# LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Proceedings of the

**Twenty-Sixth International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis**

**Viterbo (Italy) | July 1 > 5 | 2009**

Edited by **Frederico Pereira**

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

***Photocomposed*** by *Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada* – Lisboa

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

***Legal Deposit*** 314939/10

***ISBN*** 978-989-8384-04-1

**2010**

# TWENTY-SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# ON

# LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

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

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

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# P A P E R S

**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 3-10**

# But what is lacan's symbolic order?

*ROBERT SILHOL*[*]

I know, Lacan is difficult to read. Even though some of his "Seminars" have remained quite legible, we are not always sure we understand what was said in them. It is therefore safer to maintain that Lacan is a very difficult author.

But I think there were reasons for this and, to begin with, what must be acknowledged is the fact that Freud introduced us to a world for which there was no word, or at least no "signified," before him. I am of course referring to what is *un*conscious in us, and to the epistemological break which the creation of psychoanalysis represents. Can one speak of what is not conscious in us, and if so can it still be called unconscious? (This is indeed the subject of some lessons in Lacan's *Seminar XVIII*, "*D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*", 1971) Indeed, dealing with such new concepts is no easy task, and we must not be surprised if the meaning of these new words more than once seems very vague to us[1].

One of the consequences of this discovery that there is much in us which escapes consciousness is that communication is not as simple as we may think it is. As an analyst, Lacan didn't believe that what he had to say to his Wednesday audience could be understood and accepted without a necessary working through. In a word, just as an analyst requests his or her patients'collaboration, Lacan, very psychoanalytically, requested the collaboration of his audience and chose therefore to express himself like a poet, leaving his listeners or his readers to painfully construct their own meaning (there is no other!). And because of the way he had of coming relentlessly back and forth to the same themes and demonstrations, of the way he had of "encircling" the difficult and sometimes hardly acceptable ideas he was developing, he hoped that some coherence would eventually emerge from his discourse.

A poet, then, that is to say a practitioner of the metaphor – and it could be mathematical –, but a disciple of Freud also, which means that he spent his scientific life ceaselessly improving his models. And this naturally constitutes another difficulty for his readers. Indeed, Lacan's active career as a theoretician extended over some thirty years, and this explains why some of the concepts he worked with had their meaning modified over the years. Some terms or notions never varied, it is true, terms like "unconscious," "castration" and even "phallus," all received from Freud, but others, of Lacan's own coining, as "Other" with a capital letter (*Autre*) or "jouissance," had their signified altered, while the well-known *signifiant*, "signifier," may be said to convey a rather indefinite

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[1] I have dealt with the concept of unconscious and with Freud's paper on the subject in: "Freud on 'Repression' and on the 'Unconscious'", *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, ISPA, Lisbon, Portugal, 2008, 79-90.

meaning unless one decides it simply stands for "sign" or "symbol," which is not quite, I think, a correct interpretation.

I am conscious, of course, that reading is always an interpretation and that, to a certain extent, misunderstanding is unavoidable, but we may stand a better chance of understanding what Lacan was trying to communicate if we always carefully replace the words he pronounced within their proper context, that is to say if we consider their place within the theoretical progress his work taken as a whole represents.

Among the terms that frequently recur in Lacan's discourse, "Symbolic Order" may appear so simple and obvious that one may think it hardly deserves a specific debate. And yet, what seems at first like a general statement about the importance of symbolism is far from being as simple as it looks and I am not surprised it has given rise to so many misunderstandings.

## I

"*Symbolique*," the first half of the phrase, does not appear to be the term which poses much of a problem: we can say that its signified is simple and unambiguous enough, even though the question of representation, it is true, happens to be an essential topic in any philosophical debate.

With "*Ordre*," however, things are not so simple. To begin with, it might be interesting to note that the very first meaning of the expression "Symbolic order" has *apparently* little to do with psychoanalysis. We are indeed reminded that Lacan first borrowed it from the ethnological findings and writings of Claude Levi-Strauss[2]. A primal law organizes, regulates exchanges between the families observed by the anthropologist: "I have received a bride, I owe a daugther". Order, here, means rule, the way exchanges have to be arranged: I have received, I owe...; I have a debt. This law defines a *passage obligé* in the social group studied, and it is what must have attracted Lacan's attention in the first place: something which had to do with determination, the discovery of a structure, of a particular law which governed social behavior, and also the fact, pointed out by Levi-Strauss, that the *signifier* preceded the *signified*. I interpret this interest in structure on the part of Lacan as a manifestation of his wish to give psychoanalysis a scientific status. At this stage of his research, "order" expresses a desire for scientific certainty.

## II

But of course, when thinking of exchange it is not too difficult to bring what takes place between mother and child into the picture. This, particularly in the Fifties, with Melanie Klein, was the main concern of Object Relation theory. The mother is the Great Giver, the great provider, at least at first, and the consequence of her absence is naturally something that must be taken into consideration seriously.

> [...] in the plus/minus oppositon, presence and absence, we already have, virtually, the origin, the birth, the possibility, the fundamental condition of a symbolic order (*Le Séminaire IV*, 68. My translation)[3].

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2 From this point of view, page 68 in *Le Séminaire IV*, which deals with the relationship between the symbolic and the real, is essential. In this page, could the insistence on "presence and absence", and on "the opposition minus/plus", which discusses the infant mother relationship and which I have quoted earlier, be interpreted, because of this very insistence, as perhaps a sign of an unconscious regret not to have given the mother all her due? It is a question.

3 As obvious as the fantasmatic dimension of my reading, or of the original text, may seem – "to complete," "to add" – it in no way alters the correctness of the observation.

Order, here, can undoubtledly be given a specific signified – and in passing we shall note the insistence –; to the first meaning already marked out – determination – we can now add a second: representation. In short, and one naturally remembers Freud's grand child and his game with the reel, the fact that the mother can be represented in her absence introduces us to the field of language where things are replaced by signs. Quite simply, the "symbolic order", now (1956), denotes the domain where symbols are used, or, to put it more strongly, the fact that one can only express oneself "symbolically". But what was said earlier about determination is not forgotten:

> It's only from the moment of entrance of the subject into an order which preexists to all that happens to him, events, satisfactions, disappoinments, that all in which he approaches his experience [...] falls into an order, is articulated, takes its meaning, and can be analyzed (*Le Séminaire IV*, 102).

The synthesis is clear and complete. We are now dealing with an already established symbolic order and this does correspond to the "Law", as was the case with the findings of anthropology, and *at the same time* to language, for linguistics deals with representation. Humans speak, that is to say use signs, in short symbolize. As human *subjects* separated from the world-out-there – Lacan says submitted to the "real", to the mother as power –, the world of *objects*, we can nevertheless, and do, *represent* it. In fact, there is no other way of dealing with the "unattainable" real. This first structure is well-known: on one side the sign, on the other the referent, and between them an insuperable space, a gap which can only be bridged symbolically (Winnicott). After Levi-Strauss, Saussure and the linguists. Never mind if Lacan's linguistics was only "*de la linguisterie*"as he himself pointed out. We have here a structure which he will never forsake, a fundamental element of his system. For there is more, and Saussure and his sign articulated into signified and signifier (which in passing I take to have nothing to do with Freud's "manifest" and "latent thoughts", with the added remark that this is a distinction which is not always made clearly enough by Lacan himself!) cannot but ring a bell for the psychoanalyst, for this is a structure which equally applies to the dream, to language and to literature... not to speak of the concept of unconscious! As we know, it is easy to go from the structure of language, which as we have just seen is the structure of representation, to the structure of the metaphor. Metaphor and metonymy very much resemble what Freud discovered in the functioning of our dreams: condensation and displacement (Jakobson). It is here that the findings of the linguist become particularly useful to the psychoanalyst: because several signifeds can correspond to a single signifier we can play with language, use, that is, a given signifier to carry a meaning, a signified, which, because of the ambiguity, will remain concealed while being secretly expressed: I can say "table" aloud and be inhabited by the unconscious desire of thinking "bed" (love?), or perhaps "operation table" (castration, destruction). The same structure applies to our slips of the tongue or to parapraxis. We can make fun of Lacan's jargon in sentences such as: "The subject's secret lies in the signifying chain", but we must realize there is nothing wrong, from the point of view of logic, with such a statement.

Much more could be said – and much more has been written already – about the relationship between Freud's discovery and language; let it suffice here to repeat that the symbolic nature of language, the fact that humans do give a *name* to *things* (the sign, as mentioned above, on one side and the referent on the other) and the fact also that, without knowing it, they can *name* what is repressed, what is hidden to their conscious self, constitutes them into a particular group of beings. "*Ca parle*": as in our dreams, what was not intelligible before Freud can now be given meaning through the interpretation of what symbolically *manifests* itself, at last "*latent thoughts*" are made accessible, and this applies to discourse also. We are indeed endowed with such a power of representation, but this faculty of adding a signifier to a signified in order to make a sign – because of the slippery nature of the signified, which is the individual mark of each subject –, entails our submission to a symbolic order, that is to say to an order of things where what we say cannot be reduced to its "manifest" meaning, "surface" at best and often screen, and always carries more

(unconscious) meaning than we consciouly think. Thus can a concealed, "repressed" meaning suddenly be revealed (as when a slip of the tongue is successfully understood) or on the contrary remain secret, as in our dreams until they are analyzed. In the end, Lacan's perhaps most famous formula can be understood without too much difficulty and we can agree with him that the unconscious *is* structured like a language.

## III

Which brings to the foreground the notion of separation. For indeed, the unconscious *subject* of which psychoanalysis speaks is quite simply the separated being that I am: the infant separated from its mother at birth, the human being for whom the world-out-there will never be more than a representation – something which always has to be interpreted –, the boy who (anatomically) will never be a girl or the girl who will never be a boy, the image in the mirror, finally, which tells me that this face, this body, whole and in one piece, is me but remains all the same an image only and shall never represent a subject, the reflection, in a word, of the incomplete being that I am, for if the image tells me I am, and this is Descartes, it cannot tell me – without a psychoanalytic interpretation – who or what, as a subject, I am, and this is Freud and Lacan.

It is because such incompleteness is inacceptable that it is represented – so to speak – in a way that denies its very existence while realistically focussing on the many instances in life where we are seen to be lacking something. I do not think the concept of unconscious can ever be understood properly if we do not bear in mind such a fact: it all begins with this lack, "*le manque*" for which a reassuring, if paradoxically anxiogenetic, representation has to be found: better crave for the impossible, hanker after ideals, call it fusion if you like, than the nothingness of the world-out-there from which as a subject I am for ever separated.

This difficult concept of the lack is of course at the heart of Freud's discovery, even though, more of a clinician than a philosopher at first, he never expressed himself with the words of the metaphysician, simply contenting himself with speaking of the bar between Cs and Ucs. This, however, was dramatic enough! And there were many practical reasons to introduce such a paradigm, if only because the object the infant misses most in the first years of its life is the mother, the mother's body from which we were "cut" at birth.

The structure, of course, is the same: *an infant and a lost object*, but because we cannot yet say "a subject and the representation of what has been lost," this loss can be expressed in more ways than one, and this is where the difference between the sexes comes into the picture and makes matters a little more difficult for us.

In "The Dialectic of frustration," which is the fourth lesson in *Séminaire* IV, in a subtle, and I think convincing, discussion, Lacan, for about ten pages, describes the child's entry into the symbolic order (the mother has now become real because she can refuse to give, and the object has now become symbolic, entering "the connotation presence-absence"). The conditions for the formation of a symbolic order are therefore fulfilled, and it is true that the discussion could be brought to an end here, except that at this point another lack is introduced into the debate and will henceforth become the central point of interest. Justified or not, the shift is obvious in Lacan's text:

> Let us now ask the question from quite a different starting point [*à partir d'un tout autre point de départ*] (*Le Séminaire* IV, 70).

Following the Freud of 1935, Lacan chose to direct his attention to an imaginary object which he defined as essentially missing: *the phallus.* Not that he refused to take notice of that other lack clearly exemplified in the infant's demand not to be separated from its mother, as we have just seen, but in the end, he does seem to have considered it as secondary. We have moved from:

the subject misses something or someone

to:

an object is missing.

Privilege is therefore given to sexual difference and to the concept of castration. In Lacan's work on Object relation theory, this theme is soon introduced:

> Castration is essentially related to a symbolic order [...]
>
> The connexion between castration and the symbolic order is made palpable [*mise en évidence*] by what we have said so far, and also by this simple remark – for Freud from the very beginning, castration is attached to the central position given to the Oedipus complex [...] (61).

Then, Lacan goes on discussing what he calls "frustration," bringing back the mother, and woman, into the picture, in a demonstration that is much nearer his reflection on language than one might think at first. We all know that one of the theoretical steps which followed the discovery of the Oedipus complex by Freud concerned the difference between the sexes. In 1935, for instance, he discusses the relationship of the daughter and of the son to the father, pointing out how different their demands are: where the little girl will ask for a baby, the little boy will ask for the permission to use his own sexual organ (a permission which, in some cases, may not be so easy to obtain). We have therefore moved from an "order" which defines the law according to which children, young men and women, are to be exchanged, to an "order" to which humans are submitted and which describes them as capable of representation, and we have now finally come to the point where representation is given a particular content, to the point where what is represented is an *imaginary* object, the phallus namely or, in other words, what is missing. Considering 'what is missing', Lacan writes:

> Freud tells us for his part that woman has, among what she misses as essential objects [*au nombre de ses manques d'objets essentiels*], the phallus, and that this is very closely connected with her relationship to the child (70).

Quite simply, the object – and I mean the object of Object relation theory –, be it breast or mother's body, has now been changed and has become what the mother desires. Where she was at first seen as the one who can give or refuse, she is now the one who asks, asks the child to replace what she misses. But what she misses is only *imaginary*, Lacan insists on this, and it may help us – it has helped me – to accept his theory more easily.

Naturally, males also suffer from a lack; only, they have the possibility of making use of a signifier which will help them to deny they are incomplete, which of course they are, as all humans. It is of this (false) claim that women are deprived. For the lack from which men suffer is not in the end so different from that of women (fathers also ask their children to "complete" them), and for instance they can be said to suffer from the impossibility of having an ideal sexual organ, an organ moreover which is under a permanent threat (castration), but when it comes to symbolization, there is a difference. Lacan does acknowledge the similitude (although I think he should have said "penis" and not phallus here):

> Let's not forget, indeed, that the phallus of the little boy is not much more vaillant than the little girl's (193).

But because the object we are now discussing amounts to the possibility of signifying, amounts to the way women and men signify, symbolize, "our starting point has to be the existence of an imaginary phallus" (190).

And *imaginary* is the key word, needless to say, for we are here speaking of language, that is to say, and I prefer the expression: of representation. In a word, we represent what we are missing. It is true that Lacan may seem to overdo it in the way he gives this "phallus" the leading role, almost the only role in fact. But there is little doubt that as a clinician, like Freud, he has come across the domineering role of the fear of castration in us. The insistence on the imaginary nature of the phallus will help us to accept the ambiguity of the statement, for indeed it all starts with a discovery about anatomy. And at least we understand how the phallus, this imaginary object of desire, can be considered as a signifier, *un signifiant*.

> For in fact, this lack we are talking about when we speak of women, we know quite well [*nous sommes déjà avertis*] it is not a real lack. This phallus, everybody knows they can have of it [*chacun sait qu'elles peuvent en avoir*], they have them [*elles les ont, les phallus*], and on top of this they produce them, they make boys, those phallusbearers [*phallophores*] (191).

True, in this short homage to women, the formutlation, however apologetic, may seem more awkward than properly poetic: they can have "of it", they have "them" remain vague, difficult to translate, but what matters to me here is the insistence on the fact that we are dealing with an imaginary object. As we have just seen, the "problem" is not so much sexual difference as such as the fact that males are provided with a particular signifier

Of course, straight away, one may object and add: "And the breast, and the round belly of the mother to be, aren't these also signifiers?" No doubt, these are signifiers also, but as signifiers they come into existence later in life, after the discovery of sexual difference. (Also, as I pointed out above, the analyst only deals with what he or she hears from patients, and for the time being these belong to a culture which was until recently – and still *is* in reality – dominated by a patriarchal order.) In the end, though, essentially, what must be taken into consideration is the importance of what is genital for humans. That it should have been naturally selected as an area which provides symbols is not really surprising.

> If, according to what she says, it is much more difficult for the woman than for the boy to enter the reality of what takes place in the area of the uterus or of the vagina in the dialectic of a desire that can satisfy her, it is indeed because she has to go through something with which she has a different relationship than the man, that is to say, because of what she lacks [*par ce dont elle manque*], that is to say the phallus (190).

It is now easy to see how totally Object relation theory has been reversed, subverted perhaps even: what it was in the power of the mother to give or to refuse has now become what she asks. But we can also see how perfectly the liaison between language and sex difference has been achieved: an essential element of exchange between mother and child has been added to psychoanalytical theory. This does not mean we should altogether set aside what happens betwen child and mother in the domain of nurturing, of giving, but the phallus as an imaginary object does radically change the situation: it adds a new and essential determination to what takes place in the making of a *subject.*

In short, what is symbolical in the "order"I have just described – organization *and* injunction – is the particular request the mother makes to the child.

Which causes me to disqualify an interpretation often made of the mother's place in the parental couple according to lacanian theory. Although, it is true, it was not too difficult to misread the aspect of the theory which defines the mother as primarily wanting as resulting in a hierarchy between males and females. What was new in the theory was that the mother was no longer the Great Giver – and I would like to specify "the great giver only" – and had now become the one who asked, while the apparently all powerful father is the one from whom one expects a gift: a baby or a working penis. My argument, here, rests on two points: first, *this was half a century ago* and it may have seemed necessary at the time to complete Oject relation theory, add (*3*) something to it or perhaps even to subvert it, following Freud's footsteps in the enterprise (see Lacan's comment on the case of Little

Hans in *Séminaire* IV). The second argument, which proceeds from the first, is that sexual difference cannot be denied, no more than the fear of castration, and had to be taken into consideration.

## IV

In his insistence on the importance of the phallus, however – an insistence which will appear quite necessary if we simply accept to look around us –, Lacan seems to have overlooked the necessity of insisting also on the proper "lack" of fathers. If only because "*Pater semper incertus*" – until recently at any rate –, the father is at a disadvatage and cannot be certain he is the true begetter. Much more could be said on this subject, and for instance that the possibility exists of a primal jealousy on the part of men, who are not the ones to give life to the child. A necessary condition to conception, no doubt, the role of the father is not a sufficient one. The *phallus* as an ideal image – an image is always "ideal", I know, not really real except as a representation, but we have to insist on the ideality here – may have its *raison d'être* for the simple reason that no conception can be achieved without erection, as by the way it cannot either be complete without a womb, but I do not think *it* can in any way be used as an argument to sustain the existence of a hierarchy between the sexes. Once again, this is the reason why Lacan insists on the phallus as being only imaginary in the unconscious desire of the mother.

So much, then, for the possible misreading of Lacan's phrase about "order". But it is true that the expression remains so vague and general that it can easily lead to misinterpretation. What is certain, however, is that the bearer of the penis – not the phallus, needless to say – is also the one in the parental couple who, by his "No" after the birth of the child is instrumental in the separation between infant and mother, when the infant comes out of its fusion with maternal omnipotence. "There are three of us now," the voice says, and to the mother: "Thou shalt not 'reincorporate' your 'product'". This primal "weaning" creates the possibility for a subject to exist, is in fact the necessary condition of its existence. At the heart of the infant's entry into an order which symbolically defines its place and status, the father is the great "interdictor," the one who prohibits, and for the little boy he comes into action twice since he will soon forbid sexual union with the mother.

At this point, however, and for the second time, there appears the possibility of another misinterpretation of the word "order" in Lacan's formula. Because Lacan does not always clearly distinguish the two roles of the "prohibiting" father and often switches without warning from the first function – of separation – to the second – of prohibition and castration – one may fail to see the adequacy of his expression "Name-of-the-father" when thinking of the triangular situation, and repproach him with having forgotten that for the little girl the mother also has a prohibiting role. Thus this recourse to the father and his name may not be such a good way to describe the triangular scene and may remain confusing. In the end, I find it safer to read his phrase – which as we remarked he gives as equivalent for "symbolic order" – as simply standing for the freudian bar. For indeed, Lacan does equate the Name-of-the Father with castration – and here the play upon *Nom* and *Non,* so easy in French, makes complete sense –, which brings us back to the utter radicality of the freudian discovery of an insuperable gap between conscious and unconscious and of the fundamental incompleteness of the human being, male or female.

*

Was Lacan's phrase 'too vague and too general' to be of any interest? Meaningless because it carried so many meanings? Or was it on the contrary a perfect epitome of what Freud had discovered and expressed beautifully in his graphic formula Cs/Ucs?

The begining of an answer might be found in yet another meaning which Lacan's phrase incites me to formulate. As an object, constituted as such by the "symbolic order," I depend on an Other *and* on a given order which was itself determined by "a regular succession of generations" (398).

> If the psychoanalytic experience has taught us anything, it is that any interhuman relationship is founded on an investiture which comes from the Other. This Other is already in us from the very beginning under the form of the unconscious, but nothing in our own development can come into existence if not through a constellation which implies the absolute Other as locus of the spoken word [*comme siège de la parole*] (372).

This was half a century ago, we must remember, and still remained vague; but twenty years later, the "seminar" in which Lacan spoke of Joyce, *Le Séminaire* XXIII, found him giving a more precise definition of what he meant by Other and it was a way of repeating his phrase about generations. What may have been an interrogation about *determination* addressed to the work of Claude Levi-Strauss in the years of the beginning now comes to the forefront; I take it to have finally become Lacan's most open preoccupation.

In 1975, he may have had a good time playing with his "knots"on his own, but his perhaps not so successful pedagogical game was quite meaningful all the same, as we can judge today[4]. Thus, from Freud to Levi-Strauss, to Saussure, to Lacan, and to Freud we have come full circle – a "return to Freud" as the formula goes –, and in the process, already implied in freudian theory no doubt, a question has come to light which prompts us to ask what kind of an object the child was for the parent.

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4 See my article on Lacan's knots: "Comment ne pas se faire des nouds avec les nouds de Lacan," *Gradiva*, Vol. IX, N° 2, 105-119, and Vol. X, N°1, 39-47, ISPA, Lisbon, and Univ. Paris VII, Paris, 2006.

**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 11-20**

# Homage to Guillevic: The poet of atavistic nostalgia for the primeval

*ERIK NAKJAVANI*[*]

**For Thomas R. Flynn in friendship and appreciation**

When each day/ is sacred/when each hour/ is sacred/ when each instant/ is sacred/ earth and you/ space and you/ bearing the sacred/ through time/ you'll reach the fields of light.

[*Quand chacun de tes jours/ Te sera sacré,/ Quand chacune de tes heures/ Te sera sacrée,/ Quand chacun de tes instants/ Te sera sacré,/ Quand la terre et toi,/ L'espace avec toi/ Portorez le sacre/ Au long de vos jours,/ Alors tu seras dans le champ de gloire*].

Guillevic, "Opening" / "*Ouverture*" in Guillevic: *Selected Poems* (pp. 137-138)

## I

I intend to provide brief phenomenological and psychoanalytic descriptions of nostalgia for the primeval. The thrust of my effort will be to show how such nostalgia for the primeval coincides with the search for the "thing-in-itself", "*Das Ding an sich*", of German philosophy and particularly of phenomenology. That is to say, the object as it appears to our consciousness before any other consideration. Even though creative imagination is intensely at work in the equation of the thing-in-itself with the primeval, the result is not merely phantasmagoric. I will then apply this description and analysis to the innovative poetry of the distinguished 20th century French poet (Eugène Guillevic) would like to. Born in Carnac, Brittany, in 1907, as a poet he used the patronymic Guillevic. He died in Paris in 1997, leaving behind an impressive body of innovative poetry.

This psycho-phenomenological description of atavistic nostalgia for the primeval will serve as a category to the psychoanalytic definition of nostalgia in general. Thus, the aim of this combination of phenomenological and psychoanalytic approaches will be threefold. First, I shall try to make as intelligible as possible my understanding of the psychoanalytic origin of obsessive nostalgia with its secondary narcissistic elements and illusory spatio-temporal structures in lived experience. This effort will make manifest how such nostalgia psychically strives to restore and then maintain a fantasy world sustained by idealized remembrances of things past. Subsequently, I define the nostalgia for the

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primeval as an imaginative search for the thing-in-itself, which henceforth I shall refer to as atavistic nostalgia. Finally, I give examples of atavistic nostalgia as recurrent images from a representative selection of Guillevic's poems.

One of the most characteristic dimensions of nostalgia (Greek *nostos* + *álgos*), and *Heimweh* or "homesickness" in German, is that it conveys a negative and deleterious effect. Its psychical pain occurs with various intensities as a delusional but relentless effort to relive one's past. Within this perspective, nostalgia develops into pathology of associative memories. As appealing and often compelling as nostalgia may appear, it always carries in it an irreducible quotient of what Freud designated as "secondary narcissism" or "ego libido". One experiences it as an uncanny melancholy, even painful moroseness, yet its experience is paradoxically at once sweet and agonizing.

The object of nostalgic consciousness is a given, unchanging, unchangeable, and obsessively sought past. The acuity and complexity of its pain is that of a narcissistic wound. Nostalgia tends to substitute itself as the first and sole object of the ego. Under its relentless psychical pressure, the libido gradually withdraws from the present and divests itself from the exterior world, and doubles up on itself, as it were.

We experience extreme nostalgia as an intense regressive idealization of the lost objects of infancy, the breast, and the mother. What psychically rushes forth is a desire to replace the present vicissitude of pleasure with the constant nostalgic pleasure of the past. Such resurgence of the time past, along with its spatial component, intimates itself as our true home, where all our potentials were *already* fully realized and therefore totally exhausted. At the unconscious level, the whole process passes itself off as a fantasy of paradise regained: the retrieval of the primary love object, the body of the lost mother.

One experiences such nostalgia, then, as a deep desire to live the present not as here-and-now but rather as its own negation as an absolute past. In this sense, the nostalgic person does not psychically conjugate lived experience as present progressive (*Erlebnis* of German phenomenological tradition and *le vécu* in French). For nostalgic temporality no longer coincides with "ekstatic" or qualitative time suggested by Jean-Paul Sartre, which is the lived experience of time (*le vécu*) as "I am" and "there is" as it glides into the present perfect "I have been" and "there has been". The obsessive nostalgic time belongs rather to the order of linear time, chronos, or clock time of the past perfect as "I was" and "there was". In its psychoanalytic context, nostalgic time coincides with the time of the mother of infancy, the temporal dimension of paradise lost. The delusional reliving of the non-ekstatic temporal existence robs the present from the implied wide-open possibilities of the anticipatory "I will be" and "there will be".

Similarly, the spatial dimension of nostalgia is not that of "hodological" or lived space as first conceived and formulated by psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890-1947). The measurable metric, mathematical, and geometric space of, say, geographical and topological maps and charts fall into the scientific domain. The hodological space (from Greek *hodos*, signifying path or way) is the experiential space, a *way* of being human in space-time, Heidegger's *Dasein*. It signifies at once being with space while comprehending and appropriating it rather than scientifically isolating, understanding, and explaining it in conceptual terms. In other words, the hodological space is a hermeneutic ensemble of spatial perspectives. Along with their temporal dimension, spatial lived experiences embrace an individual's biological, psychological, social, cultural, aesthetics, and even religious apprehension of the environing world. That is how our understating of spatial designation of "high" and "low", "up" and "down", and "right" and "left" come to signify multiple perspectives of lived experience of space.

In the light of the psychoanalytic and phenomenological description of nostalgia that I have thus far given, it represents a wish to fantastically *reconfigure* memories of the past. Nostalgia often renders memories hauntingly euphoric to a hallucinatory extent, transforming them into phantasmal images of lived experience through the psychical agencies of magical thinking, wish-fulfillment, and daydreaming. However, in the Lacanian perspective, nostalgia is an attempt to reconfigure so that a wish may continue to exist only as a "lack" (*le manque*). Therefore, it stands for the unbroken presence of a desire as an inalterable absence, or the loss of the mother of infancy, which nostalgia itself can only gratify as fantasy.

As I have noted, the illusion that once our life was simultaneously ideal, well integrated, and complete constitutes the psychical matrix of nostalgia. Thus, it implies an absolute ontological and developmental finality. It delineates a task that only our death and disappearance in the bosom of Mother Earth can only irrevocably accomplish. Clearly, in its most regressive form, nostalgia corresponds to cases of arrested psychical development, which are fraught with *masochistic and negative drives of the death instincts*.

To the extent that nostalgia for one's earlier life attempts to declare one's life as already closed in upon itself, it may psychically fulfill the requirements of an unalterable unified whole, which symbolically presents the permanent state we attribute to death. As such, it closely approximates, and depending upon the degree of its force even coincides with, the Freudian death wish (*Todestrieb*). The connection between nostalgia and the death wish and the more general death instinct may sound too far-fetched, or at least odd. Just the same, it is psychoanalytically justifiable. For as unlikely as it may seem, nostalgia exhibits phantasmal imitations of the final closure of one's life at the time of one's inevitable death. In fantasy, it places a particular life lastingly beyond any further disclosure or change; that is to say, beyond lived experience and its endless hermeneutics.

Living fully in the concrete present – which is all that we truly have – its imperfections and unconscious vicissitudes notwithstanding, becomes in itself problematic. In the gathering darkness of this mode of nostalgia, a heavy burden of death wish masquerades as a new horizon of life. Clearly, in its most regressive form, nostalgia represents an arrested psychological state, a way of being human that is not subject to further transformation. It successfully cancels out the possibility of existential freedom and responsibility in the midst of life.

Now, I would like to advance the notion that there exits a different, that is, benign, lively, and energizing nostalgia. It is on the side of the life instinct for it is creative and therefore imagination fuels it rather than obsession with the past as an ensemble of lost objects. I would define it as longing for our origins, which still situates itself squarely within the psychoanalytic concept of the lost mother of infancy. The symbolic dimensions of the lost mother of infancy and its unlimited manifestations transcend the concept of the mother's body as a specific corporeal entity. As Heidegger puts it in a different context in his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art", "Origin here means that from and by which something is what it is and as it is. What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature. The origin of something is the source of its nature" (*Poetry, Language, Thought* 17). The love of origins is a love of beginnings. The atavistic nostalgia for beginnings therefore radically differentiates itself from nostalgia for a fixed and idealized vision of the past as secondary narcissism.

Atavistic nostalgia by extension and in its widest, most inclusive sense is nostalgia for the primeval as the origin, where the thing-in-itself in its endless manifestations resides. Atavistic nostalgia as libido finds its object in our environing world. It prodigiously invests itself in our sensual appreciation of the environing earth as the Great Mother, as Mother Earth. Our libido invests itself in the ambient nature as it once did in the body of the biological mother of infancy with the sensual experiences of unity it offered. As William Wordsworth reminds us:

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky.
> So was it when my life began;
> So is it now that I am a man;
> So be it when I shall grow old,
> Or let me die!
> The Child is father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety.
>
> *The Collected Poems of* William Wordsworth (91)

Atavistic nostalgia does not signify in psychoanalytic language a regressive movement to be *childish* but rather to be *childlike*, which is a different emotional tendency altogether. Atavistic nostalgia for the primeval origin of the thing-in-itself is a veritable reinvestment in the prelapsarian poetry of the childhood of the natural world as it bursts upon our consciousness. Atavistic nostalgia is a harking back to the call of our infantile experience before the development of pre-judgments and prejudices, whether they are familial, religious, educational, cultural, and so forth. It is an original way of being *human in the world* that is at the spiritual core of phenomenology, a world anterior to Freud's superego. In short, atavistic nostalgia represents a sort of originary archeology of sensations that attempts to produce glimpses of our earliest emotions and perceptions.

As I have already mentioned, atavistic nostalgia for the primeval origin of the thing-in-itself is a way of making the whole of the so-called external world in which one exists the object of the libido. Defined as such, atavistic nostalgia avoids the inevitable pain and melancholy of narcissistic wounds of nostalgia for a past as paradise lost. They quicken our senses and make us keenly present to our environment. Within atavistic nostalgia, we have an inkling of the pre-reflective awareness; that is to say, the domain of comprehension that precedes what we know reflectively and formulate consciously as ideas and concepts. Accordingly, meditation on the pre-reflective visual, aural, tactual, olfactory, and gustatory senses magically give us an inkling of the inconceivable of human experiences at the dawn of human existence on earth. Nostalgia for the primeval defies the solipsism of narcissistic nostalgia. It creates its own epistemology and attendant body of interpretations or hermeneutics. Based on our lived experience of prelapsarian consciousness in childhood, it constitutes our earliest intentional phenomenological comprehension and appropriation of our world but without comprehension, understanding, or conceptualization of it.

The arts can always express with greater simplicity phenomena that conceptual fields such as philosophy and psychology can theoretically come to grips with. In the context of our discussion, the following passage by George Eliot situates our theoretical discussion more succinctly and clearly within the art of fiction:

> We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it – if it were not the earth where the same flowers come up again every spring that we used to gather with our tiny fingers as we sat lisping to ourselves on the grass – the same hips and haws on the autumn hedgerows – the same redbreasts that we used to call "God's birds", because they did no harm to the precious crops. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known, and *loved* because it is known?
>
> (*The Mill on the Floss* wrote 57)

One may even say that atavistic nostalgia for the primeval is a sort of paleontology of sensations. It evokes in those who experience it their earliest emotions and perceptions and intensifies their creative possibilities. Consequently, there is an elucidation of the creative alchemy that remembrance of things past can bring to our lives. Hence, reliving the originary appearance of reality upon our consciousness as a child considerably enlarges the role of memory as a mode of creativity. On the plane of remembrance, such nostalgia places us again in the midst of our primal encounter with the world. In my view, it suggests an analogue to the prehistoric, prelinguistic human life on earth, now beyond all remembering. In this sense, the temporal dimension of our infancy and our relationship to the mother would coincide with the childhood of the human world and its earliest *sensual perceptions* of reality. It may sound mysterious and even mystical, but works of art bear witness to this seemingly ineffable connection.

On the plane of philosophy, I believe this atavistic nostalgia for the primeval corresponds to the long saga of seeking the thing-in-itself. In its most compelling form, it is the call of "*das Ding an sich*", that so enthralled Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804) and later phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and his many followers such as French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005). From a psychoanalytic point of view, one may say the thing-in-

itself finds its most complex hermeneutic dimension in the Freudian theory of the triadic structure of "psychic apparatus" as the "id", the given, or "what was originally present", in distinction to "what was acquired in the course of the ego's development" (*An Outline of Psychoanalysis* 36). For me, the "id", "*das Es*", or "the It" echoes the intrusion of nature as an ensemble of the unlimited modes of the thing-in-itself in the psyche itself. The id provides an umbilical cord between the human mind and the materiality of Mother Nature, so to speak. Freud writes, "It [the id] contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth, that is laid down in the constitution – above all, therefore, the instincts, which originate from somatic organization, and which find a first psychical expression here [in the id] in forms unknown to us" (*An Outline of Psychoanalysis* 14). Of course, there is also the shadow of *Das Ding* in Freudian "thing-presentations" (*Sachvorstellunen*). The concept of "thing" *Das Ding* (*la chose*) in Lacanian psychoanalysis delineates the final frontier of the known, beyond which lies what we cannot symbolize and therefore cannot comprehend and conceptualize.

For these reasons, one may state that atavistic nostalgia for the thing-in-itself becomes the capital of enchantment of the domain of poetry of things. French *chosiste* poetry, such as Francis Ponge's *Le Partis pris des choses* (*The Voice of Things*), tends to create a materialist cosmogony whole and entire. So, poetry of things gives birth to its own psycho-philosophical and aesthetic concerns. In such concerns, one simultaneously finds the inevitable background and the horizon of our lives, aiming to reveal to us the daybreak of our awareness of our world and our continuing consciousness of as it leads into our future. In the perspective of the interrelated phenomenological and psychoanalytic descriptions, atavistic nostalgia for the primeval reveals much through its history, philosophy, psychology, and aesthetics of the thing-in-itself. However, it intimates that its immeasurable expanses reside in the arts, particularly poetry. Or so I believe. It awakens in each one of us the longing for a primeval past when the world was young.

## II

> Entre el vivir y el soñar/ ha una sera cosa/ Advinida.
> [Between living and dreaming/ is a third thing./ Guess it].
>
> Antonio Machado, Quoted and translated by Denise Levertov in *Guillevic: Selected Poems* (viii)

In *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, Paul Ricoeur writes, "The [phenomenological] thesis of the world is a sort of blindness in the very heart of seeing. What I call living is hiding myself as a naïve consciousness within the existence of all things: "In natural living I live the fundamental form of all 'actual' life" [Edmund Husserl] (20). One may say this naïve consciousness, which is at the core of the spiritual quality of phenomenology, finds its best expression in the infant's view of the world. What the child simply perceives as a sensual flash of appearance on consciousness takes voluminous work for the reader with a conceptual formation and the phenomenologist to elucidate. That is the reason for the great difficulty of producing true phenomenological descriptions of the objects of our consciousness in philosophy and psychoanalysis. Finding once more the spatio-temporal lived experiences of childhood means to many of us the discovery of not so much our childhood but rather *when the world was young* to our budding senses.

In this sense, many sensitive and sensual poets are among the best explorers of a direct vision of the world, as-yet unmediated by the intellect. Their poetry resonates with the appeal of returning to the novelty, sparkle, and the uniqueness of the thing-in-itself. Everyone can make their own list of such poets according to their own knowledge and culture of reading poetry. In my own case, I respond to the poetry of American poets William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens, and French poets Francis Ponge, Jean Follain, and, Guillevic as efforts to pursue most passionately the poetry of atavistic nostalgia. Theirs is a desire to resurrect the world when young before any conceptual considerations; or put more technically, the thing-in-itself. However, for me, Guillevic singularly

stands out in this group as the lyrical poet of the thing-in-itself. Edmund Husserl's call for return to the thing-in-itself becomes a generative principle of considerable consequence in the thematics and stylistics of Guillevic's poetry. In the context of our present discussion, Guillevic's poem "*Art Poétique*" ("Art of Poetry") particularly strikes me as clear and compelling. Here is the American poet Denise Levertov's translation of Guillevic's "*Art Poétique*":

I don't speak for myself,
I don't speak in my name,
It's not a question of me.

I'm nothing but
a little life, a lot of pride.

I speak for all that is,
in the name of all that has form and no form.
It's a question of all that weighs
and all that is weightless

I know that everything that surrounds me
longs to go further, to live more intensely,
to die more fully, if dying
is what must be done.

Don't think you hear inside you
the words and the voice of Guillevic.

It's the voice of the present moving toward the future,
the voice of the present sounding from under your skin.

[*Je ne parle pas pour moi,*
*Je ne parle pas de mon nom,*
*Ce n'est pas de moi qu'il* s'*agi*t.

*Je ne suis rien*
*Qu'un peu de vie, beaucoup d'orgueil.*

*Je parle pour de tout ce qui est,*
*Au nom de tout ce qui a forme et pas de forme.*
*Il s'agit de tout ce qui qui pèse,*
*De tout ce qui n'a pas de poids.*

*Je sais que tout a volonté, autor de moi,*
*D'aller plus loin, de vivre plus,*
*De mieux mourir aussi longtemps*
*Qu'il faut mourir.*

*Ne croyez pas entendre en vous*
*Les mots, la voix de Guillevic.*

*C'est la voix du présent allant vers l'aveni*
*Qui vient de lui sous votre peaux].*

("*Art Poétique*", "Art of Poetry" in *Guillevic: Selected Poems* 110-11)

I would suggest that the main declaration of "*Art Poétique*" is: "It is not a question of me". As a poet, Guillevic regards himself as nothing more than a "little life", that is in its fullest a modest life. His life poetically dwells in the world and as an artist of language on the far side of *nostalgic narcissistic obsessions*. His poetry is not about him; he does not speak for himself, in his own name; it is not a question of him, not at all. His is not a libido devoted merely to the ego in isolation from the world. It is not a matter of a poet's megalomania with him.

Just the same, the phrasal declaration of his having "a lot of pride" clearly shows that the poet immediately recuperates and augments himself as a poet. His little life as a poet permits him to have the transcendent pride of oneness with all that exists. In being an artist of language embracing the earth and the ambient sky he acknowledges the function of his primary narcissism as self-support while transcending its boundaries. The poet's active creative imagination rushes headfirst into an embrace of human existence and human way of life within the sheltering fold of nature that offers it sustenance. His intervention in imaginatively appropriating the world is very much akin to a child's birth into the world, inhabiting it for the first time and making it his or her own flesh and blood through the agency of primary sensations and primary narcissism.

Consequently, Guillevic's pride as a poet alchemically transforms the lead of self-preoccupation and secondary narcissism into the gold of poetry. He speaks for *all that is*, for *all that lives, and for all that wishes to die more fully and well*. For there is no dying fully and well without having lived prodigiously fully and well. In short, he imaginatively holds closely to the real in its totality, an act that clearly differentiates itself from mimetic realism. In this fashion, Guillevic's poetics defines subjectivity as consciousness of an object, as does phenomenology. He indissolubly does away with the subject-object dichotomies and polarities that divide our world and render it irredeemably broken. Such poetics makes amply manifest how our immediate consciousness unfolds, how we form our perceptions, and how we create images of absent objects, and bring into being our imaginal world. Accordingly, his poetry becomes coextensive with the objectal world as the horizon of our lived experience of the world.

Elsewhere, Guillevic has referred to this state of creative grace as "living in poetry", which for him consists of "making an ordinary object, however humble, become the equivalent of the ocean or a menhir. Living a degree of exaltation in communion with everyday things, a sprig of heather just as much as the ocean" (*Living in Poetry* 118). As Heidegger has pointed out "In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing, a lightening. Thought of as a reference to what is, to beings, this clearing is in a greater degree that are beings" *(Poetry, Language, Thought* 33). This is the "clearing" where "communion with everyday things" takes place.

I would think it reasonable to say inhabiting the world in communion with the realm of things is to live magically in the presence of the originary past, the primordial. One imagines a mode of gazing directly at the world with the *unmediated vision* of the prehistoric men and women, living in a state of total awe and wonder of being. Let us call it the quintessential new experience, because it is the experience of the marvelous, in the etymological, strong sense of this adjective as miraculous, *le merveilleux* in French. Seeing, perceiving, and naming all that has form and weight as it detaches itself from invisibility and formlessness, defining itself as contour, size, color, and visible mass are tantamount to magical lived experiences. One may put forward the notion of the primal invisible as the background of all visibility, which coincides with our lived experience of language as emerging from silence. Without silence, there would be nothing but sounds; therefore, no discernible utterance and therefore no language. So one can categorically state: Without the invisible, there would be no visibility, and without silence, there would be no language. Our desire to return to this original moment of silence and the invisible in creative activities intimates a profound and authentic nostalgia for the pre-historic, even pre-lingual world. Perhaps atavistic nostalgia gives us an experience however elementary of the primal silence and invisible that is the background of Guillevic's concept of "living in poetry".

Now, it is our common experience that every attempt at discovery of the primeval is improbably difficult and mostly ends up in impenetrable mysteries. Matters aesthetics also possess their own particular mysteries. Thus, the poetics of the originary appearance of things at the pre-historic stages of human existence on earth is an exceptionally difficult task for the imagination. No doubt, one can only approximate it through the psychical effort of atavistic nostalgia. It partakes of intricacies on two different but parallel planes of the as-yet-unknown. In "*Voir*" ("To See"), one of his most condensed and compact poems, Guillevic hints at his own unmediated vision of the world as the foundation of his aesthetics. Let us take a close if brief look at the following poem:

It's a question of seeing
so much clearer,
of doing to things
what light does to them.

[*Il s'agit de voir*
*Tellement plus clair*,
*De faire avec les choses*
*Comme la lumière*].

("Voir", "To See" in *Guillevic: Selected Poems* 6-7)

First, I would say what strikes me, what I respond to as a reader, is the economy of this poem. Just a few words and no more. What constitute it are unmistakable plainness, simplicity, precision, compression, and clarity. The reader immediately *sees* the poem visually in its scriptural form as it breaks out on the consciousness; and has an "irreal" (*irrél*) image of light, to use Jean-Paul Sartre's terminology, which indicates the "great 'irrealzing" function of consciousness or 'imagination', and its noematic correlate, the imaginary" (*The Imaginary* 3). Then there is the simultaneous seeing through the poem, this time conceptually, making it and its multitude of significations one's own without let or hindrance. All that is extraneous has already been excised from it. Because the poet has left out all that is ornamental, superfluous, or merely poetically patterned in one way or another, save its aural conversational musicality and stripped down scriptural visibility. In this sense, the poem already sketches a kind of preliminary poetics of extreme poetic minimalism, a kind of poetry suspended between scriptural visibility and invisibility, language and silence.

Secondly, the initial phrase of the poem, "It is a matter of seeing/so much clearer" is manifestly stating the premise of his poetics of the thing-in-itself. Now the implicit question is: what precisely offers the possibility of seeing the thing-in-itself "so much clearer"? It would seem to me that such seeing is a matter of seizing the surge of the appearance of the seen on the consciousness, and doing so by unbiased eyes – a difficult operation that requires a kind of phenomenological bracketing of the seen. As a *seer*, in the fullest sense of the term, Guillevic asks that our act of seeing should do for things what light does for them; that is to say, render them fully visible to consciousness. This definition of visibility makes manifest the ground of its emergence of the visible as the consciousness of the appearance of the object and nothing more. Without this kind of visibility as light, there would only be an undifferentiated continuous mass, a continuum of sameness in our world. Various intensities of the appearance of the thing-in-itself reveal to us the reality of the real or the Tao of the real, in its totality.

Guillevic is fully aware of the paradoxical verities of these consciousness as the consciousness of the appearance of the thing-in-itself, of language and its relationship to things, and the ground of emergence of poetry as opening between the two phenomena. He tries to incorporate them all by another paradox: the austere economy of his style that maximizes their effects. The first stanza in his book-length admirable poem *Carnac* conveys the sense of his poetics that I have just outlined,

Sea on the edge of nothingness
Mingling with nothingness...

[*Mer au bord du néant*
*Qui se mêle au néant*...].

(*Carnac* 30-31}

Clearly, the sea in its immensity delineates itself against the infinite nothingness or void of space as well as consciousness. The void of space at the horizon makes the sea visible as the thing-in-itself as its natural backdrop in reality, in consciousness and in the poem. In addition, each one of the

inexhaustible visual and lingual significations of the poem eventually draw from the evocations of their indispensable dialectical relation with the invisible and silence that surround the phenomenological description of the thing-in-itself and "bracket" it.

Let me offer you one last example Guillevic's poetics of silence and the invisible from the collection of his poems *Gagner*:

> An earthen jar,
> A loose page,
> A wine glass.
> If all is lost,
> All is regained. (my translation)
>
> [*Un pot de terre,*
> *Un papier vague,*
> *Un verre à vin.*
> *Si tout se perd,*
> *Tout se revient].*
>
> (*Gagner* 23)

As in the first law of thermodynamics, all is conserved in Guillevic's poetic universe; that is to say, nothing is ever lost that cannot be again rediscovered and recuperated by reliving it as it reappears in consciousness as primeval, as it did in the first light of the first imaginable mornings of the world. In other words, the primal silence and the invisible always allow us to regain in our imaginal world the origin of all that is visible and audible in their absence as images. One finds this mode of acute atavistic nostalgia for origins in most of Guillevic's poetry. It is particularly present in Carnac, the collection of descriptive poems about his birthplace of the same name, a place of prehistoric grandeur beside the Gulf of Morbihan in Brittany. Guillevic evokes and celebrates Carnac's beaches and Neolithic monoliths or menhirs. In the Breton language, menhir "men" (stone) + "hir" (long) recalls its faraway origins now beyond human remembrance. Just the same, most of his poems fall into this category and are gifts of a world of magical, sentient, "materialist mysticism," in which Guillevic thinks poetically. Heidegger reminds us in his essay "The Thinker as the Poet," a "poetry that thinks is in truth the topography of Being" (Poetry, Language, Thought 12). This is an immensely complex and often paradoxical mode of thinking but true, which creates a world whole and entire onto itself. I salute Guillevic for his poetic genius and his generosity to share it with anyone who can read and partake of his nostalgia for primal mysteries.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 21-24**

# The impact of psychology in G. B. Shaw's play: Candida

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ABSTRACT

*The present study aims at reading Bernard Shaw as a psychologist, attempting to extricate the legal and rational relation from the romantic, illegal, and irrational, though the latter is the flowing as all that happens in the world. Nevertheless, all the activities that spring from our Life Force, i.e., our instincts and impulses are infected with pain and frustration and discomfort, but we are not cut off from final and complete redemption. Shaw in his plays awakens mankind to realize our salvation lies in sanity, the sooner we become rational the better it is.*

## INTRODUCTION

The impact of psychology in literary interpretation has long been recognized. Plato and Aristotle, for example, attributed strong psychological influence to literature. Plato saw this influence as essentially baneful: literature aroused people's emotions, especially those that ought to be stringently controlled. Conversely, Aristotle argued that literature exerted a good psychological influence, in particular, tragedy did, by affecting in audiences a catharsis or cleansing or purging of emotions. Spectators were thus claimed and satisfied, not excited or frenzied, after their emotional encounter.

The title refers to the honesty and compares it to that of non-Shavian morality, especially which of romantic drama, requires in cases of morality infidelity. In this case, the infidelity is the result not of a casual affair but of a love neither partner had ever found in their respective marriages.

Shaw's letter of 11 March 1911 to Gilbert Murray, in which he specifically encourages Murray to write a Freudian version of Oedipus Rex (supplying him with a hilarious scenario by way of inducement), shows that by that time he knew about Freud's Oedipus complex through Ernest Jones's 1910 essay "The Oedipus Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery": "I am not very appreciative

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of the psychiatrists; but there may be something in their theory that repressed instincts, though subconscious, play a considerable part in our lives, and that the first child's jealousy of the second, and even of its father, is the jealousy of Othello in a primitive stage of passion, before the specialization of a part of it takes place for reproductive purposes. The completeness with which that specialization is suppressed does not eradicate the passion" (G.B. Shaw, Collected Letters, III, pp. 13-19).

Shaw knew Jones, Freud's leading English discipline and future biographer, who could have kept him up to date in matters Freudian, and he may easily have come across Freud's name earlier than this in Hare lock Ellis's work (Albert's "Reflection on Shaw and Psychoanalysis", p. 172, Albert suggest that Shaw could have read about Freud as early as 1904 in volume 1 of Ellis's studies in the psychology of sex).

Shaw wanted the reconstruction of marriage after realistically seeing its liabilities and deficiencies. Shaw was basically a Eugenist and a socialist, and realism serves him as a device to expose the hidden flaws of our respectable social structure. Instead of painting things naturally he went deep to find out the facts affecting society. After considering his views on love and marriage, being associated with respectability and sentimentality, is based on the fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose of sex-instinct, thus obscurity the creative purpose of the life force, Shaw spared no pains to reveal the new nature of sex and to free society from its slavery of sex.

Marriage depends, as a permanent relationship, on the basis of sentimentality, not on sex which is the creative instinct. Thus, the real and creative purpose of sex-instinct remains obscured by romance. Shaw claimed that "he alone of modern English play-writes has written genuine sex dramas" (G.B. Shaw, The Complete Prefaces, pp. 500-501).

He was interested in sex, in its intellectual and cosmic aspects approaching sensuality though he was mistakenly criticized for treating sensuality in his works. Not dealing with romantic nonsense and "erotic ecstasy" Shaw took the genuine "natural attraction of the sexes for one another" as an appropriate theme.

## DISCUSSION

Candida is Shaw's unique comedy with a triangle of love; love and sex from satisfaction point of view. Shaw considered it as a real creative purpose. In the play Candida, Eugene Marchbanks, a young poet, falls in love with Morell's wife, Candida. The device of this love triangle, however, is used by Shaw to expose the reality under the idealistic mask on marriage and family. In the play, tearing aside the mask of illusionary happiness of married couples, Shaw has ruthlessly exposed the loss of freedom and the tyranny to which married women are subjected. Eugene, the young lover, declares that Candida wants "reality, truth and freedom" the truth being the truth about her marriage and the freedom from the bound that ties her to her moralizing husband. By this impression of Candida's domestic life on Eugene, Shaw wants to show that her dutiful, respectable and noble-minded husband is really above and a tyrant, even though he considers her as his "treasure". Eugene tells Candida that she must have no more to do with scrubbing brushes or ill-smelling lamps, and offers her instead "... a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun; where the lamps are stars..." (G.B. Shaw, Plays Pleasant, p. 129).

Interestingly, Freud had originally used the theatrical of "Catharsis", derived from Aristotle, to describe the treatment of hysterics: The Cathartic Cure. And psychoanalysis, which involves playing roles, storytelling, dialogue, performance, and catharsis, can itself be viewed as a form of theater. This climate scene in *Candida* translates Freud's "talking cure", as psychoanalysis is often called, into a typically Shavian discourse or laughing cure. If I make you laugh at yourself, Shaw declared:

> Remember that my business as a classical writer of Comedies is to chasten Morals with ridicule and if I sometimes make you feel like a fool, remember that I have by the same action cured your folly, just as the dentist cures your Toothache by pulling out your tooth And I

never do it without giving you a plenty of laughing gas. (G.B. Shaw, The Complete Plays, London: 1950, p. vi)

In 1902, Shaw had written to Trebitsch that "laughter is my sword and shield and spear" (Weiss 27). And Bertolini has very interestingly read some of Shaw's shorter plays as deliberate meditations on how laughter works as part of his dramatic technique (Bertolini, The Playwrighting self of Bernard Shaw, p. 85, On the Doctor's Dilemma).

Thus the drama of *Candida* leads toward this cathartic scene of laughter and discussion between Morell, Eugene, and Candida in act III. Shaw tries to rationalize love as far as possible. Candida's love is motherly. She develops a warm corner for Eugene Marchbanks in her heart, not a grand romantic Passion. She is perfectly cool and unsentimental. When the moment comes for her to make a choice between her solid husband and her fragile poet lover, she shows herself thoroughly unromantic and practical. She is a rational thinker in the matter of love and she says:

Candida: "I give myself to the weaker of the two".
Morell: "I accept your sentence, Candida".
Marchbanks: "Oh, I feel I am lost".

Romance is an artificial construction and it obscures the real creative purpose of sex instinct. Shaw views sex apart from romance, which is unreal. For him, sex is a fundamental instinct which ought to be satisfied not for pleasurable romance but because it is real, evolutionary, violent and the most imperative instinct. This is a most necessary, sporadic and impersonal instinct and the sacred Life Force express itself through it. For Shaw the aim of Life Force is neither pleasure for its own sake nor puritanical repression for the attainment of heavenly bliss. Shaw considers sexual experience as a necessary part of human growth and for him the substitution of sensuous ecstasy for intellectual activity is the very devil. In a letter to Frank Harris, Shaw said:

I liked sexual intercourse because of its amazing power of Producing celestial flood of emotion and exaltation which, However momentary, gave me a sample of the ecstasy that May one day be the normal condition of conscious intellectual Activity (G.B Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches, p. 115).

Though Shaw rescues sexual attraction from its slavery to romance, his over-enthusiasm to view sex as an instrument of creative evolution, sometimes, makes his treatment of sex unnatural and attractive. However, it is wrong to say that Shavian plays lack sexual emotions. Shaw has declared the purpose of theatre:

The theatre is continually occupied with sex appeal. It has To deal in sex appeal exactly as a costermonger has to deal, In turnips, and a costermongers opinion on turnips is worth having (Chapperlow Allan, Shaw – The Chucker Out, London: 1969, p. 97).

Shaw left the serious business of sex to woman and motherhood has been made the sole purpose of woman's life by Shaw. No doubt the desire to be a mother is instinctively universal. Let us mention again that Shaw's characters are mere Instruments of sex instinct and whenever he gives love scenes; sex is the dominant motive behind love. No doubt, Shaw did not isolate love from sexual impulse. So, we may say that Shaw rescued love from romance and glamour, the institution of marriage from nobility and false respectability, sex from sensuality and unreal pleasure ,and presented there three- love, marriage and sex- in their true and real selves, naked to the world. However, these three are devoted by Shaw to the service of the Life Force in bringing about the race of superman. Shaw put love, marriage and sex on a new pedestal of reality, which was hidden by the artificial masks of romance, respectability and sensuality and very clearly discussed them as the themes of his comedies.

## CONCLUSION

In the present age, when every part of the world is threatened with Destruction, Shaw's ideas find relevance in the quest for peace and harmony among the different nations. If Shaw has lost some of his appeal today, the fault is not in his approach to the theater, but to the fact that the iconoclasm of one generation is not the same as the next. As Shaw himself told Stephen Winsten, "The world will never be the same again, because I have educated Four generations to see things as they are, not what they imagine them to be or want them to be" (Winston's, Days With Bernard Shaw, London: n.d, p. 88).

Shaw's views on theater have influenced modern dramatist and brought about changes in methods of dramatic presentation. He wrote in 1926 that his newer plays needed the "sort of theater" whom would combine the optics and acoustics of a first-rate lecture theater with a first-rate circus. What he thought the playhouse should look like is still largely an ideal, though these have been experiments with theater-in-the-round. Much of Shaw's modernism consists in his adapting to the stage available to him and bringing back to life theatrical conventions that had been discarded when naturalism and realism took hold in the theater. Thus he made use of the pre-naturalistic stage convention that Characters may have written into their roles an artificial amount of self-consciousness. This device not only permitted the use of the ironic with that Shaw loved but made possible clarity of expression in dialogue unavailable to a doctrinaire realist.

Great dramatic art, Shaw had, "is a revelation of ourselves to our own consciousness" (G.B. Shaw, Our Theaters in the Nineties, p. 145). In order to make ideas behave dramatically, he wanted his characters to be able to step out of their roles now and then to become bigger than life: "unless an actress can be at least ten times as interesting as a real lady why should she leave the drawings room and go on the stage?" (Ibid, p. 194).

The reader of today should find much interest and relevance in the study of *Candida* as aspect of feminine psyche even if the reader is uninterested in Shaw's political passions or evolutionary zeal.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 25-29**

# Oedipal Rage in *Twelve Angry Men*

*DONALD VANOUSE*[*]

*Twelve Angry Men* was written in 1954 by Reginald Rose as a teleplay for *Studio One* on CBS TV. After the TV production earned an Emmy for "Best Screenplay," the play became the source of a rich history of adaptations. A stage play (by Sherman L. Sergel) was published in 1955. The TV script was adapted for film by Sidney Lumet in 1957. This script was produced by Henry Fonda and starred Fonda as well as featuring a stellar supporting cast, including Lee J. Cobb. There have been two subsequent film remakes. In 1997, William Friedkin directed a version entitled *In the Jury Room* which is set in California, and was inspired by the O.J. Simpson case. The 3 cast includes Ossie Davis, George C. Scott, and Jack Lemon. In 2008, the "tense, minimalist" script of the play was expanded for a Russian film by Nikita Kikhalkov (Ty Burr). This remake addresses the "lurching" toward Democracy" in post-soviet Russia. It features a Chechnyan boy who is on trial for stabbing to death his Russian army-officer stepfather. Reginald Rose does not specify the boy's ethnic identity in the Studio One script, but the original TV play, the stage play, and the earlier film adaptations all define the boy's alien otherness as an important element in the psychological texture of the play.

A drama which explores the possible guilt of a son in the stabbing death of his father is clearly making a return to the subject matter of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Rose's play, shows a jury of twelve angry men locked into a room to decide whether to convict a boy of parracide or to conclude that the evidence leaves "reasonable doubt" of the boy's guilt. It seems, to cite Freud and Otto Rank, that this play shows another instance in which "the Oedipus complex has provided [a] dramatic [author] with a wealth of themes in endless modifications, softenings and disguises" ("Archaic Features" 208). It seems likely that Rose's *Twelve Angry Men* has attracted producers and audiences because of its engagement with the disturbing subject matter presented in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex.* A son is on trial for the murder of his father. The jury's probing into the evidence and the testimony from the trial is a realist's analogue to Creon's visit to the Oracle at Delphi to learn the identity of the murderer of Laius.

The stage play opens with the offstage voice of the judge who defines the categories of patriarchal and judicial authority:

> ... [P]remeditated homicide... is the most serious charge tried in our criminal courts. You have heard a long and complex case, gentlemen, and it is now your duty to try and separate the facts from the fancy. One man is dead. The life of another is at stake. If there is reasonable

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doubt in your minds as to the guilt of the accused – then you must declare him not guilty (Rose, 1955).

The twelve jurors enter the chamber in a kind of ritual isolation. The jurors are given no names. Except for the Foreman of the Jury, each of them is identified only by his juror number. The click of the lock on the jury-room door startles some of the jurors. It draws their attention to the parallels between their own isolation and the imprisonment of the accused boy. They experience an awareness of their own guilt. Juror Three asks, "What do they think we are, crooks?" (11). Freud writes in "The Ego and the Id" that "the Oedipus complex... belongs to the unconscious. He adds, "In the expressions of his unconscious, the normal man is not only far more immoral than he believes but also far more moral than he has any idea of" (*The Works* 230). The awesome presence of the legal system in the sound of the locking door awakens the jurors' unconscious awareness of their own guilt as well as awakening their sense of kinship with the imprisoned boy and their moral outrage at the crime of which he stands accused. Even before the jury begins to discuss the evidence, Juror Two asserts, "An awful way to kill your father – a knife in his chest" (Rose 13).

The nameless jurors participate in a process which reveals that they are also bearers of Oedipal angers. Their first ballot shows that eleven jurors believe that the boy is "Guilty" of killing his father (Rose 14). When Juror Eight is asked what makes him "think the boy is innocent," he answers simply, "He's nineteen years old" (Rose 14). The boy's youth, for this juror alone, is an argument for his innocence. By the end of their deliberations and disagreements, however, the twelve jury members conclude that there is reasonable doubt and, therefore, the boy is "not guilty" (Rose 63).

This conclusion seems to indicate *Rose's* optimism concerning Oedipal guilt. The boy is not guilty of murder in this instance of biological forces meeting in the particulars of this family and this moment of social history. But the result is not easily achieved. The jurors must struggle with their own Oedipal rage and envy. Erik Erikson says that "Moralistic man refuses to see how... as an emotional and political being he undoes with infantile compulsions and impulsions what his thought has \ invented..." (*Childhood* 404). Numerous infantile impulses are depicted in the play. The most intense is Juror Three's scream of rage upon being restrained at the end of Act Two: "Let me go! Let me go! I'll kill him" (43). He is enraged by Juror Eight's assertion that he wishes to execute the boy for personal reasons. There are other instances of emotional explosions. Juror Ten's assertion that Jurors Six and Eight are "absolutely insane" (40) is one example. Ten is enraged that the jurors are proposing to re-enact the crime as it had been described in the old neighbor's testimony against the boy.

At the beginning of the third Act, two of the jurors rebuke such emotional attacks by their fellow jurors. "I don't see why we have to behave like children," observes Juror Four. "Nor do I... We should not make it a personal thing" (44-45), responds Juror Eleven.

Oedipal rage is present in the jurors, but Rose's play demonstrates that the Jurors are able to articulate techniques to **limit** the expressions of such symptoms. It is possible that Reginald Rose could have been influenced by Erik Erikson's theories concerning historical shifts – from Oedipal inevitability to historical innovations – in order to escape of the epidemiologies of Oedipal rage. Erickson's ideas were quite well known during the early nineteen-fifties (Fulford). The jurors in Rose's *Twelve Angry Men* achieve a hesitant flexibility or openness to reach their conclusion. They learn from their own emotions and achieve "Reasonable Doubt" concerning the guilt of the boy charged with the murder of his father.

In his comments upon the life-history of the boy, Juror Eight employs the term "anger" as it is used in the title reference to "twelve angry men" of the jury. Several jurors note that the boy's father "slapped" or "punched" the boy on the night of the murder (see 22 and 30), but Juror Eight provides an interpretive description of the sources of the boy's anger: "This boy's been kicked around all his life. He's a tough, *angry* kid. You know why slum kids get that way? Because we knock 'em over the head once a day, every day" (13. *Emphasis added*). Juror Four is the first to affirm that his own emotional experience parallels the sources of the boy's anger. He says, "... it was hard for me.

Everything I've got I fought for. I worked my way through college... I fought, yes, but I never killed" (16). There is a gap between the struggle of "working [his] way through college" and the assertion of a need to "fight" for "everything [he] got" in the world, but Four does acknowledge the sources of his own anger and his defensiveness.

Juror Three, is the most emotionally explosive man in the group. He does not cite any specific conflicts in this instance, but simply blurts out, "I know what it's like. I never killed nobody" (16) The absence of transitions in his speech indicates both his anger and his reluctance to connect his emotions to his behavior. Like Juror Four, he does not identify his father as a source of his pain. He does mention his own harsh behavior as the father of a boy who "[w]hen he was fifteen... hit [him] in the face" and whom he has not seen for three years (Rose 21). The comments of Juror Twelve supplement his earlier anxieties about losing his job in advertising because of his legal obligation of jury duty. His comments on employers come closer to the plight of the boy punched by his father: "I've been kicked around, too", he says and then he specifies the aggression of the "big boy that buys the advertising" (16). Juror Eleven is a refugee from World War II Germany. In this personal history he parallels Erik Erikson who fled from Germany in 1933 (Fulford). Juror Eleven refers to the culture that he fled, and refers to the need for some amelioration of its violence: "In my country, in Europe, kicking was a science, but let's try to find something better than that" (16). In this desire to escape his personal anger, Juror Eleven seems to be suggesting that the jury might try to "find something better" in their responses to the boy who has been accused of murdering of the father who had abused him.

Juror Ten shifts from reporting his experiences with violence to attacking the other jurors. His comments seem to indicate that he has become exasperated by the Eriksonian suggestion that the jury should "find something better" than a violent retribution against the boy. Juror Ten expresses a harsh bigotry:

> I don't mind telling you this, mister. We don't owe the kid a thing. He got a fair trial, didn't he?... Look, we're all grown-ups here. You're not going to tell us that we're supposed to believe him, knowing what he is. I've lived among 'em' all my life. You can't believe a word they say" (16).

This outpouring of resentment and abuse is directed at the youth and his ethnicity. This speech shows that this jury might have become unified by bigotry. Freud states that Oedipal "hatred" can operate to *unify* a group against an individual or a community (*Group Psychology*, 32). Ironically, this sustained expression of Juror Ten's ethnic rage enables the Jury to move toward "Reasonable Doubt." in its conclusion (Rose 99-100). The ferocity of Juror Ten's bigotries impels the others to experience a disgust which enables them to achieve a humane sensitivity.

The Jurors also question the appropriateness and the authority for defining legal evidence and procedures. Reginald Rose's father, William, was an attorney, but it is not clear that Rose himself is expressing an Oedipal challenge to his father's profession in the issues of law and justice addressed in the play. The murder knife, a switchblade, is found stuck into the body of the father, for example, and it is "is a pretty strong piece of evidence" according to Juror Five. The boy admits to having bought a knife the evening of the murder, but Juror Four notes that "the storekeeper was arrested... when he admitted selling it to the boy," and he testified that the knife was unusual, "the only [knife] of its kind that "he had in stock" (Rose 22-23). After the shopkeeper had been arrested, his testimony that the murder weapon was "the only [knife] of its kind" he had in stock seems unreliable. It contributes to the prosecution's case. After Juror Eight presents an identical knife which he found at a "junk shop around the corner" from the boy's home (24), the shopkeeper's comments appear even less reliable.

Greater unreliability results from questions about the testimony of the old man who lives downstairs and the woman who lives on the other side of the elevated railroad track. Their testimony raises questions about how physical limitations and emotional needs might affect their reliability as witnesses.

Juror Seven questions the appropriateness of the growing list of uncertainties: "Why didn't [the boy's] lawyer bring up all these points?" (Rose 36). The question indicates an oedipal submission to the cultural roles of patriarchal authorities: "If the lawyer didn't bring up this issue, then we have no right to." In asking the question, Juror Seven seems to reveal a source of his "anger" in his powerlessness as a child. Erikson observes that it is important to remember that "every adult... was once a child... A sense of smallness forms a substratum in his mind" (*Childhood* 404). Another reversion to immaturity seems to be indicated in Juror Seven's desire to cut short the deliberations because he has "tickets to a Broadway hit" (13). Juror Three, who expresses a deep rage and hatred of "tough kids" (21), reveals a childish regression in proposing to play tic-tac-toe rather than participating in the jury's deliberations (31).

Rose's play probes the accuracy of the witnesses against the boy. Although Sophocle's Oedipus discovers the unreliability of what *he* has seen and heard, Rose's Jurors learn that the physical limitations of the witnesses invalidate their testimonies. The old man who lives in the apartment below that where the murder took place, is shown to be unreliable about what he claimed to have heard and how quickly he could walk to the hallway to see the escape of the murderer. The old man claimed to have heard the boy "say" or "yell" at his father, "I'm going to kill you". But the roar and screech of the passing elevated train make his hearing of such a voice unlikely (32-3). The old man's also asserted that, after hearing the body of the murdered man fall to the floor, he walked in 15 seconds to the hallway and saw the boy fleeing. The old man who used two canes to walk in the courtroom, seems to be Rose's allusion to the Sphynx's riddle to Oedipus concerning walking in Sophocles play.

Erik Erikson develops the relationship between walking and the riddle in *Oedipus*:

> To be "one who can walk" becomes one of the steps in child development which through the coincidence of physical mastery and cultural meaning... and social recognition contribute to... self esteem (*Identity*, 49).

In affirming his ability to walk and to see the fleeing boy, the old man's introduces a deceptive assertion of self-esteem. His childish need for recognition seems to have compelled him to make these assertions (Rose 33-4).

The woman who claims to have seen the stabbing of the father while she was lying sleeplessly in bed is described by one of the jurors as having "dents" at the bridge of her nose from wearing eyeglasses (Rose 62). Because it is unlikely that she would wear her glasses while trying to sleep, her testimony is determined to be unreliable. She is not a Tiresias, the "blind seer" of Sophocles' play who verifies the guilt of *Oedipus*.

Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Men* employs the sturdy social realism which is characteristic of works from the Golden Age of television. The play also seems to express the intellectual and moral aspirations of Eriksonian psychoanalysis in the post World War II era. The utopian aspect of the play's ending – the boy is not guilty – reflects Erik Erikson's theoretical aspiration to define a "sociogenetic evolution" (*Identity* 39 and 43) in the human engagement with Oedipal conflicts. Such an aspiration also is suggested in Erikson's comments on the "therapeutic orientation" of psychonalysis itself:

> Freud, the doctor, revealed for the mercantile and early industrial period what havoc the hypocritical morality was wreaking, not only in his era, but in all human history. In doing so, he founded what Phillip Reiff has described as the *therapeutic orientation*, which goes far beyond the clinical cure of isolated symptoms (*Identity,* 33).

Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Men* seems to depict a cultural moment in which it is possible for the members of a community to escape their personal and cultural histories to liberate themselves and their judgments of a boy from mindless rage and Oedipal injustice.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 31-38**

# Psychology of utopias

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## THE CONCEPT OF UTOPIA

Utopias have primarily been studied within the fields of philosophy, literary history and history, up till now. These fields investigate questions concerning content and genre. Studying the psychology of the authors of utopias, however, falls within the competency of psychology. As far as I know, psychologists have not dealt with this problem.

The concept of utopias derives from the Greek "ou" (a prefix meaning "no"), and "topos" ("place") expressions meaning "nowhere", or a "place that does not exist". To this non-existent place the author dreams the world where the naïve traveler (who gets there by some chance) finds a pluperfect society instead of the incomplete one he knows so well from reality. The term *utopia* comes from the title of Thomas More's work, though we have been acquainted with earlier utopias as well, such as Plato's *Republic*. Concerning content, we distinguish between positive and negative utopias. The former depicts a society that seems ideal for its author, while the latter (often called "dystopia") handles the term "ideal" ironically and provides a misshapen and grotesque caricature of the society. We also make a distinction between the utopias of order and the utopias of liberty, and there are combined forms as well.

As a genre the utopian literature is fairly multifarious, and that is why literary history does not consider utopia a distinct genre. It can appear as a state novel or a fantastic travelogue, or it can be science fiction or a piece of fantasy literature. The correct classification is irrelevant to the present paper so I will not make such distinctions. I will speak about utopias in general – not as a literary but as a "psychological genre".

Concerning the psychological approach to the problem of utopia, I do not have an easy task due to the unprecedented nature of this exploration. Invoking psychohistory[1] the question should be asked in the following way: "why do people write utopias"? That is, what psychological situation motivates people to quit reality and speculate on alternative and ideal realities? The question implies that this time I concentrate on positive utopias.

## UTOPIAS AND PSYCHOSIS

The most conspicuous feature of utopias is that they secede from reality, so we can say that they have something in common with psychosis on the level of the phenomenon. It is true that this is a controlled secession (by the authors), and it does not mean the complete loss of contact with reality.

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[1] Psychohistory suggests a strong relationship between an author's personality and the work of art he creates.

If we look for the analogy of utopias with psychosis, we can easily acknowledge that utopias are based on delusion-like ideas. These ideas, however, construct a coherent system. "Delusions" keep the theoretic systems of utopias together, and they serve as an ideological and moral basis to them. As delusions are necessarily false, the content of the reality generated by them is at least dubious.

Delusions tie down and, at the same time, are capable to mobilize exceeding amounts of energy. This energy provides utopias for ideological and moral élan. The élan enchants and fills the travelers (not mentioning the authors themselves) up with enthusiasm. Readers also can fall victim to its charms. This élan mobilizes not only the readers' minds but also their emotions, and they can hardly stay indifferent to the world of the utopia. The delusions of the utopias operate in the same way as the psychotic persons'. They serve accomplished responses to all the questions inside their systems. The questions that query the systems themselves are labeled irrelevant.

The analogy, however, is incomplete. There are some differences between insane persons and the authors of utopias. Delusions encompass the psychotic persons' everyday life, but for the authors of the utopias (except for the case they are also insane) they serve as intellectual adventures (concerning leastwise the conscious level)[2]. The boundaries, however, are permeable. For the insane persons it is natural that they subordinate their thoughts and acts to delusions. If the author started to construct the world of the utopia he no longer could be regarded sane.

As the boundaries between psychosis and utopia are permeable, it seems logical to conclude that the authors of utopias are very close to get into a psychotic state. Their contact with reality is unbalanced and their personalities are at the threshold of disintegration. Writing utopias, thus, (just like any other creative activities) is a self-healing attempt, aimed at the prevention of mental insanity. All these issues need a more elaborative exposition that I will try to perform in the following sections.

## UTOPIAS AND FAIRY TALES

Utopias resemble the world of the fairy tales in many ways. They both depict coherent (though fictive) worlds that enable the heroes to find their happiness. In both genres wish-fulfillment predominates. In fairy tales happiness comes true at the end while in utopias it should not be reached since it has been given. The worlds of utopias are the worlds of happiness. Utopias usually start where most fairy tales end: "And they lived happily ever after." Utopias save conflicts: in their worlds the aims, values and ideals that guarantee the happiness of their civilians have already been achieved.

The Bettelheimian "good-enough tale" term (that refers mainly to folk tales) reflects the infantile world-view, which operates with sharpened contrasts, rather than with sophisticated distinctions. Thus the heroes of fairy tales are one-dimensional: they are either very good or bad, beautiful or ugly, and so on[3]. As Bettelheim says, children draw ideas from the tales to rearrange their inner chaos[4]. The clear contrasting pairs of fairy tales motivate the children to find their way in their own chaotic worlds. Thus children can observe the operation of these simplified emotions, features and desires, both separately and together. By means of identification and projections to heroes of fairy tales, these things become comprehensible and easy to elaborate for children[5].

The worlds of utopias seem to share common features with the infantile world view. The civilians of the utopias are just as one-dimensional as the heroes in fairy tales, with the exception that all represent the "right" side, since there is no "wrong" in these ideal societies. So in utopias only the morally "right" halves of the contrary pairs are projected to the heroes. Morally "right" things, of course, imply many different features (e.g.

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2 Utopia, as a genre falls into the field of speculative fiction. One of the most characteristic features of speculative fiction is that the authors play an intellectual game. They try to answer a "What if…?" type question in a speculative way. See Balint (2009).

3 See Bettelheim, p. 9.

4 See Bettelheim, p. 75.

5 See Bettelheim, p. 90-96.

diligence, truthfulness, love, loyalty, etc.), which can be represented by different persons or groups. The nature of the values of the contrasting pairs characterizing the societies of utopias depends on the authors' personalities, actual desires and conflicts.

The analogy of the two genres is also affirmed by the often similar beginning as well. In fairy tales the heroes must leave their homes (either they are expelled or lose their way) and start wandering to pass through adventures that contribute to a new integration of their personalities. Utopias, as I have already mentioned, begin also with the turn that the heroes find themselves in a totally unknown world. The analogy ends at this very point, because the traveler is not the real hero of the story, at least not in the same sense as the hero of a tale. It is not his integration of self that is important: his adventures in the strange world do not mean the symbolic levels of self-integration. The traveler mainly concentrates on the intellectual comprehension of the ideology of the strange world. Of course, just like the hero of a fairy tale, the traveler also faces a series of difficult tasks, because the familiar, common logic does not predominate in this world.

As for the space and time relations, there are also some parallel features. Neither fairy tales, nor utopias are linked to space and time – things happen somewhere and some time. Both fairy tales and utopias seemingly concrete the locality, saying "over the hills and far away", or "in the middle of the round forest", or "on the island", or "on the Moon", or "under the sea", but all these are, of course, only the symbolic labeling of the fact that the heroes are wandering beyond their real localities, deeply inside their soul. The time of fairy tales (if we can speak about time dimension at all) is rather the past – the linguistic past tense of the story refers to this, and the almost obligatory beginning sentence, saying "Once upon a time". This past, of course, should not be meant in a historical sense; it rather symbolizes the psychologically ancient and infantile part of the soul.

The time of utopias can also be the past, the withered golden age – this is true mainly for the utopias written in the ancient times. The longing for the golden age relates to the archaic-mythic world-view and to ancient people's relationship to transcendence. In psychological sense the past golden age is the same as the past time of fairy tales. From the 16$^{th}$ century the time of utopias switched mainly to the future, which can easily be explained with the appearance of the trust in progress, and the hope in the future results of progress. Future, in psychological sense, is the time of wish-fulfillment. Thus, utopias are, in modern sense, tensed moments of future; the seemingly eternal moments of fulfilled wishes.

The two genres urge the comparison from another aspect as well. This is the aspect of sexuality. According to Bettelheim, fairy tales provide the ideal sexual education – proper to the child's age and level of personality development[6]. Without any contents referring to sexuality, the story promotes the emotional maturation. With the help of fairy tales the child finds the role of sexuality both in his inner and the outside world.

In the worlds of utopias there are no emotions, at least not in their complex, conflictuous and ambivalent forms. There is no sexuality either – these worlds cannot handle the questions of love affairs and families. The authors are too busy with the depiction of social relationships, institutions and economy, and they have no time to deal with "minor details" like these[7]. They show up an "ideal" form of life that resembles monasticism. If family as such appears at all, it has no elaborated function and role, unless in economical sense. The phenomenon that utopias ignore and deny sexuality can refer to problems with intimacy and can also be interpreted as a regressive feature.

Due to psychoanalytic studies, the relationship between fairy tales and the unconscious is obvious, and the interpretations of some symbols are well-known. All the main heroes in the story (three brothers, seven sisters, etc.) refer to the same person. The split of the person into different heroes promotes the observation of how the unconscious operates, what happens if desires take over the control, and how maturing it could be to act according to the principle of reality. The elder brothers motivated by the pleasure principle never succeed, while the youngest, who is able to reconcile his desires with nature (for example he gives food to the hungry mouse), comes to know his unconscious wishes (he can speak the language of the animals), is able to delay his needs (he does not drink from the well despite of his thirst), is capable of solving critical situations. All these give the child

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6 See Bettelheim, p. 279.

7 Thomas More's Utopia seems to be an exception to this rule. He deals with the question of love in exact terms and takes romances between men and women into account.

the hope that he himself will become capable of solving difficulties by "domesticating" the unconscious and undertaking the demands of the principle of reality[8].

The relationship between utopias and unconscious is not so obvious. It is certain, that the world depicted ideal can be regarded the fulfillment of unconscious wishes. The role of the pleasure principle and the principle of reality played in wish-fulfillment need some further explanation.

## UTOPIAS AND THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

In utopias pleasure principle predominates. Since the worlds of utopias serve as happiness and fulfilled wish, there is no need for either the delay or the abdication of wish-fulfillment. The balance prevails in a way that there is no need for compromises with reality. Despite of this utopias are not the small children's worlds, though it would be plausible concerning the things mentioned above. In contrast to children, utopias know reality; they just deny it.

Utopias try to make us believe that the principle of reality predominates in their world. But this dominance is only pretended – the small child is unable for pretending in that way. What do I mean by pretence? The authors of utopias depict the pleasure principle as if it was the principle of reality. The worlds of utopias seem to be very rational, they suggest a high level of morality, and they are subjected to strict rules. It seems as if they were impregnated by reality control. In fact, the worlds of utopias have no contact with reality, they are completely isolated. This isolation gives free course to the pleasure principle and suggests the operation of the principle of reality unreasoning. These utopian worlds have their own inner balance, thus there is no need for the balancing function of reality. They do not generate problems inside their own systems, and that is why they do not need any compromises in the course of problem solving. The phenomena that seem to be the representations of the principle of reality, such as rationality, rules, order, balance, or, in some sense, morality, all come from the inner structure of the system. Thus the principle of reality is only seemingly present, in a delusive way, in order to make the worlds of utopias valid and acceptable for adults. As for attractiveness, it is rather due to the unlimited predominance of the pleasure principle.

The worlds of utopias are in close relations with their authors' personality. If the principle of reality does not work in utopias, we may suppose that the authors have some problems with keeping in touch with reality. They try to maintain the balance, the morality and the inner cohesion of their personalities by isolating themselves from reality, and transmit the unlimited control to the pleasure principle. Here we can seize the regressive feature of utopias as well as their self-defending function.

## UTOPIAS AND DREAMS

Utopias are often compared with dreams in the sense that they create ideal and dream-like worlds. Utopias are really the close relatives of dreams in their Freudian sense as well. We know that dream is ego-regression, through which the ego suspends the contact with reality. There is an analogy to be presented right here: utopias also suspend the contact with reality. The regressive feature of dreams will be detailed later. Utopias often apply the dream metaphor – the traveler gets to the new world by falling asleep, or he thinks that he is dreaming.

In the course of dreaming the unconscious desires and the repressed drives, after significant distortion (that we call dream-work), get close to the conscious. In the course of dream interpretation all these contents can be unfolded. Freud himself dealt so intimately with dreams because he thought that they lead us to the exploration of the unconscious. Dream is wish-fulfillment, suggests Freud. Utopias are analogues of dreams also from this respect: utopias seem to be completed dreams. Utopias depict the completed happiness, the Eden itself – at least the authors think so. The reason why utopias cannot vindicate a great number of followers and executers may be that the desires fulfilled in them are the authors' own. Everybody dreams his own dream.

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8 See Bettelheim, pp. 41-53.

The world of utopias often seems chaotic, illogical and distorted for the traveler (and the reader), just like dreams. The traveler is as puzzled and helpless as a dreamer is. In utopias, however, a leader usually occurs, who interprets the issues. This leader is the author himself, or, more exactly, his mouthpiece. (He is often the leader of the society of the utopia, or even the founder, or in other cases, he is just a well-informed person.) He does the same than the psychotherapist in therapy who interprets the patient's dreams. The traveler, on the other hand, finds himself in the regressed, infantile position of a patient.

What I suggest here, is that both the travelers and the leaders represent the authors' personality. The authors of utopias are projected into their dreamed worlds as two distinct persons: one can ask good questions, the other knows the right answers. There is a "division of labor" between them, just as in the case of the brother heroes of the fairy tale, but the function of their "split" is different. They are not the divided representatives of pleasure principle and the principle of reality, but the two poles of a conflict.

The traveler, though he has left reality, remembers it. He calls the world of utopia to account for the rules and operation of reality. He keeps comparing. His reminiscences tie him not only to reality but also to the principle of reality. The leader also seems to know reality but he is somehow "above" it. He regards his own utopian world superior, more reasonable and more ideal. He represents the fulfilled wish, opposite to reality. As we have already seen above, this fulfillment comes true by ignoring the principle of reality, and by the unlimited predomination of pleasure principle. It happens in the same way in dreams.

The traveler represents doubts. These doubts are, whether there could be balance without the operation of the principle of reality, or not. The leader put an end to the traveler's doubts. "Yes", he suggests, "in special circumstances this can work. Moreover, this is the most appropriate way of all." The two figures can be considered as the ones who personalize the author's inner conflict. This unconscious conflict resembles to the conflicts of dreams – and the attempt to solve it, the wish-fulfillment, resembles to dream-work. Dreams, with the help of the unconscious, argues Freud, always demand something from the ego: whether a satisfaction of a drive or a notion, or to put an end to the doubts. The sleeping ego tries to go on sleeping, so it works on the elimination of the factors (like wishes, conflicts and doubts) that disturb dreaming. This happens in a way that the ego "pretending to be unresistant" prevents these demands by wish-fulfillment and in this way it abolishes them. In utopias the answer to the traveler's doubts is wish-fulfillment; the same what happens in dreams. The function of wish-fulfillment is the same in both cases: to prevent the dreamer of awakening.

## UTOPIAS AND DAYDREAMING

Utopias, as we have seen, share some common features with dreams, but there are limits with this similarity. Daydreaming, which means a kind of "wakeful dreaming", seems to be a more proper analogy. As a matter of fact, the daydreamer usually creates utopias – it is not certain, however, that he puts it into a written form. He lets his imagination free, which means, that with some conscious control he mobilizes his unconscious world of images and instincts to solve a current problem – at least in his imagination, on the level of wish-fulfillment.

Utopias, though wish-fulfillment predominates in them, with the exclusion of the principle of reality, are the favorite genre of adolescents, not of children. Utopias enforce abstractions, so one must be intellectually mature enough to do such cognitive reasoning. Adolescents not only understand abstractions but they like them as well. They willingly submerge in an imaginary world and they even create worlds like that in the course of their daydreams. Adolescents are "professional" daydreamers, and as long as their contact with reality is kept, this activity can be considered normal.

What happens in the course of daydreams? Daydreamers create imaginary images about their possible identities with the help of possible worlds. The imaginary work mobilizes their complete personalities: beyond the conscious progresses even the unconscious tends to play a significant role. Daydreamers look for the most proper identities for themselves: profession, aims, values, community. Daydreaming, at least in the case of adolescents, is in close relation with identity construction, and as such, it is a factor that makes the personality develop[9].

[9] See also Balint (2010).

In the case of an adult, daydreaming is not an unambiguously positive phenomenon. Adults start daydreaming when they get in crises, that is, they face problems concerning their identities. Unlike adolescents, adults do not have either "unlimited" possibilities, or "unlimited" life-time. That is why daydreaming is not the proper way for the reintegration of their identities in crisis. For adults, daydreaming is rather regression, or even escape, than real problem solving. Though, it is true, that it is a fairly creative form or escape, and as such, by some lucky chance, it can lead to the resolution of the crisis. Utopias, nonetheless, mean a special form of daydreaming. The authors of utopias are none other than talented daydreamers who are in identity crisis.

## UTOPIAS AND IDENTITY CRISIS

Identity crisis, as Erikson argues, is one of the life tasks and a necessary part of adolescents' psychosocial development. By resolving it, only the foundations of identity become solid – there is good chance for either further construction or destruction, rearrangement or, of course, collapse. Constructing identity is a life-long progress, and that is why adulthood is not free from identity crises either. There are several factors that threaten the different aspects of adults' identities. According to Breakwell[10], the three aspects of identity are continuity, distinctiveness and self-esteem. Any of these can be threatened by internal or external factors. In this sense marriage, divorce, loss (job, home, etc.), mourning, illness and psychosis are all possible threats. When the person detects a threat he can mobilize intra-psychic or/and interpersonal coping strategies in order to save his integrity[11]. Breakwell reviews these strategies and shows how they work. Her plausible system enables us to carry on with thinking and suggest that daydreams, or the special form of daydreaming, i.e. generating utopias can be considered an intra-psychic coping strategy, even if Breakwell does not mention these in her own system.

Thus utopias are, in a Breakwellian sense, attempts to save identity in a crisis situation. Is it possible to identify the threat from the features of utopias? I will make an attempt for it.

## UTOPIAS AND COMMUNITY

What have we already found out about the authors of utopias so far? When examining the analogy between utopias and psychosis I came to the conclusion that the authors are near to psychosis. At the apropos of daydreams I pointed out that they are facing identity crisis. In their personality we can observe the regressive and infantile tendencies, as well as the creative and self-healing energies. But what is their personality threatened by? I think the authors answer this question themselves by creating utopias (nor diaries, neither poems, etc.).

Utopias always depict the welfare of a community. They portray ideal communities that consist of ideal people. There is neither rivalry nor conflict among them. There is no sexuality either, because it is a rather complex phenomenon, full of conflicts. Why do the dreamers of utopias need ideal communities like these? What are they escaping from? Daydreaming about ideal fellows implies problems with intimacy. Instead of their old friends they dream about new ones and create a society controlled by themselves. This ideal society replaces the one that "excluded" or "misunderstood" them. In the authors' imaginations the people surrounding them do not need to be convinced, they follow the authors' ideas without doubts so that they can feel at home among them.

The social aspect of identity is a crucial factor of mental health. The more complex the network of one's social relations is, the more he feels at home in society. Feeling at home in society means being loved. This confirms the self-esteem aspect of identity. The losses of social contacts on the one hand lead to isolation and the loss of self-esteem on the other. Beyond self-esteem the isolated person's continuity of identity gets hurt as well. From the viewpoint of the Breakwellian system, two aspects of identity are threatened by society. This is what daydreamers try to prevent by creating an ideal social milieu in their imagination.

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[10] Breakwell (1986) p. 40.

[11] See Breakwell (1986) and Erõs (2001).

The ideal societies of utopias look ideal not because they consist of one by one "good" people but because this world is impregnated by an ideology, an order of values and morals, that determine everything. These factors make the society ideal, not the people's diligence for "good". The authors of utopias do not twiddle with the improvement of mankind, as Christianity attempts, but they practice control above them by an ideology. They "solve" the problem of the world at one sweep – and form people to their own images. The authors of utopias have obviously serious problems with control and power – in reality they had become incompetent and that is why they need overcompensation in imagination.

It is important to know also the content of the controlling ideology because it refers to the nature of the conflict between the person and the society – and this conflict obviously differs in each utopia. Without knowing the content we can only say, that this ideology (which is a close relative of delusion) is the author's resolution for the current problem. With the help of this ideology the author hopes to regain the lost control and reinstate both his self-esteem and the continuity of his identity.

## THE AUTHORS OF UTOPIAS

Utopias, like any other genres, tell many things about the authors' personalities. The authors, by creating utopias, demonstrate their resentful exodus from the world. In the real world they do not obtain the appreciation, respect and love that they long for. Whilst they are creative, they start to create in order to save the integrity of their personalities. They create utopias because this genre is the most appropriate for them to admit quick and limitless narcissistic filling up. They depend on the external feedbacks too much, so escaping from critique, they create a new reality where they obtain positive feedbacks. They let in their imaginary world only those with whom they can live in a conflict-safe harmony, and who keep appreciating and acknowledging them. In order to do this they multiply themselves – the societies of utopias are so one-dimensional because each person represents the same aspects of the authors' identities. These are features that the authors can integrate into their own personalities. Their non-accepted aspects are excluded from the world of utopias and are addressed back to reality, and then realized as persecutors and doubters. Only by this circuit can the authors free themselves from low self-esteem that threats their integrity and acquire a pathologically high one. By multiplying themselves they can contemplate on the "complexity" of their personality with pleasure. They create a superior world, society and personality in this way. In virtue of all these it is probable that the authors of utopias have narcissistic personalities.

Narcissistic personality in itself would not be enough for creating utopias. One needs a current crisis as well, that threatens the balance of his personality. As we saw above the authors of utopias struggle with identity crises that threaten the continuity and the self-esteem factors of identity so much that they almost balance at the boundaries of psychosis. The above mentioned regressive tendencies (the unlimited operation of pleasure principle, infantile features and asexuality) and leaving reality all refer to that. Even an ideology that is similar to a delusion appears.

Creating utopias, however, is a creative activity as well, and as such, it can have a self-healing effect, too. How effective this self-healing can be? It depends on whether the externalization of the crisis (that is to create a coherent text) was successful – whether it reorganized chaos, orientated the authors in their emotional confusions, gave hope for change and matured their personalities. So long as they contribute to the reintegration of self, they can be considered as successful self-healing attempts. With their help the authors can cope with the current crisis, and narcissistically filled up, they can return to reality.

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Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 39-47

# Self-readings: The artistic experience on the crossroads between psychoanalysis and narrative theory*

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ABSTRACT

*The paper undertakes to examine different angles of the filmic and literary reception process: on the one hand it analyses the understanding of a narrative film and the causal representation of its events from a cognitive-narrative approach by using the thinking-aloud-method. On the other hand, the expectations posted by psychoanalytic reception theories are also discussed and the role of attachment style in the reception process is empirically tested.* The Man without a Past *was shown to a sample of 20 students, who also had to interpret the poem* Füst *by Attila József. Our main question accordingly is to what extent the structure of the film/the poem and the character of the viewer/reader determines the coherent causal representation. To find the answer we presuppose correlations between the demand and the depth for the understanding of works of art as well as the personality and attachement style of the receiver (BFQ, SOC, LOC, ECR-R). Preliminary results show that the reception of a narrative is determined by two, interrelated factors: the attachement style of the person and his/her ability to control emotional impulses.*

## INTRODUCTION: THE ORIGINS OF INTERPRETATION

Both in aesthetics and in psychology of art the reception of a work of art has posed a general theoretical problem for decades. Aesthetic theories are centered around the characteristics of the work of art, while reception theories highlight the role of the reader. First, we critically discuss and interfere two theories which represent exaggeratedly the work-of-art-based and the reader-based approach,

* This research was supported by National Research Fund OTKA-K79146.

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namely narrative theory and psychoanalytic theory. Then we attempt to test the interaction of the reader and the work of art in the framework of an integrative empirical research. Beside the theoretical importance, the abundance of art therapies also provides significance to our research.

*Narrative theory*

It is a general view among narrative theorists that narrative construction is essentially based on causal relations between the narrative events (Barthes, 1970; Bordwell, 1986; Forster, 1985; Todorov, 1981). Understanding of a narrative then is naturally examined taking the reconstruction of causal links into consideration. While there is some controversy regarding the status of causality in narrative understanding, there is no doubt about the primordial function of causality in narrative understanding.

If one accepts the claim that interpretation of a narrative depends to a considerable extent on the reader/viewer's input, and consequently a narrative can be legitimately interpreted in multiple ways, it means that the differences of interpretation should be traced back to the most basic elements of interpretation, i.e. the causal links between the events. It is very unlikely, that he reader/viewer's side of the interpretation does not concern construction of the basic logical structure of the narrative.

Narrative theory predicts that *the viewer's activity is essentially directed by the clues provided by the narrative flow* regarding the questions: who, what, when and why. Basic similarities of interpretations of narratives support the claim that narrative clues in fact have a considerable role in the interpretation. We do not know, however, to what extent the viewer's interpreting activity may overwrite those clues. In other words, we don't know what is the respective role of the clues of narrative construction, and what role the viewer's personal traits play in the causal construction of the narrative, which is the basis of a narrative's interpretation. The aim of this research is to assess by empirical means the weight of one side and that of the other in interpretation in the dimension of causal inferences.

*Psychoanalytic theory*

To give a brief overview, we chose Norman N. Holland's transactional model of the reception of the reception of the work of art to give a brief overview, because this was one of the first attempts which developed a coherent explanatory model of the reception process on the basis of the results and concepts of psychoanalytic literary criticism.

Holland's views interfered with the analytic practice of new criticism as it left the problem of the origins of different readings in the case of the same literary work of art uncovered. Changing his focus from the comparison of different readings of a single work of art to examining responses of the very same reader to different pieces of literature and film, he worked out a model of the unconscious fantasies of the reader. Besides being suitable for empricial tests, the model is also advantageous in providing an integrative theoretical framework for the process of interpretation, while it utilises concepts of various phases of psychoanalysis towards a coherent system (1976/1998), cognitive psychology, the identity theories developed in the sixties, and the questionnaire method of personality psychology (Kann, 1984).

He states that the reader takes possession of his environment, the work of art in a structured way matching his identity, and recreates his own adaptive and defensive mechanisms using the options offered by the text. So the chance arises that the reader can project his unconscious fantasies into the work of art, which take shape in the interpretation as intellectual and moral meaning in a form acceptable for the reader and the society. The model of interpretation referred to under the acronym DEFT, summarised by the quote 'interpretation recreates identity' explores the question what the contents of the projected fantasies are: the identity theme of the reader, which evolves on the basis of

the early dual mother-child union according to what the infant means for the mother, and later defines the acts of the individual as a central organising principle.

Thus the relation to a work of art is defined by the unconscious need of maintaining and representing the relational pattern to the primary caregiver, which for the interpreter is necessarily unapproachable, and for the observer can only be grasped by the thematic repetitions in responses to different works of art. That, on the other hand, can be examined by the analysis of the text for the scholar of literature, unveiling the central theme of the individual in the different interpretations. Thus interpretation is a text which articulates the person's identity theme or the pattern of the relation to reality.

In literary criticism the theories adopting the terminology of object-relational theory (e.g. Rudnytsky, 1993) also suppose the primer identity, the patterns of early mother-child relation to be a major force in the background of the emergence of aesthetic experience, nevertheless they relate it to mediational mechanisms such as the ability of symbol formation. During the development of the individual, symbol formation, as the product of the transitional phase, bears the function of handling the frustration of the infant in its relation to the mother and integrating the fragments of experience (Klein, 1999).

Looking at the readings of poetry based on the aesthetic experience this theory indicates a number of consequences. By putting the stress on identifying the mechanism of symbol formation instead of particular symbols, it leaves a lot of space for executing a structural interpretation of the text, pushing the analysis of contents into the background. On the level of theory, this change of stress is expressed by the criticism of Christopher Bollas against the notion of identity theme as defined by Holland: the aesthetic experience of the beholder does not lie in the reaction to the content of the work of art, but in the pleasure of the reader in how the aesthetic framework of the text transforms and contains its own content. Because according to Bollas the aesthetic moment is "A spell that holds self and other in symmetry and solitude, time crystallizes into space, providing a rendezvous of self and other (text, composition, painting) [...] provides the person with a generative illusion of fitting with an object, evoking an existential memory" (1993, 40). This experience has another important function in addition to the one of recalling the early memories: the opportunity of a corrective experience for forming and transforming the content of the self by the environment, the work of art provides the uncanny pleasure of being held by its form. In the thoughts above some of the elements of the therapeutic influence of the works of art emerge described by terms of the object relation theory, thereby posing the question not as the interpretation of the imprint of the reader but rather as whether the aesthetic experience can have a corrective affect, for instance in shaping the fragmented self of people in a state of psychosis.

Both psychoanalytic models predict that the *viewers react to the work of art in their personal ways* according to their early relational experiences, although object-relational theory admits that *the work of art can have an integrative effect on the viewers' selves*.

Summarizing the expectations of narrative theory and psychoanalytic theories discussed above our main question is to what extent the structure of a work of art and/or the character of the viewer determine coherent representation being made during the process of reception? Is the process of reception of a work of art "only" a projection of our personality/identity theme or there is an opportunity for corrective self-experience?

## METHOD

### *Antecedent*

In 2004-2005 a research was conducted by a team led by Tamás Tényi and Antal Bókay at the Psychiatric and Psychoterapeutic Clinic of the Medical Faculty of the University of Pécs (PTE ÁOK), into interpretations of the poem *Füst* (Smoke) by Attila József by people living with psychic

problems. The original aim of the team was 'to look for reception positions during our research involving psychiatric patients which in one way or another tear up or belay the net of grammatical order of understanding of the text, the cases of normal reading and the subjective-rhetorical modus vivendi of the construction of meaning' (Papp, Bókay, & Tényi, 2005). This focus incorporates problems such as the nature of individual interpretations of literary works of art being formed on the basis of personal life experience versus the field of interpretation of a poem as defined for the reader within the borders of the given text; furthermore the use of interpretational responses to works of art as tools of diagnostics from the viewpoint of psychiatry.

In our qualitative analysis, based on the theory of N. N. Holland (1975) we have formed six case studies by contrasting the psychiatric anamnesis on the one hand and the different interpretations of the poem on the other (Papp, Bókay, & Tényi, 2005). *Füst* is a symbolic poem, it contemplates the origins of human existence and provides an artistic statement of the ways of shaping personal identities (Papp, 2005). This article also presumed that it evokes the functioning of symbolisation processes taking shape in the context of early mother-child relations. These processes differ from "normal" in the case of people living with chronic psychiatric problems, for whom it will not be without problems to interpret the poem just as other relationships in their lives.

Personal reactions to the poem clearly reflected the life themes and world view of the reader, furthermore the reception experience, the distorted object-relational patterns of the interpreters could also be mapped in the background, which the experimenting team examined along the lines drawn by Ogden on the typology of the psychopathology of symbol formation (1985/2004).

Because these results were quantitatively not valuable, another experiment was designed in 2009 with the more specific aim of becoming able to give an integrative, critical answer to different psychological approaches, particularly psychoanalysis, the psychology of personality and cognitively oriented researches, regarding the process of reception. According to the authors' view a joint application of individual interpretations of different works of art, autobiographical episodes and personality tests may bring us nearer to detecting the psychological factors of constructing meaning behind the different readings and positions of reception, thereby counterbalancing those schools of reception which underline the historical tradition, conventions, cultural and social circumstances.

### *Experiment: Participants*

Participants were 26 voluntary students mainly studying film part-time or full-time from ELTE University Budapest (19 people completed the whole procedure, 8 men, 11 women). Their age ranged from 19 to 42 years (average age: 26,3 years). Students participated in this experiment for credit-compensation, but did not receive individual feedback on their results.

### *Procedure*

The film "The Man without a Past" by Kaurismaki (2002), which is also centered around the problem of identity formation, was showed to 26 students, who were asked to make running, 'online' comments on the film to identify the processes of the formation of meaning, by way of continuously dictating every question, comment, conclusion, remark in connection with the story that they had into a sound recording device during screening. To avoid the interference of sounds they listened to the film's sound via headphones. After having completed the viewing of the film they were asked to write down the storyboard of the film. Two days later they answered questions about the film. At the same time they filled out psychological tests so that differences of causal attribution, eventually due to psychological differences, could be observed. They also had to interpret the poem *Füst* written by Attila

József, and recall personal life events as part of a narrative interview to detect individual patterns in their experiences about the world and themselves. The interview was also sound recorded.

*Equipment*

The experiment consisted of three major parts, each required different equipment. In the film-viewing part we used the film 'The Man without a Past' by Kaurismaki (2002), which is also centered around the problem of identity formation, was shown sound registering devices and headphones.

The test questions after viewing the film included demographic characteristics (such as gender, age, level of education, profession) and specific questions examining the different ways the viewers understood and completed the storyboard of the film.

In the interview part we attempted to detect whether any other remarks or ideas in connection with the film, particularly with those parts they might not have understood, emerged since they have seen it. Then followed the narrative interview part with seven personal life events following László's method (László & Ehmann, 2004) to select thematically specific life episodes which reflect certain cognitive, emotional and relational characteristics of the narrator. We asked the persons to tell stories from their lives on the topic of loss and achievement, an unexpected event, a good and a bad story with an important person, and an episode they would do another way. These personal stories are supposed to reflect the ways the narrator makes coherent mental representations of his/her life events either positive or negative.

The participants also had to complete psychological tests, which were selected in order to test the effect of personality traits, attachment style and cognitive characteristics on the reception of the work of art.

The Big Five personality traits are usually measured in experimental aesthetic researches, where an overall personality picture of the beholder is relevant. We used the Big Five Questionnaire (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Borgogni, 1993, translated and adapted into Hungarian by Rózsa, Kő, & Oláh, 2005), which assesses Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.

The early mother-child experience, namely the attachment style underlying the aesthetic pleasure was assessed in the experiment by The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire (ECR-R, Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000), which comprises two scales: the attachment-related avoidance and the attachment-related anxiety, characteristic of the person in emotionally intimate relationships.

More specifically, we examined the role of causality in the meaning making process, the capacity of constructing a coherent representation of a work of art, which is supposed to be related with the Locus of Control personality orientations (Rotter, 1966) and the Sence of Coherence (Antonovsky, 1987). The first refers to a person's belief about what causes his/her life events: the consequences of his/her own efforts or rather caused by powerful people, fate, or chance. The latter questionnaire describes a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement (ibid). The questionnaire consists of three scales: Comprehensibility, Manageability and Meaningfulness.

We also presumed that making coherent representations of novels or films requires a certain capacity of Working Memory. We used Digit Span (Jacobs, 1887, translated and adapted into Hungarian by Racsmány, Lukács, Németh, & Pléh, 2005), Listening Span (Daneman & Blennerhassett, 1984 translated and adapted into Hungarian by Janacsek, Tánczos, Mészáros, & Németh, 2009) and Corsi Cube (Lezak, 1995) tests for evaluating the persons' working memory capacity.

## RESULTS

Our first question was to what extent does the structure of a work of art and/or the character of the viewer determine the coherent representation being constructed during process of interpretation?

Trying to find an answer each persons' comments and narrative interviews were written down literally except from hemmings and repetitions of words derived from looking for the right expressions. The questions of the interviewer and the direct follow-up questions were also eliminated. We have interpreted each text from the viewpoint of one particular dimension of cohesion, namely causality, according to Graesser, Singer, and Trabasso's categories of inferences constructed during narrative text comprehension (1994). Therefore cohesion was indicated by the number of causal antecedents (the inference is on a causal chain between the current explicit event and previous ones), causal consequences (the inference is on a forecasted causal chain predicted on the basis of the current event), superordinate goals (the inference is the agent's motivation) and author's intents (the inference is the author's attitude or motive in writing) in the texts.

According to narrative theory most "normal" viewers react in *a similar way* to causal cues in a work of art and this pattern has a sequential structure determined by the work of art. In contrast, psychoanalytic theory claims that the viewers react *in their personal ways* according to their early relational experiences, therefore the reactions will not follow any pattern during the film.

To test these predictions we divided the storyboard of the film into 7 sequences (see Table 1) and counted the number of causal inferences given by the 20 participants for each film-sequence (as shown in Figure 1). Then we used analysis of variance (ANOVA), for testing differences of means among the sequences ($p$=0,028; $F$=3,231; $df$=3,06). The significant $F$-ratio tells that at least some of the differences among the means are probably not caused by chance, but rather by causal inferences of the viewers' responses to specific film sequences. To isolate which means differ significantly, Bonferroni's post hoc test was conducted. The results indicate that significant differences are between the 1-3 and 1-5 pairs of means. It means that Sequence 3 and Sequence 5 provoke significantly the most causal inferences independently of the viewers' cognitive and personality traits or relational patterns.

TABLE 1

*A summary of the sequences of the film*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0:00-03:12 | In the train | The man is beaten up, amnesia |
| 2 | 03:25-07:00 | Wakes up | A family adopts him |
| 3 | 07:40-23:30 | The woman nurses him | He rents a container |
| 4 | 23:39-36:51 | Cleans up | Gets a job |
| 5 | 37:10-45:55 | Gets a dog | Kisses Irma |
| 6 | 46:19-1:12:56 | Suggests rock 'n' roll to the band | The police recognize him |
| 7 | 1:13:47-1:28:27 | He visits his ex-wife | Goes back to Irma |

Our second question was to what extent do the participants' responses fit into the causal pattern of the film given by the mean of this particular sample? If there is deviation, is it caused by non-understanding or personality traits?

To test these questions the personal deviation from the mean pattern was computed into a dependent variable, and an analysis of linear regression was conducted to isolate the specific personality and cognitive traits that explain the differences in causal inferences. Table1 shows the significant results of linear regression both for a general personal deviation and for each sequences.

FIGURE 1

*Sequence (jelenet) 3 and 5 of the film provoke higher causal inference reactions of the viewers*

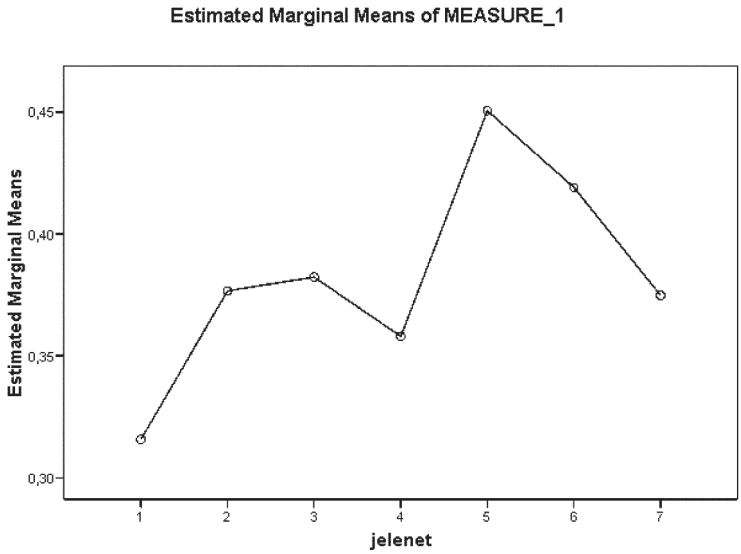


TABLE 2

*Significant personality traits underlying the variances in responses to each sequence*

| | | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | *t* | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dependent Variable | Personality characteristic | *B* | Beta | Tolerance | VIF |
| General Personal Deviation | *Attachment Related Anxiety (ARA)* | -,065 | -,448 | -2,067 | ,054 |
| Deviation Sequence 2 | *Impulse control* | *,014* | ,537 | 2,624 | ,018 |
| Deviation Sequence 5 | Age | ,011 | -,457 | -1,941 | ,071 |
| | Gender | ,176 | ,481 | 2,119 | ,051 |
| | *ARA* | *-,111* | -,609 | -2,469 | ,026 |
| Deviation Sequence 6 | *ARA* | *-,132* | -,616 | -3,165 | ,006 |
| | Causal relations in life narratives | 7,216 | ,522 | 2,682 | ,016 |
| Deviation Sequence 7 | *ARA* | *-,083* | -,481 | -2,264 | ,037 |

According to our results Attachment Related Anxiety (ECR-R) and Impulse Control (BFQ) gave an explanation for the individual differences in causal inferences. Attachment Related Anxiety shows the extent to which people are secure or insecure about their partner's availability and responsiveness (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000), correlated with the number of causal inferences negatively in Sequence 5, Sequence 6 and Sequence 7, while Impulse Control related to the number of causal inferences significantly in Sequence 2 (see Table 2).

The results do not support the hypothesis that the proper understanding of a narrative, tested by a question ('Has there been any part of the film you did not understand? If yes, please write it down'), correlates with the number of causal inferences in the narrative ($n$=20 $r$=0,036 $p$=*ns*).

Our third question was whether the interpretation of a work of art is 'only' the projection of our identity theme or the work of art has an integrative effect on the readers. We analysed the personal narratives, which were interrupted by the task to interpret the poem *Füst*. A paired sample T-test was used to compare the means of causal relations in the life-stories, which were the indicators of personal coherence, before and after interpreting the poem *Füst*. The higher the number of causal inferences in personal narratives after interpreting the poem would be, the more integrative effect of the poem could be detected. The results ($t$=0,503; $df$=18; $p$=0,621; *ns*) do not support the hypothesis that the work of art has an integrative effect on the interpretor.

## CONCLUSIONS

Contrary to the predictions of narrative theory most respondents gave only a few (Sequence 3 and 5) significantly matching responses in the narrative. The rest of the responses are evenly distributed throughout the narrative. Nevertheless, highly matching responses partly match the existing dramaturgical or narrative segmentation. Sequence3 features a new beginning in the narrative, where we receive information for the first time about the consequence of the attack on the hero at the beginning of the film (amnesia), about his new environment and about his decision to start a new life. He also meets a woman, which awakens expectations in the viewers to a romantic relationship. Sequence 5 gives resolutions of the questions raised in Sequence 3: the hero gets his first salary, which forms a basis of his new life and his romantic relationship completed with Irma.

There are at least two personality factors that significantly correlate with the causal thinking activity during film viewing: Attachment Related Anxiety and Impulse Control. This set of results supports Holland's reception theory in that we relate to a work of art the same way as we relate to other people. On the other hand the results stress the importance of the capacity of emotional self-regulation, which emerges in the course of the first years of life in relation to the primary caregiver, and also directs emotion-related cognition.

Proper understanding does not seem to direct the causal thinking activity, but we do not know much about the effective understanding yet, and nothing about non-conscious causal understanding. Our research left open the questions to what extent effective understanding relates to conscious causal inferences and how it is possible to examine unconscious causal perception.

All this suggests that viewers' responses are not directed, only enabled by the narrative structure, and the actual response is also dependent on the individual viewer's relational and emotional pattern. Therefore it is worth to investigate the reception of the work of art further in an integrative theoretical framework, because neither narrative theory nor psychoanalysis alone can give an appropriate explanation for personality-based and work of art-determined interpretations.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 49-57**

# Norman Holland's 'Meeting Movies' applied to Cameron Crowe's 'Elizabethtown'

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ABSTRACT

*In* Meeting Movies (2006) *Norman Holland claims that by "meeting" the movies that we have formed an intimate connection with, we can meet ourselves. That is, have a more complete notion of our unique identity theme. The ability to understand one's unique identity theme, a common topic in Holland's work, has never been more relevant than it is today, with the borders between the real and the virtual, the concrete and abstract, even the rational and irrational becoming increasingly blurred. Holland's theories will be examined against a background of scientific research currently being carried out in the areas of the neurobiology, neuroplasticity, cognition and neurocinematics. To conclude the paper, an application of Holland's free associative method will be presented.*

Holland began *Meeting Movies*, his only complete book dedicated to film analysis, by alluding to the role that movies had played in the lives of those who matured into adulthood during the twentieth century. This could be considered as an unusual tone for a scholar who had dedicated most of his academic effort to literary analysis but, as one progresses through this volume, one understands that Holland pursues much more than the sharing of academic achievements in this work; it could be argued that he is looking for a window that will allow his readers to understand what is happening in their minds when they connect with a film.

Holland wrote, "Growing up in the twentieth century, we have lived lives entwined with movies." (Holland, 2006; 11) Contextualizing this statement, Holland explains the manner in which films and movie theatres were central to his own personal development and living experience (rather than his academic journey) thus preparing the reader for a work that will, in its own manner, prove to be quite private. Despite his lifelong interest in cinema, as already mentioned, most of Norman Holland's academic work was based on an analysis of literary texts. However, in the 1990s, Holland started to present papers on film, including "Seeing Huston's *Freud"* (1994), "*8 1/2* and Me" (1996),

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and "Hitchcock's *Vertigo*: One Viewer's Viewing" (1996). These essays acted as precursors to Holland's *Meeting Movies,* and all appeared as chapters in the ensuing book, albeit in an adapted form that encompassed Holland's new, more personal analysis.

The quotations "Movies happen in us" and "As some literary critics say nowadays, we do not read the book, it reads us. I think that what they mean is, as we read something, be it a story, film, or play, we find feelings and thoughts within ourselves we would not otherwise have found" (Holland, 2006; 12) set the tone for *Meeting Movies*. Familiarity with Holland's earlier work means that forceful declarations like those above are unsurprising, and could be seen as an extension of Holland's vision of the fictional world offered both by films and books as transitional and transformational objects (Holland, 2000). However, I do believe that those assertions also illustrate that in *Meeting Movies*, Holland desires more than a simple transfer of a reader response technique to film analysis. He aspires to investigate the manner in which the narrative of the other, when told through film, can influence and develop the viewer's individual narrative of self, especially when there is an intimate connection between film and viewer. As one progresses through Holland's analysis of the eight films reviewed, from "Casablanca" to "Shakespeare in Love", one sees Holland using free associative analysis to achieve just this knowledge of his own self narrative. His free associative film analysis also allows him to understand psychological blockages that formed over the years in his unconscious, because of his living experience.

As one travels through the chapters of *Meeting Movies,* Holland takes his reader on a journey of discovery into the author's very inner being, and generously shares the advantages that this excursion brought to his own life. By providing an intimate account, supported by scientific expertise and academic training, he signposts a path that can be followed by others. He also convincingly illustrates how a more complete knowledge of this intimate connection between the viewer and the transitional object (the film he or she has connected with) can enhance the development of the individual mind.

As Holland's association in *Meeting Movies* is always linked to specific film sequences, I believe it can be construed as a form of conditioned association as defined by Fromm (1955). Erich Fromm supported the concept of conditioning association to specific events and immediate stimuli, rather than using open-ended and general questions to illicit associative responses. He defended that, though conditioned association can be more disturbing to the patient during the immediate period of the consultation, it yields more constructive outcomes as it produces more direct and focused results. It also avoids the repetitive downward spirals that unconditioned free association sometimes provokes. Fromm even went so far as to claim that this type of conditioned association had been Freud's true objective.

Holland discussed films that covered large extensions of his total living experience, from his teenage years in World War II America, through his twenties, thirties and later years. He referred to the fact that these "old friends" remained static (but not always), while other factors and relationships changed. He also demonstrated how unique identity themes can be fixed, while still allowing variations. This concept of a central unaltered identity theme is a principal feature of the body of Holland's work. In *5 Reader's Reading* (1975), he employed Lichtenstein's identity theory as the foil against which he interpreted different readers' divergent free associative responses to the same literary texts. According to Lictenstein, identity themes do not change much throughout life, but the variations lived on those themes may vary widely because of different circumstances, like variations on a theme in a symphony. From this perspective, the course of peoples' lives may change because of varying external realities, growth and experiences (for example they may marry, have children, stay single and childless, leave school without a high school diploma and work in a blue collar job all their lives or get a college education and have an international career), but the identity themes, or inner personality traits remain constant (Lichtenstein, 1961).

Throughout his work, Holland, like Lichtenstein, supported the notion that there are no good or bad identity themes and that they, of themselves, do not determine the outcome of the individual's life. However, being aware of them and involving them in decision-making can play a vital role in the

individual's feeling of self-worth and self-appreciation. In *Meeting Movies,* Holland provided a path that can assist this process of increased self-awareness within the current social paradigm, where the boundaries between the real and the virtual are becoming increasingly blurred and it is more and more difficult to hear one's inner voice because of the constant external "noise" arising from the unremitting bombardment with varied and useless superficial facts. This is particularly relevant today, as even cursory research into mental health studies shows that young adults are becoming increasingly more susceptible to the global plague of depression. Despite increased efficiency in diagnosis and treatment, depression levels are growing exponentially worldwide. It is now the fourth leading cause of the global disease burden (Hyman, 2006) and in the 15 to 44 age category, it is the second most common cause of DALY (disability adjusted life years) worldwide, affecting 121 million people globally (WHO, 2008).

*Meeting Movies* had a three-fold appeal for me. Firstly, because Holland went beyond the imparting of a theoretical opinion and demonstrated the manner in which he adapted free association for his purpose, he provided a comprehensive model that can be easily followed. Secondly, Holland believed that film and literary analysis should use the whole mind, and not just be limited to the scope of the rational, hence his use of free association to tap into the unconscious as well as the cognisant. Thirdly, Holland extended conditioned association to the selection process for the films analysed. This meant that some of the films reviewed in *Meeting Movies* are not classics; a few are even, as Holland self-effacingly describes them, "just a bit of fluff". I really appreciated his defence of the idea that a movie does not have to be a great film, or a classic to be significant, it just needs to connect with a viewer and this connection will make it a work of magnitude for that person. I believe film, as a popular art form should be available for appreciation with little or no peer censorship. However, its stratification into different categories like classics, author films, cult film, independent films, even genre interferes with this fluidity.

In "The Mind and the Book" (2000), Holland had proposed that the role of literary criticism should not merely be to help the reader understand the literary work, but also the unique relationship that is created between the reader and the book, due not only to the literary object itself, but also to the innate nature of the reader's mind. When he described a book as both a transitional and transformational object, he indicated a strong belief in the dynamic and interactive nature of the physical brain and the fictional world provided by literature and later film. In *Meeting Movies,* Holland further extended that avenue of thought, indicating a sort of "plastic" interface between the reader's mind and the fictional world provided by a book or a film, especially when there is a certain synergy between the two. "As someone has remarked, that screen spread out in front of us in the darkened theatre with the audience shuffling and snuffling around us is really a layer of our own cortex. To meet a movie is to meet oneself, and that is what I am inviting you to do" (Holland, 2006; 14). Such statements demonstrate Holland's belief that when the unique relationship between film and viewer is understood, the viewer has not only an increased awareness of his own unique identity themes, but also can enter a process of change and development.

In *Changing Minds* (2004), after extended observation of scenarios where adults have changed their core opinions on issues central to their existence, Howard Gardner concluded that it is quite difficult for adults to do this. He points to seven levers that are normally involved in this process of transformation, the most important of which is "resonance". Resonance implies that the new idea harmonises with an internal desire that has been growing in the individual to change. The concept of resonance is echoed by Holland's suggestion that, conditioned association should be applied to films with which the viewer had formed a particular connection therefore, one could consider that a form of this resonance exists between the viewer and the ideas expressed in the film narrative he/she associated with. Within this context, the synergy between viewer and film narrative could imply a predisposition for change and/or provide a means to listen to an inner voice that had been silenced by external noise or social conventions.

My work with young people aged between eighteen and twenty-five was one of the reasons that Holland's suggestions – that any film can be significant as long as it connects with a viewer in an

intimate fashion and that meeting movies we meet ourselves – struck a chord with me. At the time my students were mostly undergraduate working in non-literary areas. However, over the years, I came to understand that films were very important to many of them, leading them to introspection and often re-evaluation of opinions. I also noticed, merely as a spectator, that, students who watched films regularly and had the habit of discussing them, appeared to have better coping skills and were less vulnerable to outside pressures than others who did not have this habit. Initially, I thought these students' inherent characters allowed them both to enjoy film and cope better with life. However, considering Holland's theories, that viewers could become more conscious of unique identity themes and adjust inappropriate opinions through increased awareness of interaction with films that had significance for them, I began to wonder if these students' involvement with film (though it could not be described as conditioned association as such) was allowing them to make life choices that were more appropriate for their individual personalities. I began to question also if these students' extended exposure to the fictional worlds that they connected with was not also increasing their coping skills in a generalised fashion and thus reducing anxiety levels.

The students normally watched a wide spectrum of films – some good, some bad, some indifferent – but there was always one or more films that brought a different sparkle or wistfulness to the eye, as well as an articulate expression of feelings and personal thought. I decided to carry out a cursory study in order to quantify, in some way, the interaction that was taking place between a "preferred film" and its viewer's state of mind. I asked students to write briefly on their feelings about a film that they had "connected" with. I had expected fairly general replies, but I was surprised to receive really personal answers like "it lets me breathe", "it made me change my point of view, and made me change my way of thinking", even "What I learnt from that movie was that when you have dreams you need to believe in them deeply and in yourself, you need to fight for what you want and for your life no matter how crazy it may seem". I realised at this stage that there was something quite profound going on in my students' minds when they connected with particular films.

The students' responses led me to consider the advantages of being able to capitalise on these rare thoughts and extend the feelings they carried beyond the immediate circumstance of watching or discussing the movies, one of Holland's aims in *Meeting Movies.* I considered that this transference could indeed enhance coping skills and reduce anxiety levels, two of the conditions vital to developing a healthy mind and making appropriate life choices.

The premise that mental health is dependent on an accurate perception of self is generally accepted by medical health experts, as illustrated by the favourable reception that Aaron Beck and his associates received when they proposed, in *The Cognitive Theory of Depression* (1979), that depression was caused by defective cognitive triads, that is, the individual's erroneous perspective of self, relationships with others and future prospects. The fact that this theory was founded on extensive clinical trials, carried out in various health care facilities over a number of years and supported by the Department of Psychiatry in the University of Pennsylvania, lent credibility to the whole project. The success of cognitive therapy for the treatment of depression focuses around a talking psychotherapy that concentrates on the counsellor confronting and correcting patients' flawed thought constructs related to their defective cognitive triad. I believe it is possible to consider that faulty cognitions regarding others and the future are laid down because patients have an inaccurate image of self.

Despite their differences, parallels can be seen between Holland's and Beck's work because both regard an awareness of the self as central to the health of the individual. While Beck works with the clinically depressed and concentrates on "cognitions of self" and his therapy revolves around a certain quantifying and appreciation of the characteristics and abilities of this self, Holland uses conditioned association to increase awareness of self. As already mentioned, in *5 Readers Reading* (1975) he adopted Heinz Lichtenstein's identity theory (1961) as the filter through which he understood and built psychological profiles for five readers' based on their readings of various literary texts.

However, though awareness of unique identity themes is a common factor in Holland's work, there is a definite progression in application of his techniques. *5 Readers Reading* is designed to exhibit a theory and requires a certain understanding of both Freud and Lichtenstein's work. *Know*

*Thyself* (Holland & Schwartz, 2008) illustrates the manner in which Holland and Schwartz working in cooperation with students in the classroom used associative literary criticism to produce psychological profiles. However, though *Meeting Movies* can be best understood if the reader has an awareness of Holland's previous work, it offers an intuitive and simple model that any reader can apply to film analysis.

In our current global environment, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to listen to one's own inner voice and have an accurate knowledge of self. Therefore, any process that assists self-discovery and development is very relevant today. Especially if this permits the individual to understand him/herself better, in a personal fashion, consolidating the value of individual thought and conviction, within an acceptable social consciousness. If one considers Beck's claims that depression is caused by inaccurate cognitions of self, relationships and the future, one could suggest that depressed individuals are unaware of their unique identity themes and as a consequence make life choices not aligned with these themes but according to acceptable generalised social patterns. These may not suit personal character traits. Perhaps Holland's approach could be adapted in some way to prevent high-risk groups from entering the downward spiral of depressive thought patterns.

With this notion in mind, I decided to put Holland's proposals into practise to try to meet a movie that I had connected with in order to extend and deepen the positive experience of watching favourite films beyond the actual viewing time frame. My associative choice fell to Cameron Crowe's *Elizabethtown* (2005). *Elizabethtown* did not begin as a favourite film of mine and it definitely fits into the category of "a bit of fluff". It was actually one of my teenage daughter's preferred movies, but as I watched it with her, I began to form a close synergy with that film.

*Elizabethtown* and I connected in two manners, and I was curious to determine the significance of these. First, the more I watched the film, the more the initial frames bothered me, so much so that I would arrange a distraction so that I would be doing something to divert my attention from the scenes. The other meaningful sequences for me showed the final cross-state road trip, which always left me with a sense of hopefulness and good will. In addition, I appreciated the film's humour, which prevented it from becoming merely moralistic. Finally, I was happy to review this film because I liked Holland's proposal that any film can be significant, as long as it is meaningful to one viewer.

Holland began his analysis of the films he met in *Meeting Movies* by reading background criticism on them. After studying and watching the films intellectually, he sat and re-imagined them letting his mind free associate in order to get beyond the intellectual experience of watching the film, thus tapping into the manner in which that particular movie affected his psyche. Holland recorded minutely the thoughts and associations re-living the film sequences provoked in his mind, thus unleashing the whole force of the mind.

As *Elizabethtown* is not a very well known film, I think it is appropriate at this point to explain it a little as Holland did with similar films. In a nutshell, it is a slice of life, a chapter of an ongoing book. No issues are resolved during the film and the principal character's physical life is very similar at the beginning and the end; however, he has changed his core attitudes and opinions and because of this is better able to deal with adverse situations. The film explores the importance of perspectives and personal relationships. It proposes that the concepts of success and failure are relative rather than absolute qualities, determined by personal and collective perspectives. It contrasts the interpersonal relationships associated with the corporate world and close knit family circles played out respectively against the backgrounds of life in urban and rural America.

The film begins with a large truck backing into a loading bay and, when the warehouse staff opens the back doors, the viewer just sees stacks of shrink-wrapped shoes on pallets stamped "RETURNED". One warehouse worker says to another, in a tone that leads one to understand that this is a recurring occurrence, "Welcome back boys".

The film tells the story of Drew (Orlando Bloom), a successful shoe designer moving up in the corporate world of Mercury Worldwide Shoes (some critics saw this company as modelled on Nike and Alec Baldwin's character Phil as a caricature of Phil Knight). The film begins with Drew's bubble of success bursting as his innovative sneaker, the Spasmatica, is being recalled from the market and

the company is set to lose nearly a billion dollars. Drew moves not from success to mere failure, but fiasco. After he is banished from the golden kingdom of Mercury Worldwide Shoes and dumped by his corporate girlfriend, he goes home to commit suicide. Shedding himself of the worldly goods provided by his success, he plans a designer death. However, after the first attempt fails, he is interrupted by his sister calling to let him know that their father (Mitch) has died and that he (Drew) will have to go back to Mitch's hometown to have the body cremated, because Drew is the responsible one.

This scene illustrates a characteristic of the film, Drew reacts to unfavourable incidents by playing the role he feels more appropriate for the situation. For example, in his suicide scene he plays the tragic hero. Drew's role-playing is interrupted by real life, in this case a real tragedy – his father's death. So Drew picks up a few spartan items of clothing and sets off for Elizabethtown, having received varied and detailed instructions from his mother, Holly (Susan Sarandon). On the night flight, where he is the lone passenger, Drew meets flight attendant Claire (Kirsten Durst) and she engages him in conversation. The following morning after various detours and mishaps Drew finds Elizabethtown and a warm extended family that he had not really known before.

Over the next few days aided by Claire, he manages to take care of the burial and memorial arrangements and reconcile his mother and his father's extended family. More importantly, he also realises that there is more to life than work. As he gets involved in normal life, he realises that he has been living a shadow existence. However, still playing a role – the tragic hero he plans to kill himself when he returns home. It is only Claire's confrontation on this issue that shows him how shallow and full of stereotypes his whole approach to life has been since he joined Mercury Worldwide Shoes.

After the memorial service, Claire gives Drew a detailed roadmap to get home, complete with strategic stopping points and music, so that he will drive, rather than fly, cross-country from Kentucky to Oregon with Mitch's ashes. The road-trip gives Drew time and perspective to regain his life. He drops the masks he has worn, at different stages, throughout the film and embraces his emotions (both happy and sad), confronts his fears about his professional failure and personal shortcomings and decides to live. At the end of the film, Drew meets Claire in a crowded, busting farmers' market, surrounded by people and movement. This place is a total contrast to the opening scenes that occurred in sterile corporate settings, where all human contact was sanitized and superficial.

I will concentrate my analysis on the two parts of the film that affected me most – the opening stills and the road trip. In *Meeting Movies*, Holland recorded his rational criticism in regular print and his *association in italics.* I will follow a similar procedure.

As already mentioned, the film begins with scenes related to the failure of the Spasmatica. The first thing that affected me was the sound of a truck reversing followed by scenes of a closed white truck backing into a loading bay. Thinking rationally, there is nothing ominous or eerie about this sequence, the only thing that is unusual is the occurrence of such an ordinary scene at this point in the film*, but for some reason this sequence made me feel uneasy and this feeling increased as the scene progressed, especially when the camera pulled back to show a warehouse full of pallets of returned shoes.* Why did I react like this? When I thought about it rationally, I judged my feelings to be completely out of proportion.

Associating with that scene, – *my mind flashed back to a summer (actually the summer of 2003). At the time my husband had a small business with the distribution rights for electronic/electrical goods. When things were starting to go really well, he received a batch of products that tested well but were in fact faulty. Over the following months, all these products were returned and I got to the stage that when I saw or heard a delivery van pull up in front of the warehouse, I would get a sinking sensation in my stomach and feel physically ill.* I realised that my reaction to the film sequence with the returned products was a reflection of this feeling. I thought I had forgotten about that summer, because thankfully we overcame the problem, but I had not, it was still buried in my unconscious, though it was not something I thought about in my day-to-day life.

The association helped me to understand that I had buried my reactions to that particular business problem and pasted over them rather than dealing with them directly and rationally. Armed

with the results of the association, I was able to look at my feelings directly, which then permitted me to eliminate residual and irrational concerns and misconstructions. Yes, it had been a difficult summer and the returned products had assumed a personal dimension for me, because for some unknown reason I assimilated their failure as a personal inadequacy. This gave me blatant evidence of one of my negative identity traits – assuming responsibility for everything that goes wrong. However, reviewing the situation from my present perspective, I could see that I had no responsibility and that I need to be careful about these self- blame tendencies. Also I appreciated that this situation had not affected our long-term stability; if anything, that summer demonstrated that most happenings (unless they are actually life threatening) no matter how dramatic they appear at the time, can be overcome if you keep a cool head. Curiously, after doing the association, I can now watch those scenes without qualms.

The second significant part of the film for me was the road-trip that Claire planned for Drew and his father's ashes. This carefully planned and laid out window in time and space offers Drew, who has been seriously considering suicide throughout most of the film, time to re-evaluate his life and determine how he is going to re-direct it. Even though nothing concrete is achieved or granted to Drew as he drives from state to state, the viewer sees him deciding to live, not play a role, (corporate executive, tragic hero, faithful son, mourning son, tragic lover) as he has done throughout most of the film. Because he has changed his perspective, though as yet he does not have the girl, a job, a planned future and only a rental car, one feels that Drew is on the right path to get his life back at last. As he chooses to enjoy the physical trip, he is also gaining strength to participate in the greater journey – life. Drew genuinely laughs, cries, faces failure by reading the slating magazine articles that had been written about his fiasco and himself, gets nostalgic and comes out in one piece at the end.

The music, the pit stops and lighting are wonderful *and the fake puppy dog smile* (that Drew always wore when he was playing a role) *is gone, banished forever (we hope) as Drew gets in touch with himself again, and I realise too why I enjoy these sequences – I too love the notion of the journey of life – and Drew's road trip and pit stops reminded me of the summer festivals and hitch-hiking trips of my teenage years and early twenties where I never knew who I would meet, but always met new and interesting people. The scenes reminded me that even as a middle-aged settled wife and mother I can still take time out to enjoy the trip that is life and these sequences are in tune with this aspect of my identity and remind me that I need to make time for the unexpected and go with the flow every now and then.* And in the end, Drew gets the girl, he still has the car (even if it's a rental), throws away the shoes, and though he does not have a job, a career or the trappings of wealth and success, he gets his life back.

Did I "meet myself" when I "met *Elizabethtown"* as Holland claimed would be possible? Yes I did, especially if we consider the claim that one of the central objectives in applying free association to literary criticism is "to build on the root meaning of education as a process of self discovery and development" (Schwartz & Holland; 2008, 90). Association helped me to eliminate a negative issue that had become "stuck" in my unconscious. I also learned about a negative aspect of my identity; my willingness or even eagerness to accept blame for situations that are not caused by me – and I understood that I need to be aware of this when evaluating my involvement in specific situations. It also helped me to understand that I should make time to "enjoy the journey of life". I realised that I am not driven solely by a desire for success, though I enjoy achieving goals. I learned that I feel more comfortable in myself when I have time to appreciate where I am going and what I am learning and have time for solid human contacts. So, it is true to say, that meeting *Elizabethtown,* I met myself. I got a clearer view of my identity theme, which allowed me to understand my individual personality. As Holland wrote "Identity themes give us a way of understanding a whole character, (Holland, 1975; 111)". I have tried to incorporate this knowledge in my decision making process since then.

Holland's reflections on the interaction of fictional worlds on the mind and brain, allowing the construction of new physical highways of thought, are echoed by many current scientific publications. In *Evolution in Four Dimensions: Genetic, Epigenetic, Behavioural and Symbolic Variations in the History of Life* (2005), Jablonka and Lamb have affirmed that physical brains and cultures interact over time. In his work *The Music of Life – Biology Beyond the Genome* (2006), systems biologist

Dennis Noble has put forward very coherent proposals demonstrating the respective roles of internal environment and external stimuli on the reading of the genome and thus genetic expression. The psychiatrist Aaron Beck has also demonstrated that new thought constructs have to be repeated many times to allow these to take prominence over previously formed assembles (Beck, 1979).

Research being carried out in neurocinematics is also showing that film can affect brain structures in a very unique manner because of its dynamic and visual nature. On the one hand, Dubin (2009) has produced working models to illustrate the manner in which film can affect the working memory of viewers due to its very nature and Hasson et al (2008) have demonstrated how editing techniques used in modern commercial film production can captivate the viewer's physical brain more than film sequences that are presented without editing. On the other, it has been shown that for plastic change to occur in the brain, the individual must give total attention to the task at hand, a feature that is implicit in both watching a film and applying free association to it (Damasio, 1994; Doidge, 2007; Sapoksky, 2004).

Holland has long proposed that applying free association to film and literary analysis can allow the viewer/ reader to understand his/her own unique identity themes. I believe that this can offer a real advantage to today's society, where the dividing line between the real and imaginary is becoming increasing blurred. Also, the technique explained in *Meeting Movies* does not require punitive methods or complicated technologies; in fact it is quite enjoyable and easy to apply. The potential rewards of applying his method – an expansion of the living experience and an increased awareness and recognition of unique identity themes are quite considerable and relevant within the context of current global health concerns. In addition, Holland's claims are becoming more and more plausible to the academic world because of recent findings in the hard sciences. Perhaps we should look more closely at his work to see if it could be used within our current social context to prevent depressive tendencies.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 59-72**

# Who's prick(l)ling whom in Robert Coover's fiction?

*SUZETTE A. HENKE*[*]

> The child's best-loved and most intense occupation is with his play or games. Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer? (Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" 131).
>
> For though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes, to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's.... [I]t is difficult to judge what we do not share (Woolf 6).
>
> WHAT THE HELL DOES THIS MEAN – !! (Coover *UBA* 210)

## I. THE PLAY OF GENDER

Do males and females play differently? Do they imagine or construct different kinds of games, or engage in similar modes of play with diverse mental and moral strategies in mind? If it be true that the sexes play differently, can such distinctions be extended to the realm of aesthetic play and creative writing? Even to suggest a gender-based criterion for games and play would raise the specter of philosophical essentialism. But if the question is conceptualized in terms of socialization encouraged by the current sex/gender system dominant in western culture, such queries inhabit a different semiotic register. Most parents are familiar with the radical distinction made by toy manufacturers marketing games to male and female children. Boys are bombarded with a startling and ever more technologically innovative array of aggressive playthings – from toy guns, rifles, military mock-ups, grenades, and automatic weapons to Nintendo games depicting vampires swilling blood from the necks of distressed damsels, or "Mortal Combat" war-games in which an electronic man sucks the brains out of his enemy or spits a fire-bomb that incinerates hapless victims. Female children are still interpellated into a hegemonic state apparatus by a dizzying array of baby dolls for cuddling and nurture, or by svelt Barbie dolls that facilitate women's inscription into institutions of commodity fetishism.

It seems clear, from studies conducted by psychologists like Jean Piaget, Eleanor Maccoby, and Carol Jacklin that male and female children bring differently nuanced moral sensibilities to similar competitive practices. In *The Psychology of Sex Differences*, Maccoby and Jacklin argue that the male is, for biological reasons, in a greater state of readiness to learn and display "aggressive behavior,

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basing the argument in part on studies of the relationship between sex hormones and aggression.... Studies of dominance have revealed a greater tendency among males to attempt to dominate one another, and during childhood a boy's aggressiveness has a considerable bearing upon his ability to dominate other boys" (274).

In a chapter on "The Rules of the Game" in *The Moral Judgement of the Child (Le Jugement Moral Chez L'Enfant*), Jean Piaget observes that although boys and girls are similarly enthralled by a kind of "rule mysticism", girls tend to worry less about legal elaborations and to subordinate arbitrary rules to broader emotional and contextual considerations. Girls' games appear to be characterized by a greater degree of tolerance. Female children are generally more flexible in adapting to situational alterations in rules and are inclined to end a game abruptly if someone is likely to feel seriously hurt or demeaned.

Carol Gilligan, in her groundbreaking study *In a Different Voice*, notes wryly that "the sensitivity and care for the feelings of others that girls develop through their play have little market value and can even impede professional success" (10). Ironically, "if a girl does not want to be left dependent on men, she will have to learn to play like a boy" (10). She must, in fact, learn to strategize and deploy a masculine set of competitive practices devised as a warlike model, however ruthless, for corporate success in a capitalist economy. (Consider Donald Trump's reality show, *The Apprentice*, with its infamous *coup de grace.*) Through sex-differentiated game-playing, "boys learn both the independence and the organizational skills necessary for coordinating the activities of large and diverse groups of people.... In contrast, girls' play... fosters the development of the empathy and sensitivity necessary for taking the role of 'the particular other'" (Gilligan 10-11). Gilligan concludes that the psychology of women, "distinctive in its greater orientation toward relationships and interdependence", evidently "implies a more contextual mode of judgement and a different moral understanding" (22), and that both inform male and female strategies of game-playing.

Of course, these findings do not necessarily imply that all female group interaction is benevolent, altruistic, and cosily nurturant. Studies of prepubescent bullying, as well as adolescent clique formation, suggest that girls, when angry, alienated, envious, or annoyed, torment one another through peer group practices of bonding and exclusion, verbal bullying, and vindictive gossip. Eager to define their identities and social popularity through exclusionary practices, adolescent girls can be notoriously "catty" toward females deemed marginal, awkward, nerdy, handicapped, or just plain weird. Such anthropomorphic bullying is uncannily replicated in simian groups like chimpanzees and orangutans. Whereas male orangutans openly challenge and attack competitors vying for social dominance, female simians adopt subtler strategies geared to shun competitors. The effects of such marginalization can be disastrous, even life-threatening, for victims in the wild.

A classic articulation of play theory can be found in Freud's analysis of the infantile *Fort/Da* game in "The Pleasure Principle" (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*). The child relinquishes its role as passive victim and becomes an active player in the scenario of maternal loss by symbolically casting forth a wooden reel at the end of a piece of string, then retrieving it with a joyous sense of exuberance and delight. Freud ascribes the motivation for such compulsory repetition to an impulsive power instinct and to a need, on the part of the child, to re-assert infantile control over the mother's body – a fantasized source of (sexual) pleasure in "*das Kinderspiel*" (*Jenseits* 12). "These reproductions... always have as their subject some portion of infantile sexual life – of the Oedipus complex, that is, and its derivatives" (Beyond 39).

Freud is more specific about the Oedipalization of game and play in the third chapter of *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (*Der Witz*). Tendentious jokes, he suggests, may be classified in three categories: obscene jokes; aggressive or hostile jokes; and cynical jokes, including those that are critical or blasphemous (*Jokes* 115). All three subsets might be linked with the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, insofar as they subvert authority, ventilate hostility, and expose the female body to shameful (seductive) violation. The category of "hostile" jokes would appear to be allied with male aggression: "Brutal hostility, forbidden by law, has been replaced by verbal invective.... By making our enemy small, inferior, despicable or comic, we achieve in a roundabout way the enjoyment of overcoming him – to which the

third person... bears witness by his laughter" (102-103). Such gaming is a transparent simulation of psychic warfare, complete with a complicit audience testifying to its success (Flieger 90-91).

Most clearly associated with the sex-gender system of Oedipal compensation and sexual mastery is Freud's category of the obscene or pornographic joke, curiously labelled *der Zote* or "smut" (*Der Witz* 81). Smut, Freud insists, is male-initiated and female-oriented, i.e., directed by a man toward a particular woman ("*an das Weib*" [*Der Witz* 82]) who sexually excites him and whom he deliberately tries to arouse. "Instead of this excitement the other person may be led to feel shame or embarrassment... Smut is thus originally directed towards women and may be equated with attempts at seduction" (*Jokes* 97). For Freud, pornographic jokes are a product of masculine libido and implicitly serve as instruments of seduction; they are, in fact, manifestations of male exhibitionism. "If the woman's readiness emerges quickly the obscene speech has a short life" (99). If, however, the female object refuses compliance, then "sexually exciting speech becomes an aim in itself in the shape of smut" (99). The male libidinal instinct, frustrated by a female obstacle, will become "positively hostile and cruel" (99).

> Generally speaking, a tendentious joke calls for three people; in addition to the one who makes the joke, there must be a second who is taken as the object of the hostile or sexual aggressiveness, and a third in whom the joke's aim of producing pleasure is fulfilled.... When the first person finds his libidinal impulse inhibited by the woman, he develops a hostile trend against that second person and calls on the originally interfering third person as his ally. Through the first person's smutty speech the woman is exposed before the third, who, as listener, has now been bribed by the effortless satisfaction of his own libido.
>
> And here at last we can understand what it is that jokes achieve.... They make possible the satisfaction of an instinct (whether lustful or hostile) in the face of an obstacle that stands in its way.... The obstacle standing in the way is in reality nothing other than women's incapacity to tolerate undisguised sexuality (Freud, *Jokes* 100-01.)

In Freud's theoretical analysis, all game-playing is implicitly motivated by a frustrated desire for mastery and domination – of oneself, one's environment, or a lost object of Oedipal desire. The joke is, in effect, an instrument of psychic warfare against an enemy, an authoritarian figure, or an inaccessible sexual object. Humor is fuelled by paradigms of conquest and psychological domination, and jokes arise from a male terrain of libidinal hostility. Women, as perverse obstacles to the satisfaction of erotic desire, function as the butt of pornographic humor and suffer the kind of ignominious exposure that gives sexual pleasure to both the (male) joker and his fraternal accomplice. Game-playing, then, can be paradigmatically allied with male dominance and the sex/gender system prevalent in contemporary American and European culture.

Patricia Yaeger notes in *Honey-Mad Women* that although poststructuralist theory has forced us to acknowledge that "sex/gender systems are socially constructed, they are no less potent for this constructedness. To know that we are controlled, our vision altered by the signifying chain, does not mean we can remove ourselves from its meanings" (225). How, Yaeger asks, might women embrace and make auspicious use of the so-called "emancipatory strategies" embedded in humor, when the very semiosis of play "tends to be represented in our culture as a masculine prerogative" (216)? Since play "is an arena of freedom precisely because it undermines coercive boundaries between subject and object", then the masculinization of the gaming instinct has serious consequences for the female authorship of postmodern fiction (216-217). If play is potentially an instrument for both social and linguistic transformation, how might a feminist interpret the emancipatory strategies implicit in carnivalesque genres? In search of a possible answer, Yaeger cites Julia Kristeva's essay on "Psychoanalysis and the Polis", which proposes that the "wise interpreter give way to delirium so that, out of this desire, the imaginary may join interpretive closure" (qtd. in Yaeger 229). But how, one might ask, can a feminist participate deliriously, parodically, or subversively in the violence, traumatic rupture, and implicit misogyny associated with postmodern fabulation?

## II. JOKING WITH ROBERT COOVER

How might a female reader interpret the kind of stylized pornography produced by one of America's most ludic contemporary authors, Robert Coover? The issue is knotty and perplexed. Although one must admire Coover's talent and intellectual verve, a feminist critic might choose to interpret a work like *Spanking the Maid* as a deliberate pastiche both of postmodern praxis and 19th century pornography. According to Jackson Cope, Coover challenges his readers to "discern the interrelationships and the differences, the barriers between fiction and metafiction, between pornography (or ritual) and romance" (34). The novella hinges on a single act of sadomasochistic "intervention" on the part of an aging and impotent master who takes perverse pleasure in repeatedly flagellating his complicitous maid. This sadomasochistic ritual unfolds in an aura of mental confusion, a privileged space in which linguistic slippage undermines cultural inscription. The narrator vaguely remembers something "about scouring, or scourging... and a teacher... who called his lectures 'lechers'" (*SM* 29). Here the slipperiness of discourse dictates a bizarre conclusion: that the scourer shall be scourged, as the lecherous teacher gives corporeal lessons with a stiff phallic rod. Jackson Cope finds in *Spanking the Maid* "nothing kinetic, only pornography simplified into its written essence as repetition. This is pleasure as boredom, a slow enactment of that self-conscious master-slave relationship that is the origin of all original and repetitive enterprises" (55).

*Spanking the Maid* turns on cultural ciphers that suggest a carnivalesque subversion of deeply inscribed power relations: master to servant, male to female, wealthy to impoverished, dominant to submissive, sadistic torturer to masochistic victim. The worn-out rhetoric of Christian submission is parodically recycled in a religious framework of discipline and punishment, whereby the rod of intervention implements the road to behavioral perfection. "True service", the maid tells herself (or has been told), "is perfect freedom" (*SM* 18). The Christian dictum articulated by Dante, "In His will is our peace", undergoes a grotesque distortion when applied to social interaction between maidservant and master. It eerily echoes the fascist motto, "Work makes free", historically emblazoned over the entrance to Holocaust death-camps in Nazi Germany. (This novella, when first published in the *Iowa Review*, was entitled "A Day's Work"). The maid is naively convinced that she is "doing the will of God from the heart" (*SM* 24). The "heart part", however, is deliberately confused with the "hard part" of her *gluteus maximus* (*SM* 66), that Paphian grove purportedly designed by nature to be whipped into submission.

In *Spanking the Maid*, a scene of flagellation and sadomasochistic titillation is compulsively repeated several dozen times, with different transgressions (or none at all) serving as transparent excuses for psychosexual brutality. Both characters in the drama occupy an obscure subject position defined by a game of stylized domination and buttressed by clichés of self-deception. Both protest, mentally and to each other, their mutual lack of responsibility or pleasure. The maid's bottom becomes a *tabula rasa* for the master's inscription of his own dominant ideology on the quivering, submissive flesh of an/other: "Sometimes, ... watching the weals emerge from the blank page of her soul's ingress like secret writing, he finds himself searching it for something, he doesn't know what exactly, a message of sorts, the revelation of a mystery in the spreading flush" (*SM* 86-87). The mystery sought seems to be the illusory bourgeois ego residual in the master's *méconnaissance*, or misrecognition, of his own coherent manhood and simulated potency in the corporeal mirror of his maid's responsive flesh. Relegating woman to the Lacanian position of *objet petit a*, the male attempts to construct a valorized subject position through parodic simulacra of sexual desire that mimic the kind of promises of gargantuan phallic performance touted on internet spam.

As Freud would remind us, sadism bears a "close affinity with instincts of mastery which have no libidinal purpose" (*Civilization* 76). In acts of sadism, the "death instinct twists the erotic aim in its own sense and yet at the same time fully satisfies the erotic urge.... But even where it emerges without any sexual purpose, in the blindest fury of destructiveness... the satisfaction of the instinct is accompanied by an extraordinarily high degree of narcissistic enjoyment, owing to its presenting the

ego with a fulfillment of the latter's old wishes for omnipotence. The instinct of destruction... must, when it is directed towards objects, provide the ego with the satisfaction of its vital needs and with control over nature" (*Civilization* 81). This profile of sadistic release comes close to Freud's description of the carnivalesque in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, wherein the Roman Saturnalia, modern carnival, and primitive festivals are all brought in alignment in terms of their permissive "debaucheries of every kind and the transgression of what are at other times the most sacred commandments.... [T]he abrogation of the [ego] ideal would necessarily be a magnificent festival for the ego" (81).

The subliminal meaning repressed in Coover's texual unconscious emerges, from a Lacanian point of view, as a pageant of postmodern fragmentation – an exposition of the sheer vacuity of linguistic ciphers, cultural ideologies, and images of bourgeois selfhood propped up by archaic and dysfunctional power relations. In his lust to control nature by releasing his own "death instinct" on the corporeal integument of an/other, the master is enslaved to a servant who gradually becomes more taunting and truculent, torturing him with mocking complicity in the sexual/textual power games he ingeniously contrives with the help of religious manuals. The story unfolds as an oft-repeated dream troubling the master's slumbers. Disturbed by his maid in the midst of an incipient erection, he transfers to her in sleep vestigial anger arising from the unconscious – a bizarre lumber-room cluttered with dust and ashes, broken bottles and mangled toys, bulls' pizzles, belts and bloody sheets, rusty razor-blades, a dead fetus, and a frog. The specter haunting him "turns out to be a woman he once knew on the civil surface" (*SM* 99), or a "sybil" service – "like the kind of callipygomancy, speaking loosely" (*SM* 100). She gives him a lecture – or an "elixir" – "on method and fairies, two dew-bejeweled habits you can roast chestnuts over" (*SM* 100).

The maid who bears the brunt of her master's misogynist fantasies – either imaginary or enacted – assures herself that true service constitutes perfect freedom. She could either resist or demur, but does neither. "She is driven by a sense of duty and a profound appetite for hope never quite stifled by even the harshest punishments: this time, today, perhaps it will be perfect" (*SM* 21). Perhaps, finally, her body will successfully reflect the illusion of wholeness and integration that characterizes the concrete (mis)recognition of bourgeois manhood within the Lacanian symbolic register. As Arthur Kroker and David Cook observe in *The Postmodern Scene*, "The body is a power grid, tattooed with all the signs of cultural excess on its surface, encoded from within by the language of desire, broken into at will by the ideological interpellation of the subject, and, all the while, held together as a fictive and concrete unity by the illusion of *misrecognition*" (26). "Postmodern sex", they insist, "has become an immaculate deception" whereby the "mechanical sex of De Sade's fornicating machine has been changed into its opposite: a site for playing out of the thermodynamics of cynical power" (24).

For the purpose of literary elucidation, the relentless, obsessive-compulsive exercises in the text are erased by the final dream sequences of the master, as the novella dissolves into discursive trauma and hallucinatory fragmentation. The display and erasure of sexual fantasy is a typical postmodern strategy for stylizing violence and for laying bare the mechanism of pornographic stimulation and response. The reader, in other words, is ridiculed for his/her prurient interest in a salacious text that proves to be a shapeshifting illusion, an erotic dream that dissolves with daylight and reality, but nonetheless mocks the hypocritical prurience of a literary audience. As Lois Gordon notes, "Coover parodies traditional religion's efficacy through its dependence (or hold) upon a belief in life's higher purpose or *end*" (165). *Spanking the Maid* offers a parody of hegemonic structures shakily supported by religious belief in masterful authority and by a monstrous social system that arbitrarily empowers wealthy, white, aristocratic males. At the same time, this slippery, oscillating text satirizes, through carnivalesque pastiche, the reader's sublimated emotional investment in sadomasochistic titillation. Who, finally, is left holding the rod of imaginary power? And whose suppressed fantasies prove the butt of Coover's pornographic jest?

In *Spanking the Maid*, Coover is practicing what Jean Baudrillard would identify as an aesthetic simulation of hyperrealism: the "endlessly reflected vision: all the games of duplication and

reduplication of the object in detail.... The real is no longer reflected, instead it feeds off itself till the point of emaciation" (Baudrillard 144).

> At the limit of this process of reproducibility, the real is not only what can be reproduced, but *that which is always already reproduced*.... The hyperreal transcends representation... because it is entirely in simulation. The tourniquet of representation tightens madly, but of an implosive madness, that, far from eccentric (marginal) inclines towards the center to its own infinite repetition. Analogous to the distancing characteristic of the dream... this is only the game of censure and of perpetuation of the dream....
>
> There is no more fiction that life could possibly confront, even victoriously – it is reality itself that disappears utterly in the game of reality....
>
> It is thus that for guilt, anguish and death there can be substituted the total joy of the signs of guilt, despair, violence and death... the abolition of cause and effect. (Baudrillard 146-148)

*The Universal Baseball Association*, *Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop*. is another paradigmatic Coover text whose involuted structure moves freely, and frivolously, among various diegetic levels of game-playing. J. Henry Waugh, the novel's (anti)hero, is a 56-year-old accountant akin to James Thurber's Walter Mitty – a timorous white-collar worker whose neurotic fantasy life equips him with a "masterful nature, absolutely narcissistic, self-confident, and independent" (Freud, *Group Psychology* 71). Obsessively devoted to his own ingenious invention, "a baseball game played with dice and charts, a double metonymy, a game substituted for a game" (Cope 35), Henry reduces world history to an "incurable diarrhea of dead immortals" (*UBA* 82). He is well aware that the "perfect game", lodged in the Lacanian imaginary, has always "already sunk away into a kind of unbelievable golden age, long lost, forever inaccessible" (*UBA* 90). Coover's radically playful, male-dominated text is defiantly propelled by misogynous rhetoric, ethnic bias, and sexist/racist clichés. Political correctness is hilariously skewered, as liberal biases are hoisted on Coover's playful petards. The arrogant game-master bears a British appellation reminiscent of an acerbic British author; whereas the more unsavory ruffians in this (melo)drama are caricatured via proletarian dialect and Irish (nick)names like Pappy Rooney and Fennimore McCaffree. Such tags call attention to the text's self-conscious artifice, since Coover, like Henry, is keenly aware that names "could bear the whole weight of perpetuity" (*UBA* 47).

Sexist stereotypes, like ethnic jokes, are prominently on show in Coover's ludic fabulation. As Kathryn Hume points out, the protagonist "shares his athletes' acute awareness of the impermanence of the flesh" and "surrounds himself with the locker-room world and locker-room language, a taboo tongue which excludes women" (130). The most amorous moment in this novel occurs when J. Henry Waugh adopts the fantasy persona of a young and potent pitcher, Damon Rutherford, and scores in that "great old game" of phallic prowess with an aging bar-girl, Hettie Irden – a figure identified by Jackson Cope as a contemporary "Gea-Tellus" and superannuated Molly Bloom (37). In describing the couple's robust efforts at copulation, Coover "subordinates the language of religion, superstition, primitive ritual, and even linguistics to a lengthy and clever sequence in baseball jargon that describes their night of gala and bonanza scoring" (Gordon 36): "And here he comes, Hettie! He's... bolting for home, spurting past, sliding in – POW! Oh, *pow* Henry!.... They laughed softly, hysterically, flowing together. She let go her grip on the ball. He slipped off, unmingling their sweat. Oh, that's a game, Henry! *That's* really a *great* old *game*!" (*UBA* 35).

Henry fears that Hettie, who "invented her own magic version, stretching out as the field, left hand as first base" (*UBA* 35), despite her prodigious talents as erotic playmate, lacks the intellectual acumen necessary to fulfill the role of vice-proprietor of his Baseball Association: "Hettie was probably too unconscious. Whatever she did, it would have to be pretty simple" (*UBA* 41). He substitutes the word "unconscious" for "stupid", in an effort to temper the arrogance of this implicit jibe. When Henry later propositions Hettie without benefit of Damon's imaginary intervention, he knows that their union will be crude and earthy, a macho branding of woman as victim: "Just rear back and burn it in" (*UBA* 170). Less of a whore than Henry imagines, the aged and agitated B-girl

vindictively flings Henry's money back in his face, then bawls with invective: "*Ah, go to hell, you loony bastard!*" (*UBA* 175). And hell is precisely where he is headed, in fictive and fantasmatic terms.

Simply for the sake of amusement and to lift himself from the glooms, Henry devises the grotesque "story of Long Lew Lydell's rape of Old Fennimore McCaffree's spinster daughter in the Knickerbocker dugout in front of five thousand wide-eyed spectaors" (*UBA* 56). This tale of sexual defloration, forcible copulation, scopophilic amusement, and female humiliation is ostensibly salvaged by the couple's shotgun wedding and by a sanguine prediction that the father's masculine honor has remained publicly intact: "McCaffree would be reelected. Raped daughter or no" (57). Sexual violence is merely a diversionary offshoot of locker-room chatter and a *macho* suspension of civilized behavior by irresponsible, sex-starved, postpubescent boys playfully bonding in a baseball dugout. Elsewhere in Coover's Rabelaisian sports fantasy, sex is depicted as a phallic contest of ploughing and seeding, as in the compensatory conception of Brock Jr.'s son, whose birth is ironically contingent on the fateful death of Damon Rutherford:

> Young Brock Jr. was among the absent: he'd bolted for home, ... dragging his missus behind him, and... had he heisted her black skirts, and without even taking time to drop his pants, had shot her full of seed: yes, caught it! she said, and even he felt that germ strike home (*UBA* 93).

Rutherford's maudlin wake inspires other, less connubial sexual activity, including Henry's fantasy of the thrilling gang-bang of a faceless, anonymous female by all the players at Damon's wake. This abject figure functions as a dehumanized and de-subjectivized target of phallic hostility – a woman who is used, abused, and casually discarded: "And oh yes, they seeded her well, they stuffed her so full it was coming out her ears, it was a goddam inundation" (*UBA* 115). In Coover's sports-scene, men control games of accounting and incorporating, while women function as convenient receptacles for prolific male seed. The thematic center of this novel's diegetic play with possible worlds of sport and ritual proves to be the driving force of male master narrative, interchangeable with narratives of male erotic mastery: "POWER and control. In and out" (*UBA* 144). "Aw, shee-*it* now! cracked old Pappy Rooney.... Rooney pinched the lady's bottom for luck, drew a dark ace in the hole: That's it! he chortled, *that's* what they're for!" (*UBA* 160). As Freud acerbically observes of group psychology, it "is only when the affectionate, that is, personal factor of a love relation gives place entirely to the sensual one, that it is possible... for there to be simultaneous sexual acts in a group, as occurs at an orgy" (*Group Psychology* 93). He adds that "homosexual love is far more compatible with group ties, even when it takes the shape of uninhibited sexual impulsions" (95).

In Coover's novel, team sport clearly compensates for the contemporary decline of traditional religion. Its sanctified re-enactment of the death drive demands a youthful rite of heroic passage that necessarily ends in ritual murder – through a process bitterly satirized in a trajectory of escalating violence. As Steven Bartlett argues in *The Pathology of Man*, the kind of human aggression anatomized by Konrad Lorenz "is cultivated and fostered through violence-gratifying entertainment and through the glorification of violence in both human entertainment and real life" (143). Bartlett cites several German theorists who analyze contact sports as incipient blood sports that mimic military aggression: "for spectators as well as athletes, the unrestrained freedom to express aggression in sport can be self-reinforcing rather than cathartic, and [can] influence human behavior outside of the arena" (Bartlett 144). J. Henry Waugh is, after all, an erstwhile aficionado of "tabletop war-games" (*UBA* 44). He once took furtive pleasure in virtual (mail-order) renditions of "mutual defense pacts, munitions sales, secret agents, even assassinations" (44). Abashedly, he confesses that his own fantasmatic practices as scorekeeper and manager of the Universal Baseball Association make him feel like "an old man playing with a child's toy", or "like an adolescent caught masturbating" (*UBA* 171). In games of love and war, the watchwords are violence and aggression. As Freud conjectures, with the demise of orthodox systems of belief, the isolated "neurotic is obliged to replace by his own symptom formations the great group formations from which he is excluded. He creates his own world of

imagination for himself, his own religion, his own system of delusions, and thus recapitulates the institutions of humanity in a distorted way" (*Group Psychology* 96).

According to Kathryn Hume, "Death has so upset Henry's fragile sense of meaning that he can preserve it only by making a conscious, deliberate leap into ritual. He sets the dice down to the combination he wants, and kills the bean-balling pitcher, Jock Casey. With passing seasons, this life-for-a-life becomes the players' central religious myth, a Manichean duel, annually re-enacted" (131) in the manner of post-traumatic compulsion. On Damonsday, the loony bastards enraptured by the group hysteria of game-playing and simulated military combat, by masculine rites and idealistic self-sacrifice, re-enact a sporting event inaugurated by Henry, yet eerily reminiscent of Mayan games once played on the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico. Like the winners of such ancient competitions, the contemporary hero pays, paradoxically, for the accolades of competitive glory with the price of his own head, even though he may only be, like Damon Rutherford, a fantasy projection of J. Henry Waugh, a timid accountant caught up in numerological god-games theoretically determined by a random throw of the dice.

Hume identifies a mythic "triad of archetypes – victim, sacrifice, scapegoat" (138) at the heart of Coover's novel. His postmodern satire casts doubt on humanity's obsession with religious ritual, even as the baseball players humorously debate their belief in an ultimate scorekeeper and conclude that they would be existentially obliged to invent such a godhead should this imagined providential overseer bamboozle them by refusing to exist. Coover's narrator, enthralled by the trance of group psychosis, protests that "it's all irrelevant, it doesn't even matter that he's going to die, all that counts is that he is *here* and here's The Man and here's the boys and there's the crowd, the sun, the noise" (*UBA* 242). Is this scene, as a number of critics have suggested, a ludic celebration of the joy of life in process? Or, alternatively, might it be construed as a cynical commentary on deluded optimism in the face of a group hysteria that pivots on sadomasochistic compulsion? Ritualistic games, Coover insinuates, provide an illusory anodyne for naïve human subjects eager to deny the reality of corporeal abjection and the threat of personal extinction. The novel sardonically implies that contemporary culture has perversely retained the traumatic resonance of religious practice by replicating obsessive (sports and entertainment) rituals, as well as Judeo-Christian misogyny and corporeal denigration of women. Henry confesses that elated spectators at the ball game make him feel "like I was a part of something there, you know, like in a church, except it was more *real* than any church.... I even had the funny idea that ball stadiums and not European churches were the real American holy places" (*UBA* 166). For Henry and for the reader, it "was *more* than history, it was, it was: *fulfillment!*" (*UBA* 66). One suspects a subtle intertextuality between Coover's novel and Freud's influential essay on *Group Psychology,* which argues that "mystico-religious or philosophico-religious sects... are expressions of crooked cures of all kinds of neuroses" (*Group Psychology* 95); and *The Future of An Illusion*, which dismisses religion as a "universal obsessional neurosis of humanity" (*Future* 55; see also Bartlett, 86).

Henry's innocuous baseball game predictably escalates into a violent re-enactment of human sacrifice, a "real duel, a duel to the death between Jock Casey and Damon Rutherford", witnessed by "breathless masses, waiting for this awful rite to be played out" (*UBA* 70). Exhilarated by the spectacle of blood sport, the crowd feels transported by the adrenalin rush of danger and the thrill of *Schadenfreude*. In a remarkable recursive turn of skeptical self-analysis, Henry contemplates an anthropological "solution: turn it into folklore" (*UBA* 102). "There they were, men turned into boys, whelmed by awe and adolescent wistfulness.... Men needed these rituals, after all" (*UBA* 102). The only thing that matters, he concludes, is the "Association, this whole thing, bigger than them all" (*UBA* 108). As Bartlett reminds us, the "human spectator's enjoyment of violence, brutality, and sadism, as in aggressive films and sports, arouses aggressive feelings", which lead, in turn, to the formation of "group cement" that "bonds people together into strong, emotionally unified collectives" (149).

In Coover's parodic narrative, ritual gaming is contingent on the compulsive repetition of a traumatic experience (of group psychosis and homicide) that can never be remembered, only repeated. It offers still another example of Cathy Caruth's "idea of the mimetic-contagious transmission of

psychic suffering to others" (Leys 16). If a particular text serves as intertextual inspiration for the ritualistic games enacted in Coover's pastiche, it must surely be Freud's essay on *Group Psychology*. Coover seems to be writing a self-conscious parody, if not a synopsis, of Freud's tract when he associates the evolution of J. Henry Waugh's game with communal "Guilt. The sons banded together. Old man psyche had his hands full, all right" (*UBA* 96). As to Fennimore McCaffree, a self-appointed social psychologist, the "social construct was his central concern, group behavior was his favorite study" (*UBA* 101).

Coover gives a condensed version of Freud's discussion of the human addiction to war when he has his protagonist enumerate the reasons why the "space race" will never be as popular as military aggression: "War seemed to be a must for every generation. A pageant to fortify the tribal spirit.... People needed casualty lists, territory footage won and lost, bounded sets with strategies and payoff functions, supply and communication routes disrupted or restored, tonnage totals, and deaths, downed planes, and prisoners socked away like a hoard of calculable runs scored. Besides, war was available to everybody, the space race to few: war was a kind of whorehouse for mass release of moonlust. Lunacy" (*UBA* 131). Similarly, Steven J. Bartlett diagnoses war as a "functional pathology" contingent on spurious emotional gratifications: "a state of heightened intensity and pleasurable arousal" comparable to that of extreme sports; "the psychological rewards of a public bonded into a single unit of togetherness, whose troops find... comfort in comradeship, the thrill of danger"; the "life-enhancing joy of being alive in the midst of death"; and the "heightened eroticism of sex in the midst of destruction" (213). Freud's suggestion of sublimated homoerotic bonding among combatants is echoed in Henry's grief over Damon's death, followed by the candid admission: "You loved him. You don't have to be ashamed about that" (*UBA* 86).

The shadow of mortality haunts Coover's fabulations, and his characters often resemble Beckettian (anti)heroes trapped in dramatic postures that mimic the theater of the absurd. "[W]hy do we go on?" Henry bellows to his friend Lou, as he conjures the Universal Baseball Association as an agnostic rationale for tenacious perseverance in his self-appointed vocation as team manager and game-player (*UBA* 92). "Play resumed. It always resumes, every dying old bastard's despair" (*UBA* 93). "Funny thing about real gloom; ... it had a giddy core" (*UBA* 95). One is always lured back into the game by its illusory patina of infinite potential: "Anything could happen still" (*UBA* 201). In his comic folk portrait of the itinerant player and "traveling man" wandering willy-nilly over the American scene, Henry issues a postmodern manifesto of existential angst: "A travelin' man always longs for a home, cause a travelin' man is always alone... like a baserunner on the paths, alone in a hostile cosmos, the stars out there in their places, and him trying to dominate the world by stepping on it all" (*UBA* 141). How can a postmodern survivor of cultural trauma avoid "dropping dejectedly into a kind of private sinkhole, having to return to all that commitment and all that emptiness" (*UBA* 141)? "Age. It got them all" (*UBA* 167). Alone in an apathetic, insensate universe, one might be tempted to "suspect the dice of malevolence" (*UBA* 152). It is clear, however, from Coover's fable that such transcendent projections of hostility onto an indifferent universe would be existentially inauthentic. Henry's players, like the majority of fragile human subjects on the planet, compulsively seek transcendence, a "rising above". "Yes, why not?" Henry defiantly asks. "It doesn't matter: death is a relative idea, truth absolute!.... They're all going to die. And nothing he can do about it" (*UBA* 241). In Coover's convoluted universe, quitting is not a viable option, since the game has taken on a life of its own: "Odd thing about an operation like this league: once you set it in motion, you were yourself somehow launched into the same orbit. There was growth in the making of it, development, but there was also a defining of the outer edges" (*UBA* 142). The same thing might be said of all sorts of contemporary games: love, war, violence, aggression, and the reading (or writing) of (post)modern texts.

In much of his fiction, Coover playfully introduces the skill and complexity of an Escher lithograph into the game of metalepsis. He deploys the literary equivalent of Foucault's concept of "heterotopia", i.e., the "coexistence in an 'impossible space' of a 'large number of fragmentary possible worlds' or, more simply, incommensurable spaces that are juxtaposed or superimposed upon

each other" (Harvey 48). In *Pricksongs and Descants*, Coover's story "The Magic Poker" draws on Shakespeare's *Tempest* for its model, but soon elaborates a panoply of mirror images that reflect, refract, and ludically distort the Renaissance paradigm. An island there is, and a Prospero narrator who claims god-like power over his invention. "I wander the island, inventing it", he tells us. "I make a sun for it and trees" (*PD* 14). This god is a vindictive *dio boia*, a deity who delights in destruction and carnage as much as in narrative invention. He creates and disfigures, constructs and deconstructs. The world of his making is a fluid and shimmering cosmos of variable realities. Aesthetic chronology is scrambled in an unstable narrative shot through with indeterminacy. A wealthy family once purchased the island and inhabited it. They inhabit it now and tell their children a fairy tale about a princess and a poker. They were never on the island. With time, the fantasy island acquires geographical status in another ontological dimension – to the feigned surprise of the narrator, who claims to have created the two women who visit the island (one of whom doubles as a fairy-tale princess). "I have invented you, dear reader" (*PD* 31), he insists. Has he? And in what sense does he assert the power of an aesthetic deity engaged in what Rawdon Wilson calls "god-games" that trick, deceive, and bamboozle the readers of a densely embedded, metaleptic story? (Wilson, Chapter 4).

"The Magic Poker" displays a looping structure of contiguous and intersecting ontological levels. In some purportedly real and representable cosmos, two young women land on an uninhabited island and explore its abandoned, disintegrating mansion. They find a poker and take it away. That, however, is only the beginning. The entire text re-enacts the *Tempest*, with Coover-like surrogates presiding. The Ariel figure, equipped with pipe and blue jacket, is, in certain renditions of the tale, a carnivalesque clown with "barbered buttocks", allied through lower-body poles with the hairy-ballocked Caliban archetype, the caretaker's son, a "satyr on a not-quite-deserted island... his hairy tuft of imagination left over from a genre abandoned and rediscovered, a beast recognizing the value of fabling" (Cope 33). The paradigm of a fairy tale is subverted in its ludic inversions and materiality. The princess in distress has been thrice married and needs assistance in decanting her torso from its steel-girded golden trousers. Her pants prove impenetrable to the boldest knight's stout sword. Only the Magic Poker can poke her pants into a laminated puddle and, when the instrument is wielded by Caliban, it affects a grotesque anti-fairy-tale. The Frog-prince is killed, the hapless princess doomed to widowhood.

Ontological levels are so intertwined that, in the end, the story's genre remains indeterminate. Is it fairy tale or fabulation, realistic narrative or pure authorial fantasy? Has a frog-prince expired, or was he merely a frog? Did Karen play grotesque Amazonian games in a deserted family mansion, cavorting with a green grand piano collapsing as she pounded its keys? Did an Ariel figure materialize through oral titillation or dematerialize through a fierce female embrace? Were Poker and Prince real or imaginary? And can one make any kind of meaningful distinction among diverse ontological planes? At the end of this tale, "a frog dies, a strange creature lies slain, a tanager sings" (*PD* 35). Is that slain creature Ariel, Caliban, or the Prospero-narrator?

A brash, intrusive, sometimes truculent and sadistic narrator presides, but there seem to be arbitrary limits to his god-like power. He sounds Beckettian in his specious promise: "Though you have more to face, and even more to suffer from me, this is in fact the last thing I shall say to you" (*PD* 25). Then he continues talking. "But can the end be in the middle? Yes, yes, it always is" (*PD* 25) he proclaims, in an intertextual echo of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*. As the story exfoliates, the narrator etiolates: "I am disappearing. You have no doubt noticed. Yes, and by some no doubt calculable formula of event and pagination" (*PD* 30). Has this strange creature, at the conclusion of the story, been slain by another *dio boia*, the wily Robert Coover? Or is it, in fact, Coover's boisterous narrative persona who lies deconstructively deceased? Lois Gordon's commentary could be applied to both figures: "Here is a writer-magician, often pulling words, rabbits, or islands out of hats, self-consciously creating myth, wrestling with words and created landscapes – both God-creator of a verbal universe and victim of its emergent arrangements" (90).

"The Babysitter" offers still another example of Coover's pornographic game-playing through the pastiche of a culture where variable realities circulate in a carnival of real, imagined, and televised

traumatic violence. Coover's writing inaugurates a dialogic paronomasia of cultural static, the white noise of consumer culture that infiltrates and orchestrates Baudrillard's simulacrum model of postmodern experience. The mirror flickers: its images construct a separate ontological reality that reflects and distorts individual sensation in a hyperbolic replication of the so-called "real world". The recursive structure of Coover's text implicates the nested collection of variable realities that constructs our perception of contemporary culture and inscribes us into a consumer society where we ourselves become the commodities marketed. If we perceive the world refracted in a televised replication of itself, we are, in turn, conditioned to modes of perception visually reflected – and relentlessly repeated – in the magic mirrors of film and television. The media are held responsible for generating a narcissistic, fragmentary, and scopophilic culture of dissociative (post-traumatic) consciousness. Its Freudian obsessions are ubiquitous, its "love of looking" everywhere commodified. With the breakdown of ego boundaries among dazed human subjects, cohesive identity is dispersed in a dizzying simulacrum of global dysphoria.

In Coover's story, each character is exposed to the lascivious gaze of an/other, both as voyeuristic subject and as specular object. The (male-defined) scopophilic gaze connotes mastery and determines all. Fierce aggression freely circulates through the inter-cutting of non-chronological film clips jumbled in cinematic mélange. The un-named babysitter is the object of lust for her lecherous employer Harry, as well as for a boyfriend who is goaded, either in fantasy or in fact, into bathtub voyeurism and possible rape. The irony of Coover's playful postmodern text resides in its deployment of contradictory narratives whose ontological status remains indeterminate. No single level is privileged as diegetic, since a series of jump-cuts amalgamates fact, fantasy, and narrative fabulation. As in Borges' fiction, incompatible plots emerge without concern for (il)logical possibility. Harry Tucker imagines copulating with a voluptuous postpubescent babysitter and either does, or does not, enact his (im)potent lecherous fantasies. His adolescent rivals, Mark and Jack, may or may not attempt a sadistic gang-bang. Young Jimmy bathes with the babysitter in infantile innocence, while his anxiously aroused father entertains lascivious dreams of a similarly blissful immersion.

Images of violence flicker across a television screen in shoot-em-up Westerns and lurid detective films. A kind of ludic, if not ludicrous, sadism erupts when the tots attack their sitter and tickle her as she rolls on the floor giggling. Pounced on by Mark and Jack, the babysitter ceases to giggle. But the *dramatis personae* in this (melo)dramatic farce are, or are not, exposed by Harry, who may, or may not, fall and hit his head against the bathroom sink. Television enacts a tummy-tightening scenario that excites the babysitter, who cunningly displaces her own adolescent desires downward when she asks Jimmy to soap her back. "You said I could watch!" (*PD* 176) whines the toddler Bitsy, in a precarious moment of scopophilic frustration. She means the television, or maybe the bath; or perhaps the awkward adolescent groping that substitutes for sex. Television is a powerful and subversive teacher in its relentless representation of mindless violence and unmediated sexual brutality. The ingenuous Bitsy is being conditioned to manipulate (and to be manipulated by) erotic desire long before she is able to understand its voyeuristic charge. Her needs are determined by a commodified celluloid culture, and her infantile eyes are being skillfully trained toward an incipient, but explosive and male-modelled scopophilia. She is, in the words of Kroker and Cook, one of those postmodern "babies whose television fare at the age of six includes *The Young and the Restless*, initiating them into the video world of sex without secretions. If babies are born postmodern, it's just because their bodies are lacerated by the language of the key technologies of power" (Kroker & Cook 23).

Just as the princess in "The Magic Poker" cannot divest herself of her golden pants, the bourgeois matron Dolly Tucker is tormented by an inability to stuff herself back into a tightfitting girdle. Like a Thanksgiving turkey, she is basted with butter and poured into her skirt. Her sex-starved host is titillated by the exposure of her flabby figure, just as his son is aroused by the babysitter's nubile flesh. The host's closing quip to a desperate Dolly proves taunting and inscrutable: "Your children are murdered, your husband gone, a corpse in the bathtub, and your house is wrecked" (*PD* 193). Like a trauma victim too shocked to cope with overwhelming disaster, she responds, hypnotically: "Let's see what's on the late late movie" (*PD* 193). Suffering from anhedonia and

psychic fragmentation, Dolly cannot focus on, or even acknowledge, a domestic catastrophe whose uncanny resonance has already obliterated the scene of trauma from her spousal and maternal consciousness. As Ruth Leys explains, trauma was originally "defined as a situation of dissociation or 'absence' from the self in which the victim unconsciously imitated, or identified with, the aggressor or traumatic scene in a condition that was likened to a state of heightened suggestibility or hypnotic trance" (8). The powerful mental wound "appeared to shatter the victim's cognitive-perceptual capacities, [and] made the traumatic scene unavailable for a certain kind of recollection" (9). If Bessel Van der Kolk is correct in his "claim that traumatic memory involves a literal imprint of an external trauma... lodged in the brain in a special traumatic memory system", then traumatic experience "defies all possibility of representation" (Leys 16) – and would account for Dolly's weird exhibition of post-traumatic amnesia.

Coover's bizarre conclusion mixes different ontological levels, until it proves impossible for a naive reader to unravel the diegetic filaments of this loop-structured narrative from an intricate texture of carnivalesque fabulation. In such a "heterotopian zone", Brian McHale would assure us, "hallucinations and fantasies become real, metaphors become literal, the fictional worlds of the mass media – movies, comic books – thrust themselves into the midst of historical reality. The zone, in short, becomes plural... located nowhere but in the written text itself" (McHale 45).

If the reader/narrator/critic can find a corpse floating in Coover's enigmatic bathtub, it might be that of Harry, the baby, or the unfortunate sitter. The predatory host's ludic(rous) chant, however, is more reminiscent of a coy lady-bug ballad distorted by an inebriated adult in a farcical play of seduction mediated by that ubiquitous bourgeois voyeur, the television set. If the childish taunt articulates "real" historical trauma, then the end of the story is shockingly grotesque. The media have so completely devoured contemporary domestic life that popular culture absorbs the tale's diegetic narrative and privileges television images over the drama of human experience and the shock of post-traumatic stress. As in a live CNN broadcast of warfare or terrorism, death and loss are backgrounded, TV representations foregrounded. Learning of the death of spouse or child, the drunken damsel simply shuts down. Exhibiting symptoms of post-traumatic constriction, she takes emotional refuge in watching the late, late show. When life becomes more violent than television images that impinge on contemporary consciousness, one's only refuge may be the unreal ontology of flickering lights and ghostly shadows. Corpses on television are decidedly less threatening and less psychologically ambivalent than horrific figures bobbing in the bathtub, "the sensationalism of spectacle" having been transformed into the "stuff of which consciousness is forged" (Harvey 54). Lois Gordon concludes that in his "ultimate pricksong, Coover descants upon the counterpointing realities and fictions of our lives and the violence, inanities, and sexuality that permeate the media which dictate our conscious and even unconscious behavior.... Life contains no resolution apart from its own possibilities" (120).

As Jean Baudrillard searingly observes, the dissolution of television into life, and of life into television, has become "an indiscernible chemical solution" (Baudrillard 55). "TV watches us, TV alienates us, TV manipulates us, TV informs us", to such an extent that we begin to witness "a fantastic telescoping, a collapsing of the two traditional poles" of cause and effect "into one another: an IMPLOSION... of meaning. *This is where simulation begins*" (56-57). Kroker and Cook lugubriously suggest that, as members of a postmodern, post-traumatic culture, we "live on the imploded side of the will to power: the side of empty seduction, dead labour, abstract power, and... the radical disenchantment of the sign. What else explains our taking delight in images of a dead society – fragmented bodies, and video ideology – signs that, at least, we know we are trapped in the 'joke' of a cynical history" (131). Certainly, part of the joke for Coover entails an acerbic satire of contemporary culture's pathological fascination with bloodshed and random violence.

Playing for time, I cannot conclusively answer the question initially raised in this essay, i.e, how a feminist reader might respond to Coover's playful, pornographic, postmodern experiments. The author is a relentlessly aggressive and manipulative fabulator. His absurdly *macho* (and generally impotent) males emerge as "characters" from a play of signs whose rules can never be fully grasped or mastered by the authorial game-player fashioning a fabulative universe. Coover occupies an

ostensibly transcendent position in the metaleptic god-games he generates to dupe and bamboozle naive readers unprepared for the postmodern roller-coaster ride of recursive diegetic worlds looping into aesthetic Gordian knots and endlessly repeating themselves, in the manner of relentless traumatic flashbacks. Coover laughs at the arbitrary manifestations of a sign-system that points to the Lacanian Imaginary, but he always remains firmly embedded in the textual skein of his own cunning contrivances. In the end, one must continue to wonder who, finally, is practicing postmodern gender/play and who (or what) is making, and mastering, the rules of the game.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 73-77**

# The black asylum and the state of exception

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This paper is concerned with the pathologisation of the institutional space of the 'asylum' – or, more broadly and more politically correctly, mental health facilities – in the segregationist and apartheid South African state. What I seek to do in the paper is to re-examine the commonly understood context of the literal physical displacement of black people, a common enough feature of South African segregationism and high apartheid, in the light of the specific nature of mental hospitals, both in terms of the spaces they occupy, and the role, functions and characteristics of the people who inhabit them as patients and doctors. The larger political context for the institutions is that of white supremacist ideologies – in their colonial democratic and later fully-blown nationalist apartheid guises. These fashioned South Africa into the most sustained political and juridical 'state of exception' (Agamben) outside of National Socialist Germany which the modern world has known.

From a physical, spatial point of view, the idea of a racially-specific area of the country was built into the developmental fabric from the beginnings of urbanisation as gold was discovered in the nineteenth century. This policy was summarized, long before the high apartheid era, by the Stallard Commission into land use policy (1921): "The native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart there from when he ceases so to minister".

Institutional psychiatric medical practice had begun in South Africa in the early eighteenth century, with the establishment of a small hospital in Cape Town to cater specifically for mentally deranged persons in 1711. In 1846 the famous prison colony on Robben Island was converted into a hospital for lepers, lunatics and other chronically ill patients. By 1912, the Robben Island Infirmary housed 500 mental patients. Around this period, several other 'lunatic asylums' were built, ensuring that mentally ill patients were largely isolated from the community. From the beginning these facilities were racially segregated. These included the Town Hill Asylum in Pietermaritzburg, Fort England Mental Hospital in Grahamstown, Valkenberg Lunatic Asylum in Cape Town, and the Pretoria Lunatic Asylum. From the beginning these facilities were racially segregated.

The country's first Mental Disorders Act was introduced in 1916, but no provision was made in it for neurotic and personality disorders, alcohol dependence or learning disability.

From its earliest institutional history psychiatry and psychology in the country had a fraught relationship with segregationism and apartheid, gradually coming to be seen as more and more collusive. By the end of the period of high apartheid in the late 1970s, psychiatry was the most

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criticised by the international community. Psychiatric services were inspected by overseas groups and condemned. In 1978 the American Psychiatric Association compiled a report after a committee of leading American psychiatrists inspected psychiatric facilities in South Africa. They found that psychiatric care for Black people was grossly inferior to that for White people, that unacceptable medical practices had resulted in needless deaths of Black patients, and that "apartheid has a destructive impact on the families, social institutions, and the mental health of black South Africans" (American Psychiatric Association, 1983). A Special Committee on the Political Abuse of Psychiatry of the Royal College of Psychiatrists investigated the matter and found substantial evidence of racial discrimination in the provision of psychiatric services (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1983).

Over the decades, regimes of treatment and programmes for rehabilitation rarely reached the majority black population. Instead they were separated out into largely carceral institutions, often incorporating a function as a camp for lepers, tuberculosis sufferers, and victims of other dread diseases.

That such spaces were not really designed to treat and rehabilitate victims of psychopathologies is discussed by Tiffany Jones, who recently, in an essay entitled 'Monopoly on Madness' (2003) uncovers the history of the Smith Mitchell company. She describes the way in which the company began operations in the 1960s, in collusion with the apartheid government, to move the majority of black mental health care patients into designated rural facilities, in order that state funds and resources might be concentrated on urban facilities for white patients. By the 1980s the company housed almost half of all black mental patients in the country. Highly profitable through a state subsidy system and the awarding of tendered contracts to provide beds and services, the company slashed costs and maximised profits – much of which went to Nationalist government ministers and MPs who sat on the board of the group of companies – by the simple expedient of not providing adequate facilities for patients. The locations themselves were barely converted abandoned mine workers' hostels in semi-rural or rural areas, often with limited sanitation and water facilities, and the patients slept on hard palettes. Medical care was rudimentary, with very few qualified nursing staff, and therapy often limited to the manufacture of toys and other craft goods, which were sold commercially, the takings going to the hospital.

This representative physical instantiation of the anomalous and brutally carceral nature of the treatment of mental illness in SA might be understood, along with many similar large-scale medically eugenic phenomena such as the American Tuskegee experiment, as examples of what Giorgio Agamben calls the operation of a 'state of exception'.

He defines this state as follows:

> Modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system. [T]he voluntary creation of a state of emergency (though perhaps not declared in the technical sense) has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including so-called democratic ones. (2005: 2)

This theory of the modern state of exception hinges on the creation of a 'biopolitical' state, one focused on the ordering and understanding of the human being and its body as the essential productive unit motivating state power. It also hinges on a much older conception, analysed in Agamben's earlier work *Homo Sacer*, of the human being acquiring the status of a subject only if they can embody the political life of a citizen of a state by demonstrating the state's values. If not, then state power may operate on the body in a state of 'bare life' – in order to decide on the continuing value of that life. In Agamben's formulation: 'It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power' (1998:6). But the state of 'bare life' is not the simple opposite of a productive biopolitical subject, according to Agamben – it acts as a limit condition against which the

biopolitical subject can be delineated. Thus the declaration of a state of exception, he argues, is built into the epistemological fabric of modern democracy, through the appeal to the prevention or exclusion of the state of bare life via the imposition of exceptional state power.

Foucault had analysed the positive version of this conception in the different genealogical areas of key socio-political institutions as a convergence of political techniques with technologies of the self. In the institution that is of relevance here, the asylum, he traces these transformations in the juridical and medical view of madness and its treatment to a mutation in the form of power and knowledge in the early modern era which is of a fundamentally *spatial* character. In tracing the shift in European societies from medical models of exclusion to those of inclusion, Foucault uses the emblem of the shift from medical models of leprosy to those of the plague. In older societies, lepers were excluded from society, both literally and symbolically, cast out to the notorious outsider 'colonies' in a diseased mirror image of the colonial empires of the European powers of the nineteenth century. This model is gradually replaced by that of the plague. Here, those afflicted are contained within a quarantined sector of the community, where movement in and out is strictly controlled, and the behaviour of plague victims is also closely monitored. This is symptomatic, in the field of public health, of power coming to be used in the positive mode of productive biopolitics, which, as we have seen, characterizes modern identity formation and the organisation of power/knowledge. The biopolitical system produces subjects whose modes of normal mental and physical functioning, as well as their pathological departures from such discourses and practices of normalization, are intensely observed and documented by forms of institutional power and knowledge. In the study *Madness and Civilization* (1967) he marks out the origins of a shift in the treatment of madness in the asylum that sees it as a fall away from a moral order, one which was in the process in the West, during the eighteenth century, of becoming secular and adopting both a juridico-medical and an ergonomic character. The goal of treatment of the mad, first in houses of confinement, and later in the 'birth of the asylum', is to rehabilitate the insane prisoner into a moral order which restored him or her to health through their own true realisation of the transcendental nature of such morality and their voluntary return to it as a rational and labouring being. The key for Foucault in the development of such a normative model for the treatment of mental illness is the establishment of the juridical-medical power at the heart of the institution in the person of the doctor, and the restoration of the insane to a position of labour productivity.

This juridico-medical component of the biopolitical transformation of the state becomes more clear as the doctor-patient coupling takes shape over time. The doctor comes to occupy an important legislative position in gauging the ability of the psychopathological patient to return, cured, to social productivity, and acts as expert witness in judging the nature of psychological abnormalities and cases of diminished responsibility in criminal proceedings.

However, the spatial dimension within which the doctor-patient coupling solidifies is less clear – if we accept, with Foucault, that the origins of the relationship are conditioned by the originally carceral and then rehabilitatory nature of the asylum itself. In this view the space of the asylum solidifies as a *moral* space, restoring the mentally disturbed to normative society by re-establishing a responsibility to both a social identity and an over-riding religious principle – both of which are mediated by the figure of the doctor.

In Foucault's analysis, the doctor-patient couple thus takes its place at the juridico-medical centre of an institution which has a twofold purpose. On one hand it opens out to the rest of society, in that it has open access and outpatient facilities, and is geared to restoring an understanding of the higher principles of the social body to the patient. On the other hand the institution becomes more internalised in the nature of its treatment of the mad – that is, it is focused on the internal struggles of the patient to return to biopolitical productivity.

But, as part of this twofold process, the physical institution of the asylum itself becomes, in the architecture of the modern state, a 'non-place', in Augé's evocative term – a concept that links the asylum to the slum, shanty-town or refugee camp. The world of the non-place, he writes, is

> A world where people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shanty-towns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity)... (this world) offers the anthropologist a new object... (1995: 63)

Such non-places are opposed in a dynamic and fluid way to 'places', or more formally anthropological spaces, in Merleau-Ponty's conception of this as an existential space, the 'scene of an experience of relations with the world on the part of a being "essentially situated in a milieu"' (65). Places and non-places interact 'like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten' (64).

Clearly the non-place of the black South African experience under apartheid, particularly those afflicted by mental illness or evil magic, impacts fundamentally on the ways in which identity could be inscribed and relations to the world established. These non-places include the shanty-towns and refugee camps which became definitive of South Africa's spatial organisation under apartheid – leaving the people in those non-places in the position of the subject in a state of 'bare life' in Agamben's 'state of exception'. In this conception, we should recall, refugees and other categories of people who do not bear the full biopolitical life of citizens because they somehow exceed – or demonstrate the limits of – the parameters of the state of exception are a symptomatic anomaly which has to be dealt with. The most representative means of dealing with the anomaly of the refugee – or any other excluded category of person – is to put them in some form of camp, where their 'rights', already attenuated by the state of exception, may be suspended altogether. There are numerous examples of the functioning of the state of exception in the camp, from Nazi Germany to Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. The most emblematic, however, remain the Jewish subjects of 'bare life' in the Nazi death camps – listlessly awaiting death, they were nicknamed *der Musselmanne* – the Muslims. The camp is thus the spatial realisation of the state of exception.

In SA history, the nature of apartheid design turned the entire country into a type of camp – the sprawling ghettoes of the black townships cordoned off outside white owned and run cities, with controlled movement in and out for those with a temporary permit. At the very end of this spectrum of exclusion sat the black mentally ill, locked away in literal camps such as those run by the Smith Mitchell company. The SA state under the apartheid government imposed a political system which depended on a generalised use of the camp concept in the construction of blacks-only townships and homelands set apart from the resources and amenities of the cities.

As apartheid approached its death throes and resistance grew stronger, the powers available to the state had to increase – in 1985 the first of two States of Emergency was declared, effectively imposing martial law. Agamben generalises such a tendency to the West as a whole:

> The Western political system thus seems to be a double apparatus, founded in a dialectic between two heterogeneous and, as it were, antithetical elements; ... legal right and pure violence, the law and the forms of life whose articulation is to be guaranteed by the state of emergency. When the state of emergency becomes the rule, the political system transforms into an apparatus of death. (n.d.)

While it is relatively straightforward to understand the apartheid state apparatus as exemplary of Agamben's contention that the Western political system contains an apparatus of death as part of its democratic dispensation, it leaves several elements relatively unexplored.

Firstly, and most clearly, the apartheid state was indeed an apparatus of death, and the deathly pallor of that apparatus lingers on in the traumatised and pathological populations of its transformed mental health institutions. The transformation of those institutions from the carceral to the rehabilitatory is by no means complete, and needs a careful theoretical examination. This needs to happen from the point of view of providing those institutions with proper resources and capacity to

meet the needs of a modern democratic state with a public healthcare system. But it also requires an examination of the need for transformation in ways which reflect their not-entirely-Western medical model requires an ongoing institutional engagement with non-Western modes of the understanding and treatment of mental illness – something which remains under-theorised and under-resourced in SA.

Secondly, the analysis of the history of SA mental health institutions needs to take place within a global context whose parameters are theorised by Agamben. Every day we hear reports of the major Western democracies allowing more and more latitude to 'extra-democratic' offices, primarily military agencies, to operate in parallel – or even definitively outside – the rule of democratic law in dealing with refugee or 'terrorist' perceived threats. How does South Africa's commitment to democracy tally with this increasing tendency in the global political body? And how far do our institutions like prisons and hospitals still demonstrate the carceral and punitive attitudes of the creation and control of 'bare life'?

Lastly, there remains to be written a 'discontinuous history' of the asylums and mental health institutions themselves in SA – in the context of an anthropology of place, and 'non-place', such as that I have suggested in this paper.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 79-84**

# Depth psychological literary criticism: Some methodological questions

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The problems we come across when assessing the validity of depth psychological interpretations of literary works are huge. How do we know whether an interpretation is adequate to the text involved? Can we, by the same token, prove that certain interpretations are inadequate? If so, how? If not – that is to say, if any depth psychological interpretation is always supposed to be as good as any other –, what is the intellectual status of exploring literary texts from a depth psychological perspective? Indeed, what are we looking for when we use that particular method of literary interpretation? The paper will deal with this type of questions on the basis of some telling examples.

## THE DOMAIN OF TRUTH VERSUS THE DOMAIN OF MEANINGFULNESS

The methodology of depth psychological literary criticism may perhaps not seem a particularly juicy subject, but it is certainly an important one. Interdisciplinary types of academic research – and particularly the less-established ones, such as the psychological study of the arts – quite obviously need to consider how they can account for academic quality. How can we make sure that our interpretation does justice to the work of art involved? Or even that it is not pure nonsense for that matter? I do not mean this in a political sense, to raise more money (though that would be good too), but more fundamentally: apart from all the excellent practical research that is conducted in the field of the psychological study of the arts in general and literature-and-psychology in particular, there is also an intrinsic need for theoretical reflection.

In order to attain a clear view of the matter under investigation a few preliminary issues have to be dealt with. First of all we have to distinguish between the so-called *domain of truth* and the *domain of meaningfulness*. Ultimately, this distinction is of Kantian origin, as Immanuel Kant introduced into the philosophy of science the idea that intuition (*Anschauung*), intellect (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*) each have their different goals and different fields of application. Both intuition and intellect aim at establishing a type of truth that, according to Kant, might refer to the empirical world, whereas the cognitional object of reason is of a fundamentally different kind: it may entail paradoxical yet meaningful notions that are very difficult to establish as 'true' in any normal sense of

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the word[1]. The difference between truth and meaningfulness was also emphasized by prominent members of the Vienna Circle, such as Otto Neurath and Rudolph Carnap, and also – though from a different perspective – by Hannah Ahrendt. More recently the contemporary Dutch philosopher L.M. de Rijk has pointed out that the current, global, clashes between scientific and religious world views might be avoided if both parties would realize that they actually operate in different areas of life: religion functions best when it operates primarily in the field of meaningfulness, whereas science, in order to be fruitful, should attempt to limit itself first and foremost to the field of truth[2].

When it comes to explore what depth psychological literary criticism is about, the same fundamental distinction between striving for truth and striving for meaningfulness is relevant. It seems quite evident that depth psychological literary criticism as an academic discipline aims to contribute to our knowledge and therefore operates primarily within the realm of truth, whereas its object, literature, principally belongs to the realm of meaningfulness.

Obviously, any distinction is a bit artificial, and in practice there may be a lot of overlap, but to my mind it is worthwhile to stick at least to the conceptual difference between truth and meaningfulness, because that will help us realize what we try to establish when we interpret literary works. While literary criticism may be meaningful, at least as a scholarly activity it will also attempt to be as clear as possible, according to the motto 'what you see is what you get'. For example, in academic literary interpretation unexplained double meanings are not welcome, and least of all unintended ones. By reading an academic interpretation readers expect to learn something. They hope to find a clear point and a sound argumentation. Certain elements of the *interpretandum* may be vague, so that it would be impossible to write in a very clear way about them, but the interpreter should at least try to come to some understanding and to explain things to the reader. Literary texts, on the other hand, are not about the world as such, but about how we see the world, that is to say literature is about ourselves. For example, if you read a book, that is to say fiction, you dive into 'untrue', sometimes very implausible or illogical events, but if you are really swept away, then you may realise that you are never as much yourself as when you read literature. It's just you and the fascinating world of the book. You don't have to play a social role and care about what others might think of you. If you are really touched by your reading, then you feel at home, and that is because somehow the book is you, or appeals to possibilities within you. In other words, the book – literature in general – conveys meaning, and great literature conveys deep meaning.

Distinguishing between a realm of truth and a realm of meaningfulness does, of course, not at all imply that one of the two would be intrinsically superior to the other. Both realms may be equally important in life, and anyway truth and meaningfulness are both completely legitimate human concerns. However, in an academic context – such as the natural sciences, history, theology, (depth) psychology, philosophy, and literary criticism – it makes sense to strive for truth in an academic sense. In literary criticism we attempt to formulate interpretations on the basis of a preferably explicit and controllable type of argumentation, so that our interpretation is open to reasonable objections. And that is very different from the goals in the realm of meaningfulness, such as literature, art, religion, jokes, depth psychological therapy, mythology, love, etc. If artists produce works of art, they consciously or unconsciously convey meaning, or if someone is religiously involved he or she is again looking for meaningfulness, and not for an empirically testable theoretical reconstruction of the physical world outside.

As to an example of what happens if the two realms are confused: in the Netherlands there is a range of disappointed, formerly heavily religious writers and scholars who time and again attempt to unmask for example biblical texts as untrue. They will explain things like that Methuselah could not

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1 Depending on the type of discourse the word 'truth' can mean many different things, and in discussions about what is to be regarded as 'true' people tend to bring in all kinds of metaphysical assumptions of which they are not always aware. Following Kant and later philosophers of science, such as Karl Popper, the present article uses 'truth' in the sense of *logically and/or empirically testable* truth.

2 See De Rijk 2008, pp. 216-228 and De Rijk 2010, pp. 134 ff.

really have been 969 years of age when he died, because that is biologically impossible. The golden calf that the Israelites in the desert were supposed to have forged out of their golden earrings probably did not really exist either, because in order to create a statue that is big enough to dance around with some hundreds of people you need a lot of gold. It is unlikely that the Israelites would have possessed so much gold. And to melt gold is a very complicated thing that asks for an advanced level of technology; you need an oven of 1063 degrees or more. You cannot make such an oven on the spot when you are travelling through a desert. In short: these interpreters take an old mythic story literally, decide that it is untrue, and then – why not? – reject religion as a whole. Now that is confusing the two realms. At the moment one of these Dutch authors is busy unmasking the Qur'an as untrue, claiming that the botanical information in the Qur'an is incorrect. That may be so, but who cares? That way you could also say that the story of Little Red Riding Hood is highly untrustworthy and actually unacceptable, because firstly wolves do not usually speak and secondly it is hard to believe that anyone would always wear the same red hood. That is not an appropriate approach for fairy tales, and it isn't appropriate for literature and art either, nor for any other subject in the realm of meaningfulness.

## THREE THEORIES OF TRUTH: CORRESPONDENCE THEORY, COHERENCE THEORY AND 'ANYTHING GOES'

We have been talking now for a while about truth as opposed to meaningfulness, and I came up with the perhaps counter-intuitive suggestion that literary criticism as an academic discipline belongs to the realm of truth. This raises the question how we can achieve 'truth'. Obviously such a huge subject cannot be dealt with in a satisfactory way in a short paper like the present one, but let me just say a few words.

In the philosophy of science it is common practice to speak of at least three different theories of truth, namely the correspondence, coherence, and consensus theory of truth. Another term for 'correspondence theory of truth' is '(philosophical) realism'.

About realism, ever since Kant it is generally accepted within the philosophy of science that at least naïve realism gets us into serious trouble, that is to say in an academic context – in the field of the humanities as well as in the field of the natural sciences – naïve, direct realism gets us into contradictions and worse. Naïve realism is a kind of intellectual imperialism. It presupposes that there is an unambiguous reality out there and that this reality can be discovered just like that, without epistemological problems. One of the troubles with this altogether unreflected theory of truth is that it suffocates all appetite to look beyond the immediately tangible. Naïve realism is based on rather primitive Enlightenment ideas, such as that the combination of rationality and empirical research simply and automatically leads to objective, that is to say absolute, knowledge. Because of its absoluteness, this supposed knowledge leaves no room for alternative views, nor for serious cognitive progress. In other words, naïve realism is rather limited and easily leads to cognitive stagnation.

As to not-naïve, well-defended realism or correspondence theory (Sir Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore are two of the most famous names in this connection), this type of theory is not so easily refuted, and what is more, when it comes to the practice of academic research there is often no need to fight against the more sophisticated forms of realism or correspondence theory, because in their methodology to establish truth they do not necessarily differ from other theories of truth, such as the coherence theory, to which we will turn our attention in a few minutes.

In the course of the twentieth century, scholars of fame used to focus mostly on the shortcomings of the correspondence theory. Perhaps rightly so. However, I got my education relatively late in the last century, and personally I suffered much more from the other extreme, namely from the highly relativistic theories of truth that were en vogue in the 70s and 80s, such as 'anything goes'. The 'anything goes' theory belongs to the so-called consensus theory of truth.

In its purest appearance the 'anything goes' theory is a form of nihilism: there is nothing but rhetoric and power; there are no reasonable arguments whatsoever; everything is merely a matter of opinion; the medium is the message. Also, it is an ideal cloak for ignorance: researchers can stop thinking, and deliver bad work without having to feel guilty. (There maybe other reasons as well why some researchers seek to avoid reasonable discussion about their work, such as fear or perhaps modesty. For example, an interpreter of a first century Latin novel, the *Satyricon*, will explicitly state about (a part of) his own interpretation that it is at best one observer's reading of the novel at one particular moment. Thus he makes sure his interpretation cannot be proven wrong, which is good, but unfortunately this also means that he does not say anything at all.)

The idea behind the 'anything goes' theory seems to be that we all have our own, personal perspectives and personal ways of understanding literature, and that we should leave it at that. Some existing interpretations even manage to combine 'anything goes' theory with straightforward, old-fashioned, naïve realism, thereby falling into both, contradictory, traps at the same time. In such an interpretation the reader is, for example, informed first that he or she simply has to believe the current psychoanalytic literary interpretation, because the interpretation is really, honestly true. In some cases this may also be accompanied by a mild threat: should the reader refuse to believe the true interpretation that is unfolded before his or her very eyes, then he or she is apparently repressing something and will have to pay for it. And then in the next paragraph of the same interpretation the interpreter blandly tells the reader something like: 'Don't come up with any critique please, because you have your opinion, I have mine, and any opinion is as good as any other. So, don't attack me, anything goes.' It seems to me that in an academic context the 'anything goes' argument will not do. Yes, we all have our different perspectives, but if we want to come to some knowledge at all, we cannot leave it at that. We also have to make some effort to get somewhere.

Therefore, a more subtle approach is to be preferred, to be found in the so-called coherence theory of truth. 'Coherence' is the cornerstone of any academic discipline, a necessary condition, a sine qua non, not only in the natural sciences but also in the field of the humanities. (Of course, in order for a theory to be academically worthwhile coherence is not a sufficient condition: for example, the telephone book may be very coherent, yet it is not an academic work.)

The methodology of the coherence theory of truth is very much in line with Popper's Critical Rationalism, Bas van Fraassen's Constructive Empiricism, etc. They all agree that reliable knowledge about the world cannot be based upon correspondence, but must be based upon coherence. That is not to say that there can be no correspondence between thought and objective reality, but correspondence as such cannot be tested. Suppose that one of the participants of a literature-and-psychology course is in reality an alien, a green little fellow that normally says bleep-bleep all the time; however, in order to gain detailed information about the Earth his superiors have transformed him into a perfect student look-alike, and they plan to beam him up right after the course so that he may tell them all there is to know about lit & psych. If the aliens did their job well, so that no one can tell the student look-alike apart from a regular human being, then it would be quite unreasonable if the teacher would accuse the poor fellow of being an alien, and for example would refuse to grade him, even though in this case this would correspond exactly with reality. The thing is that correspondence as such simply cannot be proven. The only possible proof of truth is found in sound argumentation, that is to say in coherence. The best reconstruction of reality is always the most coherent one, namely the theory that fits best with all the elements that are supposed to be relevant. For example, in the empirical sciences it is quite normal to recognise that empirical research does not test against absolute facts, but against *what we think* are facts, because no supposed facts can be seen as completely independent from theory. Or in Norwood Russell Hanson's terminology: not just theories themselves, but also the so-called facts are theory-laden[3]. Of course we may have good reasons to think that something is actually the case (is a fact), but nonetheless facts are eventually constructions too. They are not completely objective, but depend at least in part on the perspective that we consciously or unconsciously adopt.

3 Hanson 1972 [1958].

From this it follows that in the end there is no absolute certainty that we know reality for what it is. Our best shot is that we construct a picture of reality on the basis of sound, coherent argumentation.

One last example: the great early seventeenth century physicist, mathematician and astronomer Galileo is rightly famous for placing the sun, not the earth, in the centre of the solar system, like Copernicus had done before him. Galileo improved the existing contemporary theories, not because his heliocentric theory in some magical way corresponded with objective reality, but because he could prove with arguments that his theory was more coherent with the rest of our established astronomical knowledge as well as with relevant empirical data than competing theories about the universe. This example illustrates quite well that the coherence theory of truth is all about argumentation and proof, and not about mere social acceptance. Socially speaking Galileo's ideas got him into a lot of trouble. The Roman Catholic Church back then didn't care for arguments, only for politics and power, so they locked him up and forced him to recant his earlier statements. The Church had the power, but Galileo had the better argumentation, as he knew quite well: "Eppur' si muove."

To my mind, it is precisely this quest for coherence that is also crucial for interpretations of literature and art. Ideally, literary interpretations do neither present themselves as absolute, ontological truths nor as just arbitrary views, but as something in between. The best interpretation is not the one that corresponds to reality (whatever that may be), but the one that presents us with an interesting reconstruction of reality, one that accounts for a lot of data and is open to critique on reasonable grounds. Thus far from being a merely personal form of expression, a good literary interpretation will pave the way for an ongoing interesting, reasonable discussion.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 85-93**

# From bug killing to soul seeking: Georg Groddeck's "analytic delirium"

*FERENC ERŐS*[*]

In my presentation I am going to talk about three real characters, and two fictive ones. I do not need to introduce the real characters, one Austrian, one German, and one Hungarian gentleman: Sigmund Freud, Georg Groddeck and Sándor Ferenczi. The first fictive character's name is *Thomas Weltlein*. He is a middle aged guy, a foolish person, a sort of modern Don Quixote, who travels through the imperial Germany before the first world war; while the second is called simply *Miranda*, a severely near sighted young lady from Vienna in the 1960s. Weltlein is the main protagonist of Groddeck's novel *Der Seelensucher* (The Seeker of Soul), and Miranda, the only woman among these five characters, is the main figure of a short story, "Eyes to wonder" written by Ingeborg Bachmann, one of the most eminent writers of the post second world war Austrian literature. What are the connections between these real and imagined characters?

Beside Freud, Ferenczi and Groddeck had been truly important figures of the early psychoanalytic movement. Ferenczi was a member – along with Ernest Jones, Hanns Sachs, Otto Rank, Karl Abraham, and Max Eitingon – of Freud's so called "secret committee"; he was one of the knights of the "secret ring"[1]. Groddeck, the "father of psychosomatic medicine", as he is often mentioned, was, on the other hand, an outsider, a more or less marginal figure, a so called "wild analyst", who never followed the official "party line". Nevertheless, he had immense influence on both Freud and Ferenczi. Freud borrowed the concept of *Es* (the *It*), from Groddeck (a concept which derives genealogically in Nietzsche), although Freud used this concept in a very different meaning in his meta-psychology. Groddeck was Ferenczi's physician in his Baden-Baden sanatorium, or as he used to call it jokingly, "Satanarium" in the 1920s. He did not only treat his patient's physical and mental symptoms based on his medical principle called NASAMECU (*natura sanat, medicus curat,* that is, nature heals, the doctor cures), but he contributed largely to the development of the late Ferenczi's ideas on mutual analysis and on the phylogenetic origins of the soul[2].

The three men had had complicated and sometimes very troubled relations with each other. Ferenczi was in close personal contact with both Freud and Groddeck; however, the three men met simultaneously very rarely, first at the international congress of psychoanalysis held in The Hague in 1920. The primary source of studying their mutual relations are their already published

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[1] Phyllis Grosskurth: *The Secret Ring. Freud's Inner Circle and the Politics of Psychoanalysis*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, New York 1991.

[2] Sándor Ferenczi: *Thalassa. A Theory of Genitality*. Maresfield Library, Karnac Books, London 1989.

correspondences. First of all, the multi-voluminous correspondence between Freud and Ferenczi, which started in 1908, and lasted until Ferenczi's death in 1933[3]. In the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence Groddeck's name and works turn up quite a few times. The letters exchanged between Freud and Groddeck, and between Ferenczi and Groddeck, although smaller in quantity and more limited in time, are no less significant from the aspects of history. Beside private correspondences, the circular letters (*Rundbriefe*) of the "secret committee" are the most important sources[4]. Groddeck's novel, *The Seeker of Soul* published in 1921 by the International Psychoanalytic Publishing House (with the subtitle "Ein psychoanalytischer Roman") resulted in a very heated and intriguing debate within the "secret committee"[5]. (Bos, 1994). The debate on Groddeck's novel had preceded the even more tense and bitter debates on Rank's and Ferenczi's attempts at reformulating the developmental aims of psychoanalysis (1924), and later on Georg Wilhelm Pabst's psychoanalytic film *Secrets of a Soul* (1926).

The story of the publication of Groddeck's novel would deserve another novel that might be even more interesting than the original one, and illuminates not only the personal role played by each participant in the story, but the power relations within the Committee, the group of the early psychoanalysts as well. It is not by chance that Erich Fromm, who had been in close contact with Groddeck in the early thirties, and who never denied Groddeck's fundamental impact on his critical views on orthodox psychoanalysis, in the 1950s compared the "secret committee" to a Central Committee of a Communist party – exemplified by Rank's exclusion and Ferenczi's stigmatization by Ernest Jones as "mentally ill"[6].

Let's see now the main title of the novel *The Soul Seekers* or *The Soul Searcher*[7]. "Soul seeking" is a reference to the famous lines in Goethe's poetic drama *Iphigenia in Tauris:*

Denn ach mich trennt das Meer von den Geliebten,
Und an dem Ufer steh' ich lange Tage,
Das Land der Griechen mit der Seele suchend

In English translation:

*For the sea*
*Doth sever me, alas! from those I love,*
*And day by day upon the shore I stand,*
*My soul still seeking for the land of Greece*[8]

On the title page of the book a silhouette, drawn also by Goethe, can be seen. The silhouette, a rather sexist picture, shows a man sitting on the "navel of the earth", on Omphalos, a stone in Apollo's sanctuary in Delphi. The man holds a small naked female figure (a "Frauenzimmer", literally "woman's chamber") in his open palm, while he carefully investigates the "middle part" of the woman figure with a magnifying glass. Groddeck's hero, as we can read in the novel, liked the silhouette very much, called it "Seelensucher", framed the picture and hanged it over his desk. The tiny

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3 Freud, Sigmund and Sándor Ferenczi. *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi*. Vol. 1. 1908-1914; vol. 2. 1914-1919; vol. 3. 1920-1933. Ed. by Ernst Falzeder and Eva Brabant. Tr. Peter T.: Hofer. The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1993-2002.

4 G. Wittenberger and Ch. Tögel, (Eds). *Rundbriefe des "Geheimen Komitees"*, Vols. I-IV. Edition diskord, Tübingen 1999-2006.

5 See Jaap C. Bos: Die Seelensucher-Diskussion in den Rundbriefen des Geheimen Komitees. *Psyche* 48, 5. 1994. 396-324.

6 See: Erich Fromm: *Sigmund Freud's Mission: An Analysis of his Personality and Influence*, Harper and Row, New York, 1959.

7 Georg Groddeck*: Der Seelensucher. Ein psychoanalytischer Roman*.Internationale Psychoanalytische Verlag. 1921. New edition: Stroemfeld Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, Basel, 1988. English translation (typescript):*The Soul-Searcher*. Translated by Christian Darnton.

8 Goethe: *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Act I. Scene 1.Translated by Anna Swanwick.

"Frauenzimmer", and especially her "middle part" signifies, therefore, the place where the "secret of the soul" can be seen and sought "scientifically", that is, with a magnifying glass. Goethe, with Groddeck's words

> showed science a new approach, namely the approach of seeing the part in the whole, of taking the apparent whole as a symbol of the universe, of seeing the whole world symbolised in a flower, an animal, a pebble, the human eye, the sun; and to construct the world from this flower, this pebble, that is to create it anew and to investigate things not by analysing but by placing them in the context of the whole[9].

The allegory of "soul seeking" perfectly expresses the Groddeckian theory of the symbolic nature of body parts, organs and body functions, like *seeing* or *sexuality* that is the core idea of the novel as well as of his other works. The *It,* as Groddeck puts in an 1917 article,

> [this] unconscious, into whose territory we are only now beginning to penetrate, again and again creates human beings with eyes, ears, legs, hands, and necks from semen and ovum; why should it be difficult or even impossible for it to shape the character of its creation in all its mental and its physical aspects? If it shapes the body, shouldn't it be able to endow it with certain dispositions for certain reasons or make these disappear again as it makes breasts grow and wither, or hair or skin? In fact, it does create these dispositions, and will make a change to the heart perhaps or the lungs. And if we listen to its voice instead of switching ourselves off through the prejudice that we are fond of calling knowledge, then we may find out quite a few secrets"[10].

The romantic-sounding title, *The Soul Seeker* was, however, not the original one which Groddeck had given to his novel. The first title was anything but romantic; it is rather whimsical or even worse, evokes disgust or abjection. Romanticism unveils, however, through the word "soul" which appears in it, too: *Der Wanzentöter oder die entschleierte Seele Thomas Weltleins* ("The bug killer or the unveiled soul of Thomas Weltlein"). The manuscript, under the original title, was sent to Freud on October 19, 1919. As Groddeck wrote to him[11]:

> I am sending you a manuscript which I called a psychoanalytical novel in a fit of whimsy. The book made its obligatory round of the publishers and was in turn sent back to me with polite rejections and thanks. I have now given up hope of finding somebody who might publish it, yet I would like you to have a look at it before it disappears for good. Maybe Ferenczi, too, might be interested, and have a glance at it.

Freud's reaction was quite favorable to Groddeck's manuscript, though he notes (in his letter on February 7, 1920): "As for your novel, may I make the suggestion that the choice of a less whimsical title might help its publication?" A day later he wrote to Groddeck:

> I shall have your novel returned in the next few days by our publishing house. But you are wrong: I liked it. In parts I was most amused. The characters of old English humorists are well-drawn. In one respect it seems to us to resemble that model of all humorous novels, Don Quixote. The hero turns in the author's hands into something more serious than was originally planned. I admired your talent for graphic description, which is unusual, particularly in the railway scenes.

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9 Georg Groddeck: Von der Sprache, In: *Hin zu Gottnatur*, Leipzig, 3rd ed. 1912.

10 Georg Groddeck: Psychische Bedingtheit und psychoanalytische Behandlung organischer Leiden, 1917. Reprinted in *Psychoanalytische Schriften zur Psychosomatik*, Wiesbaden, 1970.

11 The Freud-Groddeck letters are quoted after Groddeck, G. (1977). The Meaning of Illness. *Int. Psycho-Anal. Lib.*, 105: 1-266. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, pp. 31-103.

Now I do believe with you that the book will not be to everybody's taste. So many clever, frank, and playful ideas are not easy to digest. And yet you should try and have it published. Worse products have been published in the name of analysis.

On April 4, 1920 Groddeck answers to Freud:

> As for the novel, I have to report that it has been rejected once again. Rejections are not accompanied by detailed reasons, they start with high praise of the first part and end with the verdict that the analytical part breaks up the artistic form and therefore destroys the whole. The latest publisher even maintained that I am losing myself in crass materialism. I shall continue to shop around. The fact that you mentioned the work in your last letter gave me back my courage. The question of a title is always difficult. I will cast around for something else. But I am not very hopeful. Everybody who reads it is somehow brought up against his own repressions and then resistance starts.

In the meanwhile Freud and Rank persuades the International Psychoanalytic Publishing House (the *Verlag*) to publish Groddeck's novel – on the author's own costs. Freud suggests that "for the title you should simply use the name of the hero and underneath put: a psychoanalytic novel." (May 9, 1920)

Otto Rank made, however, a different suggestion:

> Did Rank tell you the title he has found for the novel? Der Seelensucher I like it, but I do not want to change anything without your approval. By way of explanation I must add that I introduced a story about a silhouette into the first chapter where Thomas Weltlein is called a seeker of souls which dominates the novel; the whole of the silhouette is printed on the title page. (Groddeck to Freud, October 17, 1920)

On December 31, 1920 Groddeck gratefully thanks Freud for his intervention to publish the book. He adds that the "cover and title page are marvellous and the whole lay-out is dignified. I am very glad to see the fool run around in such good clothes. Now we have to wait and see what the world has got to say about it."

The metamorphosis of title from bug killing to soul seeking (or to dress the fool in good clothes) is in complete concordance with the spirit of the book which is also about *metamorphosis.* Bedbugs, like the monstrous vermin in Kafka's *Metamorhosis,* are symbolic creatures which signify shame and trauma. In Kafka's novel Gregor Samsa is transformed into an insect; in Groddeck's book a man called August Miller awakens, after a night struggle with bedbugs, as new person, Thomas Weltlein, the "laughing martyr", as Ferenczi called him. His rebirth was a kind of catharsis, an act of purifying the abject[12]. To summarize the novel's content I quote Ferenczi's review published in *Imago* in 1921[13].

> The hero is a middle-aged bachelor whose ordered solitude, spent in contemplative reading, is distributed by the sudden emergence of a widowed sister and her nubile young daughter. What really happened between the hero and the daughter we are never explicitly told; we can hardly even guess from the vague hints given us. In the beds of the house vermin – bedbugs – made their home and in their extermination the master of the house eagerly helps. In the chase after these bloodthirsty parasites the hero becomes 'crazy', that is to say, he frees himself of all the shackles imposed by tradition, inheritance and education. He becomes 'changed", even changes his name and becomes a vagrant. At the same time, however, his money and his old connections secure him the entry into the highest of the high strata of society; wherever he

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12 See Julia Kristeva: *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

13 Sándor Ferenczi: Review on 'Der Seelensucher'. Ein psychoanalytisher Roman by Georg Groddeck. [1921] In: *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psycho-Analysis.* Michael Balint (Eds.), Eric Mosbacher (translator). Karnac Books, London; 1994; 2000. pp. 344-348.

> arrives, he makes good use of his fool's privilege to cast the truth into people's faces, and in his way the reader comes to hear truths which even Groddeck would not dare utter except with the fool's cap on his head. We see and hear our Müller-Weltlein in the police cell, in a low-class skittle alley, in the general ward of a hospital, in a picture gallery, at the zoo, in a fourth-class railway compartment, at a street-corner meeting, at a feminist congress, among hard-boiled prostitutes, tricksters, and blackmailers, and even at a drinking bout with a Prussian royal prince. Everywhere he speaks and behaves as a real enfant terrible, notices and comments on everything, admits consciously and openly to the unavoidably childish basic quality of the adults, and ridicules all the boastful and swaggering hypocrites.

The scandal broke out immediately after the publication of Groddeck's novel. As we can follow from the *Rundbriefe,* Hanns Sachs and Karl Abraham protested sharply against the publication of *The Soul Seeker* at the *Verlag,* for two reasons. They judged the novel's literary quality and style rather weak (being too long, verbose and boring, too didactic, etc.), and reproached Freud's and Rank's voluntary decision to give the prestigeous name of the *Verlag* to such a mediocre work. The real outcry came from the Swiss Psychoanalytic Association whose members refused the novel's "obscene", "pornographic" and "rebellious" content, and demanded an immediate ban on it in Switzerland. Ernest Jones expressed his opinion as follows:

> I also would have preferred to see this sort of book, and especially this sort of man, appearing in another Verlag than our own. Ps-A has so many attractions for the popular entertainer that it seems to me better that we official representatives should lay stress on the dignified and scientific aspect, just those which our opponents deny in our work[14].

The "Groddeck affair" had already anticipated the later, deeper, more traumatic schisms within the psychoanalytic movement along the division line between "lay" or "wild" and "scientific" or "professional" psychoanalysis. The opponents of Groddeck had some reason to believe that *The Seeker of Soul* may be dangerous for the Cause (*die Sache*), since it can be (mis)understood by the public as a caricature of psychoanalysis, which speaks all the time about sexuality. For example, Thomas Weltlein thinks that a church tower is nothing else than a penis in the lap of the Holy Mother Church. It may be tempting also to project Weltlein's figure onto Freud himself who can be identified as a modern Don Quixote, fighting hopelessly with the "specters of modernity".

As for Groddeck, he had admitted to Freud in a letter on April 27, 1920, explaining the background of a case study to be published in the *Internationale Zeitschrift* that the model for Weltlein's figure was his own stepson.

> The analysis really happened as I wrote it down, yet it could only turn out the way it did because the patient is my stepson who has been living in my house ever since he was in his eighth year. He is gifted with a highly imitative, lyrical talent which might perhaps turn creative one day. During the war he broke down with a grave neurosis and has been in treatment with me for the last two years with many interruptions. That he expresses himself like the hero of my novel is because he is jealous and embodies Thomas Weltlein in nature for me. The imitation of my person which has obviously contributed a lot to Thomas Weltlein plays a large part in the symptoms of his neurosis and probably in their causes too. Treating him has its attractions and its difficulties because of the close ties. Perhaps one day I shall have time to write down his case history: it is characterised by neurotic complexes, which produced a series of boils on the face and back, and is a typical example of the condition which originally made me learn to analyse patients suffering from so-called somatic illnesses[15].

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[14] *Rundbriefe* 2 (1921). 67.

[15] Eine Symptomanalyse' (A symptom analysis). *Intern. Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse* VI, 1920. Reprinted in *Psychoanalytische Schriften zur Psychosomatik,* Wiesbaden, 1970.

As for Freud, it is interesting to observe the changes of his attitude toward Groddeck – a sort of genuine metamorphosis, too. In the beginning, in their earlier correspondence dating back to 1917, Freud was very pleased to be approached by Groddeck who presented him his ideas about the psychological causes of illness, but at the same time Freud reminds the German doctor the lack of his originality and his basic philosophical errors.

> Thus, while I would like to hold out both my hands to you to receive you as a colleague, there is only one disturbing circumstance, the fact that you have not managed to overcome the trivial ambition of claiming originality and priority. [...] Could you have absorbed the main ideas of psychoanalysis in a cryptomnestic way? In a way similar to my discoveries relating to my own originality? What's the use of struggling for priorities against an older generation? I regret this point of your information particularly since experience has shown that an untamed ambitious individual sooner or later jumps up and turns into an eccentric to the detriment of science and of his own career. [...] Why do you jump from your beautiful basis into mysticism, cancel the distinction between mental and somatic, commit yourself to philosophical theories which are not called for? Your experience does not take you any further than the realisation that the psychological factor is of an unimaginably great importance also in the origin of organic diseases? Yet does it cause these illnesses by itself, does this invalidate the distinction between mental and somatic in any way? It seems to me as wilful completely to spiritualise nature as radically to despiritualise it. (June 5, 1917)

By 1920, Freud seemed to be almost completely "seduced" by the doctor of Baden-Baden, by the "analytic delirium" offered by *The Seeker of Soul* and Groddeck's other writings. Nevertheless, he retained his original ambivalence. Commenting an analytic case study sent by Groddeck, he noted: "clever person comes to a point where he starts to turn mystical, where his most personal thinking begins. But couldn't you perhaps change a few things in these last sentences, make a sacrificio d'emozione [Italian in the original]? (November 15, 1920)

For Freud, their mutual approach contributed largely to the formulation and reformulation of his concepts, Eros and Thanatos, the place of the Id in the psychic structure, as well as his phylogenetic ideas under Lamarck's influence, originally elaborated together with Ferenczi during the first world war. It is not by chance that Freud's *The Ego and the Id* and Groddeck's *Book of the It* were published in the same year (1923). Now it was Groddeck who condemned Freud with the lack originality. He wrote to his wife on May 15, 1923[16]:

> The Ego and the Id is pretty, but quite uninteresting for me. In reality it was written to appropriate secretly loans made by Stekel and me. And yet his Id is of only limited use for the understanding of neuroses. He ventures into the realm of organic illness only in a very sneaky way, with the help of a death instinct or destruction drive taken from Stekel and Spielrein. He disregards the constructive aspect of my It, presumably to smuggle it in next time. Some of it is quite amusing.

Three years later Freud sent the following congratulation letter to Groddeck:

> On your 60th birthday our association sends you its warmest congratulations. Even your enemies in the scientific field are admirers and friends of your person. We are all grateful to you for the idosyncratic views with which you opened up barely explored areas. Then we all want to thank you for the happy laugh into which you transformed our normally so serious investigation of the psyche, in your Seeker of Souls. (11 October 1926)

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16 Georg Groddeck: *The Meaning of Illness*. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London 1977. 13.

While Freud finally has retained his ambivalence toward Groddeck, and he never gave up – in spite of a few severe temptations – his philosophical dualism, Ferenczi's metamorphosis was spectacular indeed. In the beginning of their acquaintance he was completely in agreement with Freud on judging Groddeck's therapeutic methods and his conclusions. For example, on June 14, 1918, he wrote to Freud: Groddeck "must be a very uncritical man [...] It strikes me altogether as more and more probable that Groddeck is not curing at all with analysis, but rather that with the aid of the transference he puts the plastic power of hysteria into the service of the organic tendency to heal"[17].

A few year later, however, it was Ferenczi who greeted most enthusiastically Groddeck's *The Seeker of Soul.* In his above quoted review published in *Imago* he compares him to Swift, Rabelais and Balzac. He interprets Groddeck's novel as follows:

> All the work of man is only plastic representation of the genitals and of the genital act [...] The world is dominated by a magnificent unity. The dualism of body and soul is a superstition. The whole body thinks; thoughts can find expression in the form of a moustache, a corn, even an excreta. The soul is 'infected' by the body, the body by the contents of the soul; and in fact it is not permissible to talk about the 'ego'. One does not live, but one is 'lived' by something. The strongest 'infections' are the sexual ones. He who does not want to see eroticism becomes myopic; he who cannot 'smell" eroticism catches a cold. The preference for the erotogenic zone may manifest itself in the formation of one's feature, in, for instance, a double chin. The priest is clerically 'infected' by his cassock, knitting knits the whole female sex into a pathetic pitiness.

Let's put aside for a moment Ferenczi's and Groddeck's rather Weiningerian views on women, and let's talk about seeing. "He who does not want to see eroticism becomes myopic" wrote Ferenczi, and he echoes simply Groddeck who was particularly interested in the *psychosomatics of vision*. He emphasized in one his essays on seeing that

> [j]udging by their meaning and purpose the majority of eye complaints could be considered attempts by the It to obstruct the visual perception of the outside world. There is some justification in treating every illness of the eye as a method of facilitating the repression of disturbing impressions from the external world on to the internal world. Where the turning away of the eyes, the head, and the body, or the closing of the eyelids does not suffice we get an illness, be it a mere sty or complete blindness. Diagnosis and therapy may involve the examination and illumination of the dark unconscious; one could even say that this is the most important part of the treatment by the eye doctor[18].

Groddeck's ideas about seeing our ability to combine the rational exploration and understanding of the world with a mystical experience of inner vision. In *The Seeker of Soul*

Weltlein wears glasses made from simple window glass, because, as he says, "the glasses remind me that I have a mission, and everything has to serve this mission: I must rather blind myself than to see something that contradicts to my ideas".

In Ingeborg Bachman's *Eye to Wonder* (Ihr Glücklichen Augen)[19] the young woman, Miranda suffers from serious myopia, she has to wear seven dioptry glasses. However, most of the time, she forgets to use them, because she founds the world around her so unbearable that she does not want to see what happens around her: e.g., how her fiancé seduces her best friend... Bachmann dedicates her

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[17] Sigmund Freud Sándor Ferenczi. *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi*. Volume 2, 1914-1919.

[18] Vom Sehen, von der Welt des Auges und vom Sehen ohne Augen, 1932. First published in *Psychoanalytische Schriften zur Psychosomatik,* Wiesbaden, 1970.

[19] Ingeborg Bachmann*:* Ihr glücklichen Augen (1971). In *Werke*. München, Piper 1978, Bd. 2. 354-373.

story to the memory of Georg Groddeck to whom she devoted a separate essay. For Groddeck, Bachmann explains, a physical symptom

> "is a production, like an artistic one, and sickness means something. It wants to say something, it says it by its particular way of appearing, running its course, and disappearing or ending fatally. It says what the sick person doesn't understand, although it's his most particular expression. [...] The *It* is a word he uses for lack of better, it's not a thing in itself but is supposed to mean something's there, it's there and stronger and much stronger than the ego, for the ego can't even intentionally intervene in breathing, in digestion, in blood circulation, the ego is a mask, a pretension with which all of us go about – and we are ruled by the *It*, the *It* does that, and it speaks through sickness in symbols"[20] (W 4: 352).

Ingeborg Bachmann's attraction to Groddeck belongs to his literary legacy which extends from the Hungarian poet Milán Füst (who was treated by him in Baden-Baden, and shaped a character after him in one of his novels) to the German novelist Alfred Döblin and the British writer Lawrence Durrell. His psychoanalytic legacy is more controversial. As Martin Grotjahn remarked:

> Groddeck allowed his unconscious to erupt freely – almost as if constantly in the process of being analyzed. Only after his ideas, impressions, interpretations emerged he put them in some kind of more or less socially approved forms. He seduced his listeners into following him – he encouraged them to abandon intellectual and logical censorship. He did not convince by reasoning of or by facts – his evidence was of different kind. He convinced by experience of evidence, leaving it up to his pupils to put the so gained knowledge into the framework of science. The only safeguard against the dangers of George Groddeck's method and against running off in wild phantasies is the constant logical and rational open-eyed observation of the clinical facts[21].

Ferenczi was in fact one of the "listeners" who was "seduced" by Groddeck into an "analytic delirium". His gradual identification with his Baden-Baden doctor was a consequence, at least partly, of the cumulating of bitterness about and disappointment in Freud. As he wrote in his famous Christmas confession letter to Groddeck (December 25, 1921): "I could never be completely free and open with him; I felt that he expected too much of this 'deferential respect' from me; he was too big for me, there was too much of a father." Ferenczi sought in Groddeck not only a doctor who can heal his somatic and psychological symptoms at the same time, but an intimate friend as well. He wrote in the same Christmas letter to Groddeck: "I notice that I'm imitating your 'Letters to a Woman Friend' in peppering this letter with these entertaining morsels. Are you by any chance this female friend for me, or am I using you friendship in a homosexual way to replace her?"[22]

Groddeck's growing influence on Ferenczi can be detected in the formation of his ideas in the 1920s, first of all in the monistic theory on the origins of sexuality in *Thalassa* as a "phylogenetic fantasy", and his later "experiments" in "active technique" and "mutual analysis". Thomas Weltlein as an "enfant terrible" served for Ferenczi a model which he himself tried to follow when he had assumed the role of an "enfant terrible" of the psychoanalytic movement, the role of the "wise baby" who casts the unpleasant truth on the face of people. In any case, it was Groddeck himself who had clearly recognized the tragedy inherent in Ferenczi's carrier. As he wrote to Ferenczi's widow Gizella in 1934:

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[20] Ingeborg Bachmann: *Werke*. München, Piper 1978. Bd 4. 352.

[21] Martin Grotjahn: Georg Groddeck and his Teachings about Man's Innate Need for Symbolization: ... *Psychoanal. Rev*., 1945, 32:9-24.

[22] Sándor Ferenczi – Georg Groddeck: *Correspondence 1921-1933*. Ed. Christopher Fortune. Open Gate Press, London, 2002, pp. 8-11.

Even before going over to psychoanalysis one of the underlying principles of my medical thinking was the conviction that in human individuals there are – apart from the psyche which is the subject of scientific investigation – thousands and millions of more or less independently existing souls which continuously unite and separate, group and re-group, working sometimes for and sometimes against each other, and probably exist quite independently at times. Having embraced this view, I was content to leave it at that. I never tried to study this cosmos; it simply isn't in my nature to go into matters which I consider unfathomable. Being such a close friend of Sándor's, I soon realised that he viewed these matters similarly. I was thus horrified to see him proceed to investigate this human cosmos scientifically, even attempt to describe it, so that others could participate in this undoubtedly overwhelming spectacle. He became completely consumed by this endeavour. He expressed it thus to me: I atomise the soul. Such atomisation, though, if pursued seriously, can only end in the dissolution of the self, for another human being is, and always will remain hidden to us. We can only atomise our own soul, and that will destroy us. [...] However close we may have been, and however great our friendship, he had already left me far behind in his ascent to the stars, which I couldn't and wouldn't join"[23].

[23] Ibid., 113-114.

**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 95-100**

# Rhetoric of the self in deconstruction and in psychoanalysis

*ANTAL BÓKAY*[*]

The integrative agency of human subjectivity has always been a central question of psychoanalysis[1]. Of course, this is true to the whole modern period of philosophy and other branches of the humanities too. Recently – as a kind of late modern or postmodern development – an interconnection, a constant dialogue developed in this theme between psychoanalysis and the humanities. Psychoanalysis offered an effective mode of explanation concerning the heterogeneous nature of human subjectivity, while philosophy and other fields like literary theory presented the general principles of different subjective entities. In my paper I try reflect on the rhetorical nature of subjectivity, a theme that was already discussed by Freud and also from a different point of view through the analysis of the concept of self, was developed by deconstruction.

I use the term "self" in a very general, inclusive sense, referring to a phenomenalized, autonomous subjective entity that includes the person in general. This meaning of the word developed only in early modernism when the person became the central creative cultural force. According the 2nd edition of the Oxford English Dictionary the "self" is "A permanent subject of successive and varying states of consciousness" The OED then quotes the poet Thomas Traherne from 1674:

> A secret self I have enclos'd within,
> That was not bounded with my clothes or skin

The poem quoted refers to a basic, inner essence, an inside that is different from its outside, something that has, must have a kind of phenomenalization as we know it from something that it is really there. This concept of self is different from the idea of the subject or person or ego, as it is a dynamic, self-perceptive and self-creating entity, not an object, but an objectification of a feeling. Probably the most detailed and historically based summary of the idea of self was given by Charles Taylor in his excellent book titled *Sources of Self*. Taylor described the term as

> "the ensemble of (largely unarticulated) understandings of what it is to be a human agent: the senses of inwardness, freedom, individuality and being imbedded in nature which are at home in the modern West"[2].

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1 Anthony Elliott presented psychoanalysis through a modern/postmodern undertsanding of subjectivity in an excellent book (Anthony Elliott: Psychoanalytic Theory – An Introduction. New York: Palgrave, 2002).

2 Taylor, Charles: *Sources of Self – The Making of Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. 1.

Taylor's self concept was a bit over-inclusive, in his book he followed the full history of the changing ideas of human individuation, first as it was connected with identification with God, than followed by the appearance of the idea of "inwardness" in the work of Augustinus, and arrived at the modern times of the renaissance and in the philosophical concept of the "I" or ego in Descartes, Locke and finally to psychoanalysis and the 20th Century. My approach, my understanding of the idea of self is historically much more limited, as I would like to reserve this term for that self-reflexive creativity that was first sensed in the Renaissance and fully developed in the period of romanticism[3]. One sign, one clear phenomenalization of this was the birth of the self-portrait in the Renaissance. In literature the self became central theme in Shakespeare, first of all in his *Hamlet*, which was the *expressis verbis* tragedy of the self, and which was really read, accepted, canonized only in romanticism, a period when this dynamic concept of individuation became a basic, general cultural experience. Taylor defined this period as an "expressive turn", and exactly this phenomena, this expressivity of the subjective that I would like to reserve the term "self".

According to Taylor the idea of "nature as an inner source"[4] appears in the 18th Century. But with Romanticism an important turn happened: nature lost its deistic character and turned into the "notion of an inner voice or impulse, the idea that we find truth within us, and in particular in our feelings"[5], a "significance (that) comes from within"[6]. German interpreters of *Hamlet* like Goethe, Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel all talk about a new inner center, a "Gemüt" that limits and forces the actions of the melancholic prince. In this type of thinking a constant problem, enigma continuously popped up: the problem of the availability of this inner center, its presentation in something definable that often appeared in binary hierarchy of the inner and the outer. Besides the philosophical, poetical understanding romanticism raised the linguistic, rhetorical side of this problem through the opposition of the concepts of allegory and symbol. The subject, in this understanding can rely only on its own invisible resources, on its feeling as it is phenomenalized, become available. This phenomenalization is not representation, not mimesis, but more a recreation, a repetition, where it is not easy to define what the original is: the phenomenal creates the inner, or the inner is recreated in the outer.

In this sense psychoanalysis, a deeply romantic discipline, and as such can be interpreted as the most elaborated systematic understanding and practice of the self. The major and radically new idea of Freud was that in the existence of the human subject the creative connection of the inner and outer is by no means homogeneous, cannot be understood as the coherence of two systems that are built on the same principle, the principle of rationality, logicality both present in the outer existence and the inner essence. With the idea of the unconscious Freud presented a heterogeneous, conflicting and deconstructive pole in the subject and the self was understood as the constant and problematic coordination of the conscious and unconscious. In the *Interpretation of Dreams,* in its last, seventh chapter, Freud built up a kind of phenomenology of the self (he did not use this term directly), a metapsychology that discussed its components and the relation of these components. In a later work he defined the function of dream as "a projection: an externalization of an internal process"[7]. In this paper, written in 1915 Freud defined the inner and outer as understandable through their relation to perception, where differentiation is done with the help of activity.

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3 This full development of self created such subjective entities as the literary work. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy discussed this process through the concept of "literary absolute" (Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe – Jean-Luc Nancy: *The Literary Absolute – The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1988.

4 Taylor: *Sources of Self*, 368.

5 Ibid. 368.

6 Ibid. 369.

7 Freud, Sigmund: A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Tr. by James Strachey, The Hogarth Press, 2001, 223.

> "A perception which is made to disappear by an action is recognized as external, as reality; where such an action makes no difference, the perception originates within the subject's own body – it is not real[8].

The control contains two components: referentiality and activity. Interestingly Freud immediately turns this definition of the existence of the inner into its epistemology:

> It is of value to the individual to possess a means such as this of recognizing of reality, which at the same time helps him to deal with it, and he would be glad to be equipped with a similar power against the often merciless claims of his instincts[9].

And he adds the following sentence returning to the idea of projection and to dreams as well:

> That is why he takes such a pains to transpose outwards what becomes troublesome to him from within – that is to *project* it[10].

The key term is projection that cannot be equaled with representation as it has a clear activity nature, it is more a repetition. In this paper Freud discusses the phenomenon of hallucination where the subject looses his ability to differentiate between the inner and outer, the subjective and objective.

Concerning the nature of this projection Freud emphasized an important difference, used a double definition in the *Interpretation of Dreams*. On the last pages of the Irma dream analysis we read the following definitions:

> "the 'meaning' of the dream was borne upon me. (...) The dream fulfilled certain wishes which were started in me by the events of the previous evening. (...) *Thus its content was the fulfilment of a wish and its motive was a wish*[11].

And the last sentence of the chapter repeats:

> *When the dream interpretation has been completed, we perceive that the dream is the fulfillment of a wish* (Freud's italics)[12].

On the first level, Freud suggests a kind of referential relevance, defines the hidden wish as the referent of the dream. The referent, the referential connection however, is not a conventionally fixed symbolic relation, but an activity, a process, a fulfillment of that something, it is primarily a performative, not a piece of knowledge but more an event of existence (in the dream it is hallucinatorical). The activity, however, connects two levels, a signifier-like dream-text and a signified-like inner meaning ("dreams have meaning" repeats Freud quite often).

The second aspect of Freud's semantics comes up in a later part of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in a well known footnote added in 1925. In this Freud complains that the analysts:

> "seek to find the essence of dreams in their latent content and in so doing they overlook the distinction between the latent dream-thought and the dream-work. At bottom, dreams are nothing other than a particular *form* thinking, made possible by the state of sleep. It is the dream-work that creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming"[13].

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8 Ibid., 233.

9 Ibid. 234.

10 Ibid., 233.

11 Freud, Sigmund: *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Standard Edition vol. 4. 195.

12 Ibid., 196.

13 Ibid. vol. 5. 506-507.

This alternative concept of the dream defines it as a rhetorical, formative process, not a meaning, not as a hidden essence but as a process of formation. This process is the activity partly of the dreamer (through the dream work) but also the activity of the interpreter. The dream, and through its example, the individual, the self can be therefore defined as a rhetorical process (like condensation, displacement, means of representation and secondary revision). Lacan talked about the first two with clearly rhetorical terms as metaphor and metonymy to which two others can be added: the imaginary, its visualized nature and also the frequent narrative character of dreams.

It is interesting that in a work of Paul de Man a clearly rhetorical understanding, analysis of the self can be found, with rather frequent but hidden references to Freud's work. De Man in the second, often unread half of the *Allegories of Reading*[14] interprets the works of one of the first philosophers of the self, Rousseau and creates a full theory of the of the constructive and deconstructive processes of the self and self-formation.

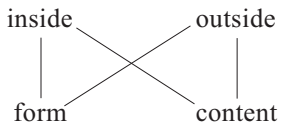
The central concern of de Man (quite similar to Freud) is the movement the process that connects the inside and outside. From a different, metatheoretical point of view the inside-outside difference is already stated in the first chapter of the book, titled *Semiology and Rhetoric*. Reviewing the present situation of literary theory de Man talks about a change that "we may no longer hearing too much about relevance but we keep hearing a great deal about reference, about the non-verbal "outside" to which language refers, by which it is conditioned and upon which it acts" (3), and in the background of this understanding, there is a "moral imperative that strives to reconcile the internal, formal, private structures of literary language with their external, referential, and public effects" (3). To summarize the theoretical approaches to the literary work de Man talks about a

> "metaphorical model of literature as a kind of box that seperates an inside from an outside, and the reader or the critic as the person who opens the lid in order to release in the open what was secreted but inaccessible inside"(5).

One possibility is a grammatical understanding where the inside is form, the outside is content; the other is a referential, affect based approach, where the inside is a human content the outside is the form that serves the presentation of the content.


His aim, however, was "to speculate on different set of terms", to arrive at a better method to understand, read the inside-outside relation in case of subjective entities. This method accepts the possibility of the two boxes, but suggests that the referential relation is always surpassed by grammatical-linguistic relation; while the grammatical relation is deconstructed by the referential, subjective content.

One can never stop this process, as there are texts that are impossible to be fixed as referential or figurative. This way metaphorical box, the two a=b relations are turned into a different a:b=c:d syntagm, the metaphors are really woven into a chiasmatic process.



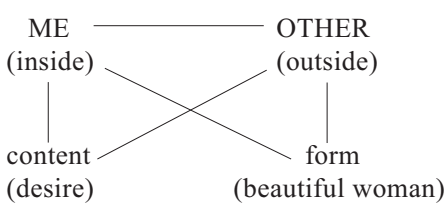

[14] Paul de Man: *Allegories of Reading – Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979 (Page numbers of quotations are given int he text).

This chiasmatic structure serves as the basic characteristic feature of the concept of self in Rousseau's work. The first chapter of the second half of the *Allegories of Reading* is titled "Metaphor", it discusses the basic figurative position of the self. Metaphor can be defined as a special alternative method of signification that can be used to talk about subjective entities. In this chapter de Man discusses the naming of subjectivity, the naming, referring to the subject and with this the creating of the self. Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins and the Foundations of Inequality among Men* presented two possible definitions of "man". The first was through imagining a fictional situation when the primitive man met another and was frightened by him. He called the other "giant", that is he used metaphor. Later, however, it turned out for him, that the other was similar to him, a repetition of him, and he created another word: "man" to refer to this being. The word "man" defines the self referentially through calculation. In the first case the self is figurative in the second it is literal, referential, these two relations, separated from each other, form the same type of box that we saw before. But de Man found an important deconstructive dynamics in Rousseau, one that prohibits the totalizing fixation of these relations. These dynamical, heterogeneous forces are fear, freedom, perfectibility, the will and ability to transgress – all are powerful inner forces that ruin the original, natural existence. These are all dynamic subjective energies, they introduce a heterogeneous tendency into a fixed, homogeneous situation. Fear, freedom and perfectibility are forces that turn the box of naming into a chiasmatic process, where man is figurative and referential in the same time:


The next chapter titled *Self (Pygmalion)* summarized this in the following way:

> "In the case of such concepts as "fear", "perfectibility" and ultimately "man" it is impossible to decide whether they are referential names for extralinguistic entities or mere phantoms of language. And it is equally impossible to let the question remain in abeyance, since the pressure towards meaning and the pressure towards its undoing can never cancel each other out" (161).

In this chapter de Man interpreted two plays of Rousseau: the early *Narcisse* and the later *Pygmalion*. In the metaphor chapter the self was understood by de Man as a self-reading, the naming of "the myself" in a context where the other served only as a passive mirror. Now the center is the definition of the self through the other, and this is the reason why the heterogeneous force would be different, it is "love" here. Love is a dynamic energy that allows the reading of the self (the inside) through somebody else, through an outside person. The first step is the differentiation between the natural self-love and and the unnatural vanity, the search for the love of the others. In the play Valere, the main character, is cured from his self-admiration by his sister, who paints a portrait of Valere as a woman. Valere falls in love with the "woman" who is really himself. In this case the chiasmatic structure builds up the like this:



Another interesting rhetorical feature can be added: the introduction of love places the foration of the self into time and in the outside world. The mimetic becomes diagetic, or better to say, it is impossible to be decided in which moment it fulfills a mimetic or a narrative function.

I have to stop here, but through the analysis of Rousseau's work de Man builds up a complicated rhetorical and later performative analysis of the possible forms of understanding of the self. I believe that connecting his theories with Freud's early understanding, would add important aspects to a post-phenomenological theory of the self.

**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 101-107**

# ‘Reading to heal?’ Some reflections on bibliotherapy from an existential-phenomenological perspective

*SIMON DU PLOCK*[*]

ABSTRACT

*Currently, there is a growing interest in the UK in using literature in the therapeutic domaine. It is important, when considering how such a ‘Bibliotherapy’ might be developed, to consider antecedents. Engagement with literature probably constitutes the primary ‘therapeutic contact’ for most clients, and the importance of literature has been recognized by many existential-phenomenological writers. Clinical experience provides evidence of the ways in which clients can utilize reading to help them ‘re-story’ aspects of their lived experience, and indicates possible limitations of much North American Bibliotherapy. Here, I want to suggest briefly how an existential-phenomenological attitude might lead us towards forms of therapeutic use of literature which do justice to its disclosing and revelatory potential.*

The notion that literature – both reading and writing – may be of therapeutic value has received a good deal of attention recently, both in the professional therapy press and in the popular press. I learned via an article in The Times (October 11, 2003) of the Reading and You Scheme (RAYS), a project initiated in 2000 in the Kirkless and Calderdale areas of West Yorkshire. The idea of the scheme is to promote reading as an alternative to prescription drugs, and to boost self-esteem through one-to-one advice surgeries, conversations about books, and group readings. The initiative evolved after librarians heard numerous reports from borrowers that a book had assisted them in tackling a life problem. ‘Patients’ are referred to a therapist by a network of community psychiatric nurses, health visitors, social workers, occupational therapists and occasionally GPs. Interest in such developments

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has spread South and Dr Phil Ferrand, senior lecturer in health psychology at Plymouth University set up a scheme in 2004 aimed at encouraging GPs to prescribe books on the NHS in an attempt to replace drugs with self-help texts for people diagnosed with 'mild psychological illnesses'. Reporting of this initiative announced a wider applicability:

> *The scheme will see patients with conditions ranging from manic depression to head injuries being sent to their local library rather than the pharmacist. There they will present an NHS "book prescription" form to obtain a loan of a volume most relevant to their condition. Under the scheme, for example, depressives might be prescribed* The Feeling Good Handbook *rather than the Prozac they might previously have received*. (The Sunday Times, December 5, 2004, 1.3)

A further recent acknowledgement of the therapeutic use of reading and writing is provided by Wright in her article 'Words, writing about experience and reading other people's diaries' in the December 2004 edition of the *Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal*. Drawing on her own experience, she provides a brief account of an online counselling via email pilot project in Sheffield. She notes that

> *A lot of therapeutic approaches use writing in therapy: Cognitive Analytic Therapy, for example and narrative therapy, but there is no writing therapy as yet, no equivalent of art, dance and movement or music therapy.* (p. 17)

I find this, personally, quite salutary, since I recall formulating the notion of using literature therapeutically fifteen years ago and, as I thought, arriving at the word 'Bibliotherapy' as a label to designate this new strand of therapy. Some years later, in 1997, I was invited to speak about existential-phenomenological therapy at a conference in Lithuania and at the reception referred to my innovation in conversation with Dr Alexei Alexanovich, the founder of existential therapy in the Baltic States. To my surprise he claimed 'Bibliotherapy' as his own creation with alacrity, stating that he had been successfully teaching it for many years. He does, indeed, lead a short course in this on the Masters Programme at the Institute for Humanistic and Existential Psychology in Birstonas, Lithuania. The syllabus exists only in Russian and I have found it impossible to date to have it translated.

While the term 'Bibliotherapy' may be of fairly recent origin, the activity it denotes is not. The therapeutic function of literature has probably been known since the beginning of written communication, and the oral tradition of storytelling predates even this and still continues in different ways in every culture. It is not without reason that the inscription over the entrance of the Ancient Greek library at Thebes proclaimed it "The healing place of the soul" (Zaccaria and Moses, 1968). Books have functioned for centuries as silent therapists for incalculable numbers. Both factual and fictional writing can provide readers with models to give them insight into the nature of the humans condition and problems of living. We need to acknowledge that for many, perhaps the majority, of clients the first 'therapeutic contact' is not with a psychologist or therapist, but with the written word. As Bernstein asserts:

> *Both adults and children are often the prime seekers of their own help through books, delegating an adult to a lesser role of facilitator. Lest any persons protest they have never sought out books to help themselves, let them think back to a time they hid a book. In some manner, that book probably helped them – by providing information they were afraid or ashamed to seek elsewhere, by clarifying concepts, by explaining a bit of their own lives.* (1989: 159)

Given this it seems remarkable that we have given so little consideration to the implications of this for clinical practice. Rather than engage with this fact in a transparent and coherent manner,

exploring it as a part of the client's journey, it often seems to be relegated to a misty time 'before therapy began'. Such an attitude encourages us to split the client's life up into discrete sections rather than adopt a more holistic perspective or appreciation of the client's 'projects'. It also largely ignores any reading which clients undertake during therapy, unless it is a part of the homework the therapist sets. This splitting is reflected, too, in the arrangement of bookshops and libraries where 'self-help' and 'popular psychology' are generally separated from academic psychology and counselling texts and are certainly separated from fiction, biography, poetry, etc. though texts such as de Botton's popular *How Proust Can Change Your Life* (1997) defy categorization. This is obviously logical – the idea of attempting to find a particular title in an undifferentiated bookstore is clearly absurd – but it also suggests that 'therapeutic texts' really can be distinguished from literature in general.

Such a distinction becomes especially problematic when we consider the way in which existential philosophers have employed literature in order to proselytize. Karl and Hamalian, writing on the "literary manifestations" of existentialism, identify aspects of this philosophy "in writers as different as Tolstoy and Proust, Kafka and Moravia" (1973: 11). What seems to distinguish such literature is a concern on the part of the authors:

> *with individual conduct. Philosophy, for them, is ethical... it is an attempt to create individuals who seek meaningful lives. Even put this way, the existential imagination is not heroic. Its defiance is low-keyed in modulations of character and action. The climax of an existential story is often not a traditional climax at all, but simply a ripple of behaviour, a sense of nausea overcome or experienced, a broken relationship recognized by both parties, a meaningless journey completed to nowhere.* (1973: 17,18)

These qualities may be found throughout literature, and are not confined to the work of contributors to the philosophical movement identified as existentialism. Kaufmann, noting the readiness with which commentators have attributed the label 'existentialist' to widely different revolts against traditional philosophy, argues

> *Many writers of the past have frequently been hailed as members of this [Existentialist] Movement, and it is extremely doubtful whether they would appreciate the company to which they are consigned.* (1956: 11)

Warnock raises a more sophisticated objection to the notion of 'existential literature'. As a philosopher she argues that existentialism

> *Is a kind of philosophy... largely practical in its intentions, and though it has had more impact upon literature than probably any other kind of philosophy, yet there is a point in treating it as a philosophy in some fairly strict sense, in order, among other things, to compare it with other kinds of philosophy.* (1987: 3)

Her concern, clearly, is to differentiate between the ethical voluntarism which engages with human beings as voluntary agents, and Husserlian phenomenology. The 'non-philosophical Existentialist' writer may be influenced by existential philosophy but does not make the, for Warnock, necessary connection with phenomenology:

> *The non-philosophical Existentialist will share the common interests of his philosophical cousin, but he will not share a method. This is not just a matter of what form he chooses to write in, but rather of whether or not he is attempting a* systematic *account of man's connection with the world.* (1989: 3)

I think we would have to acknowledge that this stipulation leaves very little fiction beyond that of Sartre which can be included under the rubric 'philosophical Existentialism' – and perhaps not even very much of Sartre's work achieves a *systematic* account.

Caute, in his Introduction to *What is Literature?* states Sartre's key theme:

> *The writer should propose in each work a concrete liberation on the basis of a specific situation.*
>
> *The thesis is clear: literature, properly employed, can be a powerful means of liberating the reader from the kinds of alienation which develops in particular situations.* (1986: ix)

I will not attempt, here, any in-depth analysis of the workings of *littérature engagée*, but will merely note the example given by Caute of Rocquentin's struggle with his sense of absurdity in *Nausea*:

> *Sartre... believed that the literary exploration of such a condition, if penetrating and truthful, has the therapeutic value of helping the reader to identify and transcend his alienation.* (ibid: xi)

The distinction between a 'philosophical' and a 'non-philosophical' Existentialism is an interesting one for a further reason, which is the danger that a writer's preoccupation with a systematic account may lead to an aridity or even dogmatism which mitigates against the practical assistance in living they seek to offer. The analogy might be with directive versus non-directive therapy, each approach has advantages but may alienate some clients. With regard to directness, Maquarrie reminds us that

> *There has been much literary production independent of any direct or even indirect philosophical influence from the existentialists, yet itself 'existentialist' in its affinities and sometimes coming to exert an influence on the philosophers. One thinks, for instance, of the impact that Holderlin's poetry has made upon Heidegger.* (1973: 262)

In practice, (and as a clinician I find it invaluable to attend to the lessons clients offer me), I have found clients draw on a wide range of literature to help them make sense of their lives. Clients frequently bring literature into the consulting room, both literally and metaphorically. The stories of two clients immediately come to mind. The first, 'John', talked about how reading *The Dead*, the final short story in James Joyce's *Dubliners*, helped him to come to a new understanding of feeling trapped in a loveless marriage. For him the crucial element of his reading was that he could identify his feelings as similar to those of Gabriel, the husband in the story, and realize that these feelings had been felt before and were part of the human condition. I would say that the text 'mirrors' the client's experience in a way which a therapist does not, and perhaps, cannot.

The second client, 'Susan', was questioning her sexuality. She brought Radcliffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* into sessions because she identified with the despair felt by Stephen, the book's protagonist. For her this character expressed what until then had been impossible to give voice to. It seems to me that for these and other clients literature had the function of raising awareness and providing a sense of connectedness to a community of suffering, or more broadly, a community of experience.

The relationship between 'John', 'Susan' and other clients, and the text is idiosyncratic and defies assimilation into a specific and concrete 'Bibliotherapy method'. It is, rather, complex and subjective, and seems to be part of a journey of (self-)discovery which can be supported or hindered by the nature of the therapeutic alliance. I find myself resonating with Libby Perves when she points out that literature which has an *oblique* rather than a direct relevance to a particular problem of living is of the greatest value. Citing the example of the experience of divorce, she states that it is "liberating to read something different but weirdly parallel (Today, Radio 4, 9.12. 2004). Among the books discussed in this interview was Margaret Attwood's *The Handmaiden's Tale*, a bleak feminist

futuristic novel which postulates a world where there are no men and women have to come to alternative arrangements for biological reproduction. In doing so it engages indirectly with notions of relationship and identity.

I would contend that there is another parallel here. The development of different ways of using texts therapeutically and the extent to which they influence and interpenetrate each other is remarkably similar to the reaction of American humanistic psychology to the European existential tradition. Yalom articulates the American view:

> *The European focus is on limits, on facing and taking into oneself the anxiety of uncertainty and non-being. The humanistic psychologists, on the other hand, speak less of limits and contingency than of development of potential, less of acceptance than of awareness, less of anxiety than of peak experiences and oceanic oneness, less of life meaning than of self-realization, less of apartness and basic isolation than of I-Thou and encounter.* (1980: 19)

The tragic dimension of existence, then, largely gives way to a pragmatic, technique-based approach; the 'community of suffering' is replaced by individual striving towards self-actualization. This may, in part, relate to the largely Catholic heritage of Continental Europe which places an intermediary clergy – a community of religious advice and support – between the individual and their existential anxieties. In comparison, the dominant Protestant ethic of North America places responsibility for the searching of the soul on the individual. England seems to stand with a foot in both camps, though erring towards an American perspective.

Much of North American bibliotherapy appears to be aimed at specific discrete 'problems'. As Pardeck and Pardeck explain

> *... clinicians have found that bibliotherapy helps clients conduct self-examinations and provides them with insight into countless types of problems...* (1992: 1)

Little attention is paid to existential givens. Stanley, at the most optimistic and pragmatic end of the spectrum, considers bibliotherapy to be a 'science' (1995:4). She provides recommendations or 'bookscriptions' for readers seeking guidance on subjects as specific and as amorphous as, for example, 'Creativity', 'Coping With a Chronic Illness', 'Addiction and Recovery', 'Mental Illness', 'Self-Esteem' and 'Discovering Your Life's Mission'. Holbrook Jackson, an English commentator, provides a fictitious corrective to the reliance on obsessive taxonomy in his earlier text, *The Anatomy of Bibliomania* (1950). Inspired by Robert Burton's 1621 *Anatomy of Melancholy*, he addresses the notion of books as pharmaceutical products in chapters with titles such as 'Books as Soporifics', 'Their Medicinal Properties Generally Considered', 'Preservatives and Prophylactics', and 'The Cure of Megrims, Melancholy and like Distempers'.

Approaches such as that adopted by Stanley are clearly more humanistic than existential, where the emphasis is less on problem solving than on the development of a greater appreciation of what it means to be human – an appreciation which provides an indirect route to engage with difficulties just as 'oblique' literature may prove more liberating than self help texts. From an existential perspective we might note how, paradoxically, the notion of scientific bibliotherapy appears on the one hand to offer the individual a powerful way of treating him/herself, without the necessity of deferring to an 'expert' such as a psychiatrist, while on the other hand implying pathology and producing specific 'drugs' to address the reader's symptoms.

An existential perspective, in cautioning against treating books homeopathically, suggests some elements which are central to the therapeutic use of books, rather than a specific method. An existential-phenomenological attitude might, I would argue, lead us to approach bibliotherapy naively and turn our attention back to the purpose of literature *viz a viz* the human condition. As Cohn reminds us

> *... existence is an attribute of human beings alone. It is the particular way in which human beings are – because for them alone their existence is an issue, they can reflect on it, they can relate to it. It is their most important attribute...* (1999: 42)

and,

> *The existential-phenomenological view does not construct any explanatory models but tries to understand situations by exploring the immediate experience which is not seen as originating in one individual person but always in a world of human beings.* (1999: 43)

An existential perspective would acknowledge the context of the client's reading and view it as a dimension of their way of engaging with their past, being in the present, and imagining a future. Their reading prior to entering into a relationship with a human therapist would no longer exist in some unconsidered time 'prior to therapy', but would be considered as one of the ways they relate to the world and create meaning. The act of reading, then, is situated among those other activities whereby human beings, uniquely, reflect on Being. Heidegger, writing about artistic creation in general, views it as

> *an act of revelation or unconcealedness regarding the truth of our existence; it is the means of 'unveiling' that which is present but is also ordinarily hidden from everyday awareness. Expressions of art are able to bring us the truth of being.* (2000: 7-15)

Spinelli, noting this *illuminative quality* of creation, considers its significance for the audience. He reminds us, first, that May views artistic creation as an encounter between the artist and their "pattern of meaningful relations in which a person exists and in the design of which he or she participates" (1975: 18) – an encounter which is invariably anxiety-provoking. This anxiety

> *is fundamentally revelatory and thus capable of breaking down not only one's previously held conceptions and values, but also one's constructed identity.* (1975: 18)

The artist's anxiety, then, has a dual function, that of illuminating Being, and of loosening their restricted patterns of relationship:

> *... artistic activity may well provide a means whereby the sedimentations and dissociations in the experienced self-structure become open to challenge (if only temporarily) so that novel, and more 'liberating', self/world interrelations are experienced by the artist.* (2001: 139)

And what, then, of the reader? If we consider the reader to be taking part in this 'artistic activity' too then the act of reading might be seen to have a similarly 'therapeutic' function.

> *Creativity contains strong elements of the mysterious and the unexpected. Even when the artist's end goal is clear, various novel routes, events and possibilities emerge seemingly out of nowhere, yet whose potential impact can alter the whole aim, goal, meaning or resolution of the work. And, just as significantly, those who make up the audience for an act of creation share some degree of this plunge into a transcendent unknown.* Their relationship with the work also permits their 'truths' to emerge, and confront and transform. (Spinelli, 2001: 142) [My emphasis]

An existential-phenomenological approach to bibliotherapy, I would argue, is uniquely positioned to raise questions about the ways in which therapists and clients can enter into a relationship with texts which foreground their illuminative quality and harness this to open up our habitual ways of being-in-the-world.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 109-114**

# Freud's *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* as a *roman á clef*

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The analysis of Dora, which Freud entitled *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, is the only example of the great Freudian case studies that deals with a female patient. Since the seventies, the case of Dora therefore figured as an object of exercise for feminine revisions of orthodox psychoanalysis. In addition, a wealth of studies is available which, for instance, discuss Freud's text in regards to the history of psychoanalytic theory, with respect to treatment methods, the discussion of hysteria or even concerning its textual nature.

In the following, I will focus on an inquiry which continues and specifies the questions raised by Steven Marcus and Neil Hertz as to the textual nature of the *Fragment*[1]. *One* of the many genre references to be found in the *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* will be dealt with in detail: the genre reference to the *roman à clef*. The study of Dora will thus be discussed with regards to a *literary* category.

Only a few of the genre ascriptions the text deliberately deals with shall be mentioned at this point: case history (medical and treatment history), fragment, novella, novel, fantasy, detective story, courtroom drama, appendix (being a supplement to a previous book: *The Interpretation of Dreams*) and the *roman à clef*. Some of these genre ascriptions are done with special emphasis. Thus, for instance, the text claims for itself the tag of a «medical and treatment history», the label of a ‹case history›; it flirts with the proximity between the doctor and the detective, between psychoanalytic study and detective story, and is obsessively occupied with its status as a fragment[2]. Other genres, on the other hand, seem to have only been brought into the mix in order to be purposely crossed out and discarded – as is the case with the *roman à clef*.

In his foreword, Freud remarks rather less amicably upon a possible reception of the *Fragment* as a *roman à clef*:

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[1] See Steven Marcus (1974): Freud und Dora. Roman, Geschichte, Krankengeschichte. In *Psyche* (28:1, pp. 32-79); and Neil Hertz (1983): Dora's Secrets, Freud's Techniques. In: *Diacritics* (13:1, pp. 65-76).

[2] In this context, the fragment can be seen as a genre which rose to popularity during Early Romanticism. The *Fragment* points to its status as a fragment through its very title. Regarding the concept of the fragment in Early Romanticism see Waldemar Fromm (2000): Geheimnis der Entzweyung. Zur Ästhetik des Fragments in der Frühromantik. In *Euphorion* (94, pp. 125-147).

> I know that there are – at least in this city – many doctors who – disgustingly enough – want to read this medical history not as a contribution to the psychopathology of neurosis but instead as a *roman à clef* meant for their amusement. To this type of readers I give the assurance that all of my medical histories intended to be imparted later on will be protected by similar guaranties of secrecy from their shrewdness, although my use of my material has to undergo a quite enormous restriction because of this resolution[3].

However, in, for example, hiding the identity of his patient Ida Bauer with the alias of Dora and in performing other disguises and adjustments, Freud deliberately operates with codification, with encryption. Hence he uses the strategy of the *roman à clef*, which works as follows: A ‹real›, a ‹factual› constellation is permutated and transposed – and this is done in such a way that the text points to its codified nature and the possibility of decoding it[4]. For how effectively Freud operates with the principle of codification is especially apparent in how the deciphering of *Dora = Ida Bauer* was even possible. Freud evidently works with similar or sometimes the very same techniques as writers of *roman à clefs*. For example, he gives featured persons other names, but at the same time provides the possibility of finding clues as to which real figure might have been alluded to. Thus readers which «want to read this medical history [...] as a *roman à clef* meant for their amusement»[5] are those recipients who have understood the ‹principle of the key› for unlocking the novel – and therefore participate in the author's game. Case history and *roman à clef* share their degree of referentiality, their very explicit recourse to ‹reality›; a recourse which they display, but which they in a second move – on grounds of decency – cloak.

Having said that, a reading approach which treats his case history – which has been coded according to the requirements of a *roman à clef – as* a *roman à clef* Freud calls «disgusting enough»[6]. But, as is widely known, disgust is not only mentioned in the foreword to the *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* cited above, but also in the reconstruction of Dora's medical history. The fourteen-year-old Dora is ordered into the «shop business» of Mr. K., her father's friend, where he alone awaits her. He

> suddenly pressed the girl close to his body and put a kiss on her lips. That was probably a situation which would cause a definite feeling of sexual excitement in a virginal 14-year-old girl. But Dora felt an enormous disgust in this moment, broke away from him and hurried past the man to the steps and from there to the house door[7].

Using this example, Freud suggests a ‹overdetermination› of feelings of *disgust*; he classifies Dora's reaction as not normal, as hysterical and thus argues for a pathological *reversal of affect*:

> Every person in whom the occasion for sexual arousal mostly or exclusively evokes feelings of revulsion I would unobjectionably deem a hysteric, whether she is able to produce somatic symptoms or not. [...] The case of our patient Dora is not yet sufficiently characterized by the emphasis on her reversal of affect; it has to be further noted that a *displacement* of feelings has occurred here. Instead of a sensation of the genitals which certainly would not have been absent in a healthy girl under these circumstances, feelings of aversion arose in her, which belong to the area of the mucous membrane leading to the gastrointestinal tract, which we call disgust[8].

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3 Sigmund Freud (1905 [1901]): Bruchstück einer Hysterie-Analyse. In: Studienausgabe VI (Hysterie und Angst), 8th rev. edition, Frankfurt a.M. 1989, Tr. Asokan Nirmalarajah, pp. 83-186.

4 Regarding the strategies of the *roman à clef* see also Gertrud Maria Rösch (2004): Clavis scientiae. Studien zum Verhältnis von Faktizität und Fiktionalität am Fall der Schlüsselliteratur. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

5 Freud: Bruchstück, p. 88.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 106, emphasis not added.

Dora's disgust, according to Freud's analysis, is a substitution for the spontaneous, displaced and reversed feelings of lust; in a sense, then, it refers to its exact opposite: desire. If we apply this argument to the invective towards the *roman à clef* uttered in the foreword, if we read Freud with and against Freud, then the disgust claimed by this authority, which – in spite of not really being ‹up to date› in terms of narrative theory – denotes Freud, would also be a reversal of affect, this disgust would hide the pleasure and cloak the lust the author experiences when confronting his *roman à clef*-readers who have understood the game he is playing with them. This passage, then, should be transcribed as follows: *«At least»*, or more precisely: «*Thank God there are many doctors in Vienna who find pleasure and enjoyment in the reading of the Dora case as a roman à clef».*

This transcription done with Freud against Freud also opaquely highlights the following: Freud's assurance to the *roman à clef*-readers «that all of my medical histories meant to be imparted later on will be protected by similar guaranties of secrecy from their shrewdness, although my use of my material has to experience a quite enormous restriction because of this resolution»[9]. Just as disgust refers to its opposite, *desire*, the guarantee to guard the secrets here refers to its opposite: *the assurance to disclose secrets*. Just as we know who is hidden behind Dora, we know who, for instance, is referred to with «wolf man».

What's more, Freud's announcement regarding the Dora case history as well as all «medical histories meant to be imparted later on», to protect them by «guaranties of secrecy» against the shrewdness of the reader, is already a paradoxical venture in so far as the Freudian case histories, their construction and their reconstruction represent a project that can hardly be surpassed in its level of shrewdness and sophistication. Freud repeatedly claims that it is his strategy to «gain secrets and hidden meanings from traits deemed marginal or not taken note of, from the refuse of observation»[10]. Not only shrewdness, rather an abundance of shrewdness qualifies psychoanalytic argumentations[11] – as phrased by Freud:

> The case is being made against psychoanalysis [...] that it complicates simple matters in a captious way, that it sees secrets and problems where they do not exist, and that it achieves this by overemphasizing little and marginal traits that can be found everywhere and elevates them to being carriers of the most extensive and alienating deductions. We would argue against this position in vain, that because of such a refusal so many telling analogies and subtle connections, which we can point out in this case, are undone and ripped apart. The opponents, however, will claim that these analogies and connections do not really exist but are carried by us into the case with superfluous shrewdness[12].

When this eulogist for subtleties and shrewdness, who is very much dependent on a shrewdness in his readers sufficient enough to follow his analytical capers, the likes of which are hard to come by in terms of sophistication, promises to keep special secrets from the shrewdness of these readers, it leads directly into an aporia: Few authors are as reliant on readers willing to engage with shrewdness and apply shrewdness themselves, on readers treating secrets as solvable mysteries as Freud is.

In addition, what Freud as the initiator of this discourse claims about the subject of the *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, the secrets of the patient to be analyzed, also applies to the secrets he himself tries to keep from us. Freud states in the *Fragment*:

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9 Freud: Bruchstück, p. 89.

10 Sigmund Freud (1914): Erinnern – Wiederholen – Durcharbeiten. In: Studienausgabe, Ergänzungsband, Frankfurt a.M. 1975, Tr. Asokan Nirmalarajah, pp. 205-215, p. 207.

11 See Stefan Börnchen (2007): Zum Geburtstag viel Freud. Paranoia und paranoide Geschlechter-Codes in «Superman's Romance With Wonder Woman». In: *Jahrbuch für Literatur und Psychoanalyse. Freiburger literaturpsychologische Gespräche* (26, pp. 203-243), p. 222-225.

12 Sigmund Freud (1923): Das Ich und das Es. In: Studienausgabe III. (Psychologie des Unbewußten), Frankfurt a.M. 1975, Tr. Asokan Nirmalarajah, pp. 298-299.

> When I made it my task to bring to light what people are hiding not through the force of hypnosis, but from what they say and show, I assumed the task to be more difficult than it really is. The one with eyes to see and ears to hear is convinced that the mortals cannot hide a secret. The one whose lips are silent chatters with his fingertips; betrayal seeps through all his pores[13].

How far betrayal seeps through all the pores of Freud himself, how accurately the observations Freud makes regarding his patients can be found within himself, could be shown in dozens of examples. One example may be mentioned that is not entirely without its charm. Throughout the text, Freud preaches the necessity to «discuss sexual relations with all openness, to call the organs and functions of one's sexual life by their proper names»[14]. As if he's using a prayer wheel he repeatedly returns to this subject:

> One can talk to girls and women about all kinds of sexual matters without harming them or being eyed suspiciously, if one, at first, assumes a certain manner of doing it, and secondly, if one can convince them that it is unavoidable. Under the very same circumstances the gynecologist as well allows himself to treat them to all kinds of disrobements. The best way to talk of these things is the dry and direct one; at the same time, it is very much apart from the lewdness with which these topics are treated in ‹society› and to which girls and women are very well used to. I give organs as well as processes their technical names and impart them wherever they – the names – are unknown. *«J'appelle un chat un chat»*[15].

Jane Gallop has pointed out how unintentionally funny this reasoning is: The one who takes the stance of spreading the light of sexual enlightenment, the one who does not want to speak in a flowery and displaced manner, but rather frankly and openly, the one who wants to steer clear of any shadow of ambiguity and lewdness dips into French and into the metaphorical: *chat, chatte* is a vulgar French term for the female genitalia[16].

However, the shrewdness of the reader, in this case of Jane Gallop, the investigative effort with which the author is caught in the act, refers very much to the axiom stated by Freud. The possibility to show the analyst that he betrays himself as well, no matter how diligently he tries to hide his secrets (and the keys capable of opening these secrets), is as much of a pleasurable, enjoyable project as is the attempt to *invert* the prohibition issued by the authorial power against reading the text as a *roman à clef*: to understand the prohibition as an instruction. The option to read the case history as a *roman à clef* is one the reader does not even have to come up with himself, it is served to him on a silver platter. And he would be neither shrewd nor curious, even completely unsuited to the reading of the *Fragment*, if he would not try out this option.

The intensity of the affect with which Freud argues against the readers who realize the ‹wrong› genre in their reading, that of the *roman à clef*, is comparable to the intensity with which he opposes the claim that his depiction may exploit sexual lewdness. It almost seems as if the *roman à clef*, the «novel with a key» is reconceptualized by Freud as a «novel with a key*hole*» – a voyeuristic, semi-pornographic genre. Immediately after the attack on the *roman à clef*-readers Freud builds a defense wall he can always hide behind (as in the already cited example of «*j'appelle un chat un chat»*) and declares:

> I simply claim the rights of the gynecologists – or rather much more humble ones as those – for me and declare it to be a sign of a perverse and alien lewdness if someone should assume

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13 Freud: Bruchstück, p. 147-148.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 123, emphasis not added.

16 See Jane Gallop (1990): Thinking Through the Body. New York: Columbia UP, p. 209.

> that these kinds of conversations may be of good use for the arousal and satisfaction of sexual longings[17].

Freud thus states that as far as he is concerned the conversations with Dora *are not put to good use for the satisfaction of longings directed towards sexuality* – and berates (which should certainly also be seen as a concession to the Victorianism of his contemporary readers) those as perverse, who assume such things. The first sentence of the foreword in which Freud announces that he wants to «make concrete» his «claims made in 1895 and 1896 about the [always sexual, C.L.] pathogenesis of hysterical symptoms»[18] by way of the Dora case, however, already assures us of the opposite: this case history is so valuable for Freud because it very much satisfies a sexual longing, or in other words, *a longing directed towards sexuality*: The very longing to show the – exclusively – sexual etiology of neurosis. And Freud does not only say it in the first sentence of his text, he says it over and over again – in the afterword he again sums up:

> I was also interested in showing that sexuality not only takes part as a *deus ex machina* occurring once somewhere in the machinery of processes characteristic of hysteria, but rather that it gives force for every single symptom and for every single utterance of a symptom. The signs of illness could almost be called the *sexual activity of the ill*[19].

So every symptom, even every utterance of a symptom is sexually motivated, and the analyst is thus tasked with deciphering every utterance of a symptom as sexual. As the signs of illness are in a sense the sexual activity of the ill, the strains of deciphering, the attempts at healing are the sexual activities of the analyst.

Hence my conclusion: How lustful it is for the analyst Freud to shoot off a firework of sexual interpretations, to give himself up to a rage of analysis that wants to tell everybody of the stories told to him by the female patient, that takes from all details a primary or at least secondary sexual meaning, is already evident from a superficial reading of the *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*[20]. Freud engages lustfully with the analytical work; he is intoxicated by how aptly the case of Dora fits into his theory of hysteria; he constructs the case of Dora in such a way that it is precisely modeled like a puzzle piece which he wants to put into his psychoanalytical theory structure.

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[17] Freud: Bruchstück, p. 89.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 179, emphasis not added.

[20] Freud already outlined the theoretical basis for this in his Leonardo-essay of 1910, claiming science to be a displacement, a sublimation of sexual interest. See Sigmund Freud (1910): Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo Da Vinci. In: Studienausgabe X (Bildende Kunst und Literatur), Frankfurt a.M. 1975, pp. 87-159.

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Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 115-122

# The Emptiness and Boredom of Affluent Life – Cesare Pavese's Novel, *Among Women Only*[*]

*RAINER J. KAUS*[**]

Cesare Pavese (1908-1950), one of the most famous Italian writers who was born precisely one hundred years ago, wrote the novel, The Lonely Women, in 1949. It describes the superficially of relationships and the isolation of the individual. The unmarried Clelia Oitana from an impoverished background has worked her way up to become a successful couturière and is supposed to open up a fashion house in Turin for her Roman company. Through her work she comes into contact with many people from the upper classes. In a laconic, matter-of-fact style, Pavese sketches a spectrum of female portraits, women full of a weariness with living who try to divert themselves with luxury, a hectic pace and conversations about literature and theatre. The questionable character of this unfulfilled way of living is unmasked by the attempted suicide by Rosetta, one of the more sensitive among these women. Clelia herself, liberated from the idleness of the other women through work, takes pleasure on the side from receptions, artists' parties, excursions and occasional affairs. She is self-sufficient, enjoys being alone and tries to give Rosetta, too, something to live for, but is unable to save her. A year after the novel was published, Pavese, whose relationships with women were full of disappointments, took his own life.

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To go into more detail, the first person narrator, Clelia Oitana, arrives in Turin during carnival. She doesn't call anybody, and nobody knows that she is staying in this hotel. She offers the maid the option of going home early. When the maid suddenly asks, after a few attempts at conversation on the part of Clelia, whether she could go now, Clelia thinks that once again she has talked too much. Clelia

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takes a bath and recalls her father who, through his death back then, prevented her from celebrating carnival. And that, on that evening, she had discovered that

> *"If I want to do something, if I want to achieve something in life, I must not tie myself to anybody, be dependent on anybody, like I was bound to this burdensome daddy".* (p. 7 all page references in the following to the German edition, Cesare Pavese, *Die einsamen Frauen* Berlin 2008)

The telephone rings and a man asks to speak to her. She puts him off to the next day, slips into her dressing gown and opens the door slightly where, in the corridor, she sees a crowd of people. Two men in white coats are carrying a stretcher out on which a young woman is lying. She had been found dying (poisoned).

The next day, Clelia receives a bouquet of flowers, the first daffodils from her boyfriend, Maurizio, in Rome. She gets dressed and goes out. Turin seems to her like a city that has just been built. Nobody simply goes for a stroll. Everybody seems busy. Back at the hotel she finds her acquaintance, Morelli, who had left his visiting card for her the previous day. She asks him to tell her about the scandal yesterday with the young girl in the hotel. He does not ask what she is doing in Turin. In the evening they go to a ball together.

It disturbs him that, dressed in overalls, she supervises the painters in the new premises of her company. Before the ball, Clelia goes to the hairdresser's and to the part of town where she once lived, in Via della Basilica. She tells Morelli something about all this at the ball.

> *"The people who are dancing and getting drunk here come from the better circles. They have grown up with servants, nannies, staff. With the freshness of summer and privileges. That's no great achievement. Who among them would have managed to work hard and climb from out of nothing, out of a backyard that is nothing but a hole, to this ball?".* (19)

A corpulent lady asks her about the condition of the young woman on the stretcher. They say that she is out of danger, Clelia replies. They say that she probably had been drunk and had taken an overdose.

Morelli notes that Clelia has prejudices, even with respect to winning the lottery. She wants to achieve everything through her own powers. Over the next few days, Clelia goes to Via Po, where the store is situated whose opening she has to organize, and which is still being converted. Someone summons the head of the workers, Becuccio, to her, who conducts her through the premises and shows her the work they have done. He is burly, has curly hair and shows his teeth when he smiles. He calls the site manager for Clelia. Clelia tells them that they want to open for business at the end of the month. Then Clelia goes away, through the streets of Turin. She always preferred experiencing carnival in the alley-ways.

> *"I was always so unbound, my own person, free to wander through Turin and to do with tomorrow as I like".* (29)

She is no longer young and knows what a man, even the best of them, is worth.

In the evening, Morelli takes her along to a salon. They all give her their hands very seriously, or unwillingly, and wait for somebody to say something. She consoles herself with the thought that she can cope with everything in the world very well alone, and that these were people whom she would never see again anyway. Loris is a painter and starts speaking about a planned stage production of a theatre group. It is not a matter of imitating old theatrical methods, but of presenting the naked word of the text. The conversation about the stage production then ebbs.

Mariella assures Clelia that she wants to see her again, to speak with her and ask her to assist the group with the stage production. They talk about Rosetta Mola, who had tried to kill herself. Mariella

thinks that she is recovering, but that she did not want to see anybody. She was only asking to see her girl friend, Momina. Clelia takes her leave.

A few days later, Mariella extends an invitation to her and picks her up in Via Po. They meet Loris and Nene, a young woman with a fringe and erratic behaviour. They start talking about her affairs and about people whom Clelia does not know. Clelia thinks that these people only speak in such a complicated way just for the hell of it. Then everything starts to turn again on the performance and the question whether, after the episode with Rosetta, they can still do a suicide on stage. Momina, her friend, who arrives after some time, is against it.

Domineering, bad tempered and with a sour expression, she comes in and immediately dominates the conversation, hopping effusively from one subject to the other, dancing attendance upon Clelia, wanting to enchant her, but she does not come back to the subject of the theatre play. She then takes Clelia back to Via Po. On the way there they have a cocktail and talk about Turin and Rome. Momina behaves coldly and dismissively, speaking of family ties in a deprecatory way.

They spend the next evening together again. To get rid of a man at the wine fair, she dances with Momina.

> *"I find it repulsive to dance with a woman. But I wanted to dissipate a suspicion, and that is always the fastest way to do so".* (55)

But Momina seems to no longer want to do so, is only a bit over-excited. They visit Morelli at his home. They speak about having children. Momina says,

> *"It's a matter of a woman, when she has a child, no longer being herself. She has to accept so many things, has to say yes. And is it worth saying yes?".* (57)

One day Clelia goes again to her old haunt. There she meets an old girl-friend, Gisella, in a shop. They tell each other about their past lives. Clelia used to say often that her aim was to be successful, to come back to these alley-ways of her youth and be admired. But the faces of the ordinary people have all disappeared. Clelia recalls that she ran away from her mother just in time, and that she had always said that men were a *"sorry affair"* (63), not bad, but stupid.

To Clelia, only the hours spent in Via Po don't seem to be wasted. The bricklayers and painters have finished their work. Now she has to take on the most difficult task, the interior design. Clelia negotiates with the architect, Febo. She takes him to bed without further ado.

> *"But Febo was red, stubborn and hairy, and he obviously had decided that I was his type".* (67)

He wants to know what Clelia thinks about all her acquaintances – Mariella, Nene, Loris, Morelli and Momina. Then they choose curtains at an exhibition where all these people are and they agree to undertake an excursion to a cabin in the mountains.

Momina, Rosetta and Clelia stop in front of one of the painter's villas at the foot of the mountains. The others will wait for them later in Saint-Vincent. Today Rosetta is wearing a skirt and tennis shoes. Her mother also pops up. Momina asks her how Rosetta is and urges her to make Rosetta come back to Turin. Everybody was already asking about her, she says. Then they meet the others in Saint-Vincent. While the others are in the gambling room, they go to the bar. The conversation turns to the stage production and its connection with Rosetta's attempted suicide. Rosetta says that it has no meaning. Momina questions Clelia about how Rosetta looked that night. But she reports that she was scarcely disfigured on the stretcher. Rosetta makes a remark to Clelia:

> *"Afterwards you feel worse than before. That is what is so horrible".* (74)

Nene tries to hug and kiss Rosetta, but she puts an end to the fuss. They go with Febo to another bar where he encourages Rosetta to drink and to talk about her past friendship. Then they take her to

her mother. Back in the hotel, Febo is completely drunk and grabs Clelia, who lets it all happen without showing any emotion.

The next morning they stroll through the town. Momina is questioned about Rosetta's affair with Loris. She says that she had taken painting lessons with him, but suddenly stopped. He had constantly been at their home. Momina asks Clelia whether she knows why Rosetta tried to kill herself and describes her own horror about living. Then they all travel back to Turin. Before that, Clelia has a moment alone with Rosetta, who takes her to a place where she often retired into seclusion to read. They talk about knowing and deceiving oneself about people. Clelia thinks that when working together, one can only be badly disappointed and thinks that Rosetta and Momina didn't know what work was because they had never had to work for their evening meal. Clelia goes back to Via Po to inspect the work, where she meets Becuccio and reproaches him about delayed deliveries. When they inspect the crystal items, she suddenly feels his hand in the straw. Laconically she says that he should take care because these goods are precious, and that he should stop immediately.

The fashion salon is supposed to open mid-March. The people in Rome want the change cabins and the salon on the first floor to be redesigned in the company's own style. Clelia travels briefly to Rome for clarification. Madame proposes to her to completely take over the store in Turin. Back in Turin, Clelia looks for an interior designer who understands something about baroque, in which style the shop is to be furnished. Febo, the architect, tries to kiss her. Instead she offers him her hand. Then she goes through the antique stores with Morelli. When they do not find anything there, she proposes that they go to Donna Clementina to see her porcelain collection.

In the evening they go back once again to listen to a violinist. On the whole, Clelia is bored. The violinist then wants to treat them all to a drink, which means stopping in front of the cafes, negotiating and then going on further. Clelia says to Rosetta that there are too many people celebrating, too many puffed-up artists in Turin. Momina asks Rosetta to tell her how she had ended up in the hotel and taken the overdose. Rosetta's eyes fill with tears. Momina does not notice and keeps on pressing. She says that she only wanted to help and that she understood when somebody wanted to kill themselves, but then properly, so that it works. Rosetta, by contrast, she said, gave her the impression of a jilted little seamstress. Rosetta stutters breathlessly that she hates Momina, who in turn asks her what she is accusing her of, since after all, they are friends. Clelia asks whether they had slept together, to which neither of them responds.

Rosetta claims that she is not angry with anybody. She says at that time she had simply turned out the light and did not want to see anybody. In the hospital she woke up again. The next day she visits Clelia in Via Po. They go for a walk. She says to Clelia that she is envious of her, that it is a fine thing to work like she does. Then, during the course of the conversation, she admits that she herself doesn't know why she went to the hotel that morning. For a long time she had had a horror of the night. The thought of having finished another day, to be alone with her disgust was unbearable for her. And then she took the Veronal. Momina, she says, is the only friend she has. Years ago she was her first love. Now, she claims, they are just friends.

They make a date to see each other again soon. Together with Febo, Clelia looks around Milan for some glass furniture. When he wants to touch her again, she gives him a black eye. She says that she does not have affairs with work associates. But he asks her to be his woman that evening. They go to various bars. Febo asks Clelia about her background and she answers that she comes more or less from the milieu of the down-and-out customers in the pub. Then she wanted to get out and thought that in other cases she had consoled herself with the position she had achieved.

Becuccio also wants to have a word to say about the matter of the antique furniture. He had heard of a cabinet-maker whom he visits together with Clelia. But the cabinet-maker declines with the argument that it is a shame to put beautiful furniture in a shop. Later on, Clelia goes to an auction exhibition with Morelli, who admonishes her for only ever working and never taking a vacation. Clelia remarks that there was one person who was serious: Rosetta Mola. When Clelia thinks about drinking her coffee in the morning, not knowing anybody and making plans, and then building up the

business occurs to her, she sees that they are the only beautiful moments in Turin. Her real vice, she says, was her pleasure in being alone.

Days later Rosetta turns up again. Clelia asks her whether she was no longer painting and she replies,

*"Only activities to which one is forced by hunger are those that one does not give up".* (114)

The next day, she shows up again and asks Clelia whether she reads a lot and admits that she herself has read a lot and had been to university. She says that as if she were ashamed of it. Momina, she says, was aristocratic and had been married. Rosetta claims to be like Momina. Then they all undertake an excursion to the Riviera, with a villa above Noli as destination.

Rosetta relates that a year ago she wanted to become a nun but that they did not want her. Nuns had to be virgins. After breakfast they all go down to the sea. Mariella takes Clelia aside and asks her to help Rosetta, to distract her. Clelia emphasizes once again that Rosetta had tried to kill herself because she was sick of Momina, the stage production, Mariella and all the others. Then the group wants to travel on to San Remo, but Nene gets car-sick.

Clelia asks Momina whether she only likes women. She replies that neither she nor Rosetta is interested in women. It had been three years ago. Momina had been there with someone in the hotel. Rosetta had come upon her by surprise and wanted to play the courageous one. Then they all travel back to Noli, passing through the little village of Savona. There a conversation develops about work, and Rosetta remarks that to work in an office also means to sell oneself. She says there are many ways to sell oneself and that she does not know which one was the most senseless. And turning to Clelia she adds that she must not think that she despises prostitutes. They, too, only wanted to survive. Then they finally drive back to Noli.

In a conversation with Clelia, Rosetta remarks that men made everything dirty, like children did. Clelia asks about the role of women. Rosetta avers that she is not lesbian.

*"But love as such is a dirty affair".* (133)

They make an arrangement to meet at Loris' party. Beforehand, Clelia calls Momina who says that she is exaggerating about Rosetta. Clelia replies that Rosetta would do better not to listen to Momina's cutting, scornful remarks.

One evening Clelia asks Becuccio whether he had a girl-friend. He keeps that in the dark and she says that whenever he wanted to spend time with her and wanted to go somewhere with her, that she would be glad to do so. Becuccio asks whether men will also be admitted to the fashion shows because he would find it a pity to only be there during the work of setting-up. Clelia promises to invite him to the opening. He feels her offer of wanting to spend an evening with him as a gift. They agree to be on first-name terms and go dancing. Clelia is satisfied and feels warm inside. Becuccio remarks that women are so temperamental, but that once you have them in bed they went along with everything. But when he puts his arm around her waist, she says no, she also likes being alone. He tries to kiss her, and she lets him. He wants her to go with him. She goes with him with the words that it is a gift for tonight, and that he should keep that in mind.

Becuccio is a Communist and had fought in the war. Clelia goes back to her hotel alone. She thinks that by Sunday when the store will be ready, she will see him again, but at the same time she does not allow herself the thought because she is already sensing a 'too much'. She rings the store and wants to speak to Febo. Becuccio answers the telephone and calls her Signorina. Then she goes to the Chiesa delle crocetta where she finds Rosetta and her mother. When she asks Rosetta whether she loves her mother she says,

"I suppose so, yes". (146)

In the afternoon Clelia sees Becuccio again. She blushes, but he stays composed. They go to drink a Martini, but he no longer reacts to her personal allusions. Clelia meets Rosetta and Momina in the evening at the painters'.

*"It was as if I knew all the faces. They were the same ones as in the hotels, the salons, at the fashion shows. Nobody cared about the paintings".* (147)

To Clelia's question to Rosetta about whether she loves music, she replies that she doesn't, but that it is something, perhaps only suffering. Then they take Rosetta home. At a certain hour, the father also arrives,

*"A man with steel-grey colouring ... and a thick-set, somewhat flabby figure. But in the depth of his eyes he resembled Rosetta. His gaze was stubborn, full of impatience".* (151)

At an attempted cuddle, Rosetta turns her head away. Clelia sees,

*"That he was an old man, that he was tolerated, but that for the women only his labour counted. I also grasped that he knew it and was grateful that they let him talk".* (152)

Rosetta asks Clelia,

*"Show me how to earn a bit of money and get to California. They say that you don't die there".* (153)

Clelia thinks that she would have liked to

*"have heard the advice which father and mother had given to their only daughter who was so crazy and alone".* (154)

Clelia asks Rosetta whether she had any girl-friend apart from Momina, but she responds with the question, what a girl-friend was. Not even Momina was her girl-friend, she said. They are viewing Turin from the hills. Momina claims that the world would be beautiful,

"if only we were not here". (155)

Clelia says that you just had to keep everything at a distance. The next day the people from Rome were to arrive. Becuccio assists Clelia with the preparations. When she suggests to him that they have a snack, he turns it down. But they go nevertheless, and when he says that they had time for a trip to Val Salice, where they had been that one evening, she says that such things do not succeed twice. She invites him to the party at Loris', the painter's, but he responds that it's better for him not to go beyond the middle class, that it's a waste of time. Then he leaves without molesting her.

Clelia is at Loris' party where they are igniting schnapps with loud shouts. She discovers Rosetta in the semi-darkness with a cat in her arms. She talks to someone with a slight hunchback about Africa, that blacks had been killed there, that they had been left to die of cold, of hunger, that they had been shot, and that she asked why. Why not, the hunchback replies, grinning. Rosetta drinks a lot, is gloomy. Clelia sees that she has been crying. Then they all go to a hookers' bar in a poor part of town.

But everybody complains that they can't see anything from where they are. Clelia is ashamed of her acquaintances' uncouth behaviour. Rosetta is called a *"Red Cross sister"* (167) and a *"naive one for soldiers from the front"* (167). She reacts in a constrained and composed way with the remark that tomorrow is another day.

The next day is an empty, useless Sunday. Clelia invites Febo and Becuccio to the hotel for dinner. It is the last time that she speaks with Becuccio. She invites him to visit her in Rome. Then she goes back once again to her old haunt. Madame from Rome and her associates cause chaos throughout

the hotel. The opening is set down for Easter. One day Clelia asks herself what Rosetta was doing and rings Momina.

"I don't know what I should think of this, the stupid girl has killed herself once again". (171)

Clelia says to Momina that she is to blame, even if the suicide turns out not to be really true. Momina avers once again that they did not have a relationship. They look for Rosetta everywhere. Rosetta's words and gestures in the past occur to Clelia. Could she have been stopped? In the evening she calls Rosetta's parents again. The maid tells her that Rosetta has been found. In a sub-let room. She was being brought home. She had poisoned herself again.

*"The remarkable thing was to rent a painter's studio, to put an armchair in it, and nothing else, and to die in this way at the window with a view of Superga. A cat betrayed her. It was with her in the room and the next morning it meowed so long and scratched at the door until someone opened it to let it out".* (174)

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In his novel, which was filmed in 1955 by Michelangelo Antonioni under the title *Le Amiche* (*The Girlfriends*), Pavese tells Rosetta's story in a series of episodes in which the brittleness of the neo-realist narrative structure becomes visible. The loss of coherence and stabilizing traditions opens up new perspectives for the two main characters, Clelia and Rosetta. For Clelia it is the social climb from a poor background to head a fashion salon in the glamorous big city, with its money and the venality of all things. She works consistently and with perseverance on her social success and is not completely free of envy of the nouveaux riches and their privileged life-styles.

*"The people who are dancing and getting drunk here come from the better circles. They have grown up with servants, nannies, staff. With the freshness of summer and privileges. That's no great achievement. Who among them would have managed to work hard and climb from out of nothing, out of a backyard that is nothing but a hole, to this ball?".* (19)

Rosetta's ideas about life are marked by sadness, inhibition and the inability to build up relationships on her own initiative. Rosetta is also a reflection of her parents, who spoiled her as an only child and had kept her dependent, instead of encouraging her to expand and to transcend limitations through her own efforts. In search of her female identity, she is like someone driven and comes to grief on the fear of reality, because she cannot free herself from her parental dependency.

All paths end in failure. The abundance of affluence does not give her any satisfaction. The relationship to her only – cynical – girl-friend, Momina, who depreciates all plans for life, also does not achieve any liberation. Even falling back on the dwindling powers of a dying institution, by becoming a nun in a convent, is doomed to failure, unless she had been a virgin.

Completely in contrast to the active Clelia, who takes the initiative, who enjoins the tradesmen to finish their work on the fashion salon in time, Rosetta resorts for a second time to a solution in suicide by swallowing pills. That is the final and successful attempt, instead of pushing toward productive solutions to overcome her parental ties and her false childhood development in dealing with herself and the world.

Viewed through the eyes of Freud, it is a matter here of two solutions to the same problem: the transformation of narcissism, on one hand, in the case of Clelia, into creativity, into joy in taking action and joy in participating in the world in a sensuous way. In contrast to this, Rosetta *wastes* her opportunities to take advantage of her privileges and to shape her narcissism. However, since she is affectively bound to her parental *imagines* through feelings of guilt, and her parents also do not

release her through the necessary minimum of denial of narcissistic feed, her path to independence is blocked. Psychically she responds to this situation of distress with recurring episodes of depression.

Her first attempt is planned in such a way that she will be discovered. The second attempt succeeds.

> *"The remarkable thing was to rent a painter's studio, to put an armchair in it, and nothing else, and to die in this way at the window with a view of Superga. A cat betrayed her. It was with her in the room and the next morning it meowed so long and scratched at the door until someone opened it to let it out".* (174)

**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 123-126**

# "Baby wants to fuck!": Object relations in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*

*SOLANGE LEIBOVICI*[*]

Objects were a key component of Freud's structural model of the human psyche. Since Freud however, theorists like Melanie Klein, Winnicott, Kernberg, Kohut and others have moved, in varying degrees, toward a less libidinal and more relational model of the psyche in which an object is the target of relational needs in human development. Objects can be people or things, such as transitional objects, with wich we form attachments. These objects and the developing child's relationship with them are incorporated into a self, and become the building blocks of the self-system. The blueprint of a self-structure is formed in early life out of our relationships with the objects around us. Once formed, the blueprint can be modified, but our basic tendency is to seek out others who will reaffirm these early self-object relationships. It is as if in early childhood we create a script for a drama and then spend the rest of our lives seeking out others to play the parts. This does not mean the script cannot be changed. However, the more traumatic our early self-object relations, the more rigid and resistant to change we become.

As a child develops, he or she chooses friends, forms of play, objects of intellectual interest, and aspects of the mother and father, to give expression to the self. According to Christopher Bollas, we are inhabited by inner structures that can be felt whenever their name is evoked, and we are also filled with the ghosts of others who have affected us. The term "internal objects" does not designate internal pictures, but rather highly condensed psychic textures, traces of our encounters with the object world. This suggests that in our encounter with this object world, we are internally transformed by objects that leave their traces within us, whether it be the effect of music, a novel, a person. For Bollas, to be a character is to gain a history of internal objects, inner presences that are the trace of our encounters, though they are not clearly knowable, but are like intense ghosts who inhabit the human mind.

As Christopher Bollas asserts in *The Shadow of the Object*, "the aesthetic experience is not something learned by the adult; it is an existential recollection of an experience where being handled by the maternal esthetic made thinking seemingly irrelevant to survival". Aesthetic productions can be viewed as embodying traces of the earliest object relations, for these relations comprise the grounds of future creativity. In Melanie Klein's view, artistic structures are reparative gestures made to the feared and always potentially aggressive mother, and literary or visual texts can be seen as

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reconstitutions of the very conditions that inform the initial mother-infant relation. Joanne Feit Diehl writes that "such a supposition draws upon on object relations approach to human experience, and, particularly, to the transmutations and anxieties associated with a specifically female-identified psyche."

According to Bollas, the dream experience constitutes an object relation in its own right and can be examined as such in terms of the dreamer's experience of the dream event. We can go even further and say that the literary or visual text, seen as aesthetic scenario, constitute object relations that can be viewed as reenacting the traumatic core of the maternal-infantile paradigm. A last quote from *The Shadow of the Object:* "In the same way as in the dream, we might consider the dream space as a particular kind of unconscious holding environment, in which the dreamer may be the object of a presentation of desire, guilt, and historical notation, from an unconsciously organized and interpretive portion of the self." What I would like to try, is to look at David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* as a kind of dreamwork inspired by early object relations.

*Blue Velvet* is a true *film d'auteur*: David Lynch not only wrote and directed the film, he also had a huge hand in almost every aspect of it, even co-authoring songs on the soundtrack with his favourite composer Angelo Badalamenti. According to David Lynch, *Blue Velvet* is "a very American movie, reflecting a very innocent, naive quality to life, and the horror and sickness as well." David Lynch has been called "a psychopathic Norman Rockwell" because he confronts us with a distorted and even perverted vision of American reality. David Foster Wallace speaks of an "unsettling voice, because you don't feel you're entering into any of the standard conscious or unconscious contracts you normally enter when you watch a movie. It is unsettling because in the absence of such a contract we lose some of the psychic protections we normally bring to bear a medium as powerful as film. The absence of recognizable agenda in Lynch's film strips these subliminal defenses and lets Lynch get inside your head in a way movies normally don't".

We will watch two scenes of *Blue Velvet*: first the beginning, "Lumberton, USA", and later the disturbing, famous scene with a brilliant and very creepy Dennis Hopper, called "Crazy Frank".

## LUMBERTON, USA

The film opens with the idealized image of small town America, with its iconic themes: the bright blue sky, the shiny white picket fence, the red roses (*American Beauty*!), the fire engine with a waving fireman, a crossing guard helping the children across the street. The father is watering the lawn, the mother watches TV, Bobby Vinton sings *Blue Velvet*. The father holds together and anchors these images of ideal fantasy. When he collapses, we see the emergence of another world, Lumberton's underworld of violence and fear.

What we see here are the first internalized objects: the father, the mother, the house and the streets, cultural images in a world that looks like what Lynch himself calls "a dream of strange desires wrapped into a mystery story". The opening of the film unfolds cultural objects and shows us the structure of the fantasy of returning to the past: the fantasy has two sizes or two poles, one peaceful and idyllic, and one frightening, destructive and obscene, both poles being fully elaborated and standing in front of each other like two separate realities. In the *Blue Velvet* universe, we encounter the fantasy in its two poles, in its pacifying aspect – the idyllic family life – as well as in its destructive/obscene/excessive aspect. Fantasy has a beatific, stabilizing dimension, the dream of a state without disturbance, out of human depravity; on the other hand, fantasy has a destabilizing dimension, whose elementary form is hate and envy. Both poles of the fantasy, one of happiness, peacefulness and stability, the other one destabilizing and based on hate and destruction, utopia and dystopia, are shown separately and in their interaction. The interdependance of the two modes of fantasy causes us to experience them simultaneously and in an interrelated way, like the ambivalent feelings of love and hate, or envy and gratitude.

The rich, saturated colours in combination with the romantic softness of the song *Blue Velvet* do not create a mood of happiness, but the kind of extreme melancholy en loneliness we know from Edward Hopper's landscapes, and David Lynch's own paintings. We might say that the position from which the small town of Lumberton is shown, is what Melanie Klein called the depressive position, which is characterized by relating to real objects and their unreal imagos, and where these two kinds of object relations intermingle and color each other constantly, like we saw in the two poles of the fantasy. Esther Sànchez-Pardo writes that "at the onset of the depressive position, good and bad come closer together, and the ego must resort to splitting, dividing imagos into loved and hated and good and dangerous ones. It is also at that point that ambivalence sets in." The baby learns then to reconstruct the reality of the objects in their wholeness and to accept the co-existence of good and bad, of the shining bright colours of Lumberton and the violent and voracious animal life underneath it. It is also in that position that reparation fantasies are set in motion, which can later form the beginning of the aesthetic attitude.

With the next scene, we go even further back in psychic development and we experience some of what Melanie Klein called the paranoid-schizoid position.

## CRAZY FRANK

There are many ways to analyze this scene, and they all depend on the perspective you choose. In *The Cinema of David Lynch*, Sam Ishii-Gonzalez chooses Jeffrey's point of view: "This episode not only spectacularly evokes the primal scene, it also conjures up the two other fantasy scenarios identified by Freud as the primal fantasies – namely, the fantasy of seduction and the fantasy of castration. (...) Within the confines of Dorothy's living space, Jeffrey Beaumont is confronted with each of the primal fantasies in all enigmatic force; not in strict succession, but in continuous fluctuation."

According to Slavoj Žižek in *The Metastases of Enjoyment*, the crucial question is: For whom is this scene staged? For Jeffrey, reduced to a pure gaze at the act of his own conception, for Frank, who is in fact the true organizer of the game, or for Dorothy, the depressed woman at the center of it all? For Žižek, Frank's terrorizing of Dorothy might be a desperate "therapeutic" attempt to prevent her from sliding into the abyss of absolute depression. Todd Mc Gowan in *The Impossible David Lynch* also focuses on Dorothy, whom he sees as the traumatic object-cause of desire precisely because no one can fantasize away her desire as she seems to desire nothing.

These are all interesting points of view, to which I would like to add another idea. Why not try to understand what David Lynch really wants to show, namely, "Baby wants to fuck"? For baby cannot fuck; the reason why Frank repeatedly says to Dorothy "Don't look at me!" is because there is nothing to see. There is no erection, since Frank is impotent. For Žižek we have here the father's desperate attempt to convince the son he is able to fuck the mother. However, I don't see Frank as the father, but as the baby trying to penetrate his mother, breathing heavily into a mask in a frightening but desired reverse of birth, while she stuffs a piece of her blue velvet gown into his mouth, like an offered transitional object. When Frank enters her room, she calls him "baby", which makes him furious. He wants to be called "daddy". But Frank's sadomasochistic imitation of intercourse only serves to mask the absence of it. Baby wants to fuck, but baby can't.

What Jeffrey sees when he watches Frank is not the father, but an image of himself, in what Melanie Klein called the paranoid-schizoid position. Klein's hypothesis is that in that fase, there is the existence of aggression as an expression of the death drive, which is expressed in sadistic and destructive attacks on the mother's body. Frank is indeed a paranoid sociopath, who will always feel endangered by the objects he himself has persecuted. After having projected his own aggression into the objects, he imagines that the objects are bad and will destroy him. For Jeffrey, Frank is a fascinating but dangerous model, not that of a father but as a part of himself.

Dorothy is a projection of "the bad breast", but after having been sexually attracted to her, Jeffrey will learn to accept her as what she is, a mother, to reconstruct the reality of the object in its wholeness and accept the co-existence of good and bad. Sandra Gosso writes about Melanie Klein's theory that "after having sadistically destroyed, broken into pieces, devoured his primary love-object, the infant is afraid on account of the damage inflicted, feels pity for the destroyed object, and grieves in the attempt to repair it." Jeffrey will try to "repair the object" and he will help Dorothy to find her own son, who has been kidnapped by Frank. She will be a mother again while he falls in love with the traditional girl-next-door.

Both scenes we have viewed, *Lumberton USA* and *Crazy Frank*, find place in the complexity of the transitional fase from paranoid-schizoid into depressive position, and that's what give the film its disturbing and violent mood. This is something only film is able to show. Or, in the words of David Lynch: "When it comes out in a pure sort of stream, from some other place" (I think what Lynch means is Freud's *anderer Schauplatz*, Lacan's *autre scène*), "film has a great way of giving shape to the unconscious. It's just a great language for that".

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 127-131**

# The phenomenology of space: Motels

*SHERRY LUTZ ZIVLEY**

In *The Poetics of Space,* Gaston Bachelard, argues that real human dwellings and dwellings that are portrayed in literature often have important psychological implications. He argues that "the house [and other dwellings] would appear to have become the topography of our inmost being" (xxxii)[1]. By "phenomenologocal" or "eidetic" experience, Bachelard, who follows in the tradition of 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, preconceived reaction to a specific event, detail place, or person. For example, when, in a suspenseful film the music changes – becomes louder or softer, modulates to a minor key, is produced by different instruments, or abruptly ceases-one immediately experiences fear or relief. One does not stop, analyze, and then conclude that the music has modulated 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. So too, as readers or film viewers, we also have phenomenological reactions to rooms in the various levels of a traditional house and to other living spaces.

Living spaces have had various configurations, uses, and therefore various phenomenological implications in different times and countries. There have been places in which travelers might spend the night. There was the centuries-old English hotel that is a combination of pub and traveler's inn, which has remained functional today because it was and is a relatively safe, respectable, and congenial gathering place for the entire community. There was also the American hotel of large eastern cities, which have in the past been a place of refinement and safety, a place with a fine dining room that is still today considered a place with plenty of security. There was the saloon/hotel of the old American west, which was a dangerous place – a place for men only, a place for fist- or gunfights into which no respectable woman could venture. When many Americans began to own automobiles, they traveled – for work and for vacations – and stayed in motels. Motels were in the wide-open spaces of the American Southwest, where long distances separated towns, and motels were not even in or near a town, but beside a road in the empty countryside – conditions that led to the phenomenological meanings we associate with them.

When I was a child, my family traveled by car throughout the United States, often through isolated areas. In the northeastern United States we stayed at what were called "tourist homes," homes in which families rented out extra bedrooms to tourists in the summer. In them I felt completely safe.

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1 Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon, 1969. First published in French under the title *La poetique del'espace* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958. Translation, New York: Orion Press, 1964.

But in the American southwest, we usually stayed in what were then called "tourist camps," "tourist cabins," or "tourist courts," all of which were fairly prevalent from the 1920's to the 1950's and were substantially cheaper than hotels. In them I was afraid.

1. The earliest commercial structures were *tourist camps*, which Leon Hale describes as "a somewhat higher accommodation than you'd find in a campground." The original ones had "a string of unpainted one-room cabins… [whose] walls were mostly screens, with roll-down canvas curtains" for protection when it rained. As Hale remembers, "You need a bathroom? – just step out the front door, turn right, walk about half a country block to the only toilets on the premises. Showers too, if you could stand the cold water"[2]. A slightly better caliber tourist camp had four walls. These tourist camps were cheaper than hotels, As Leon Hale explained, "About the only way to spend the night cheaper would be to camp under a tree somewhere"[3].
2. Early *tourist cabins* were just that – a few cabins scattered behind, beside, or around a farmhouse or filling station and a communal shower and bathroom, like the Auto Camp in *It Happened One Night* (1934). Later tourist cabins each had their own bathrooms.
3. The slightly more traditionally configured *tourist courts* of my childhood were arranged in a straight line or in the shape of an "L" or "C" around a grassy area, with, perhaps a small metal swing for children. Each unit consisted of one room and a bathroom and was separated from the next by a parking space or carport.

The units in tourist cabins or tourist courts were widely separated from each other and often at some distance from the office/reception area. In them I felt isolated, vulnerable, and frightened. In those days – the 1940's and early 1950's – the rooms did not have phones. One could not dial for help, much less for room service. I always felt that we were out there alone, a feeling that was compounded by the fact that we were in unfamiliar places, on the outskirts of towns or out in the countryside with no houses or even barns in sight. Often we knew no one within hundreds of miles, and the people in cafes and gas stations talked funny. In those tourist courts, I was always aware that if bad men – robbers or killers – attacked us or if we had a fire, we were on our own. That my father kept a loaded pistol under the driver's seat of our car was no comfort. It only reminded me that he thought he might need it. I only wished he would bring it into the room at night. Whenever we spent the night a hotel, I was relieved. With other people with shouting distance, I felt, perhaps not completely secure, but a lot safer.

4. Tourist courts gradually evolved into *traditional motels*, structures in which all adjacent units are connected and which had head-in parking in front of each unit.

## TOURIST COURTS AND MOTELS IN FILM

My early fear of motels was later validated by two films – Orson Well's 1958 *Touch of Evil* (1958) and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), which was adapted from Robert Bloch's 1959 novel[4], These two films supported my conviction that tourist courts were very dangerous places indeed[5], and

2 "Today, 'motels', but back then...", *Houston Chronicle*, Aug. 20, 2003.

3 Ibid.

4 New York: Simon and Schuster.

5 According to Tom Dirks, in "The Greatest Films" at www.filmsite.org and www.greatestfilms.org, "The film's screenplay by Joseph Stefano was adapted from a novel of the same name by author Robert Bloch. Remarkably, Bloch's 1959 novel was based on legendary real-life, Plainfield, Wisconsin psychotic serial killer Edward Gein, whose murderous character also inspired the mother-obsessed farmer in *Deranged (1974)*, the Leatherface character in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974)*, and serial killer Jame Gumb ("Buffalo Bill") in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991).

they established the same conviction in many people – a conviction reinforced by the use of motels in many subsequent films.

In *A Touch of Evil*, which I think of as the Ur-motel film, Ramon Miguel Vargas, an American sheriff (Charlton Heston) leaves his wife Susan (Janet Leigh) alone in the middle of the day in a tourist court in an isolated area of the Mexican countryside. Parking spaces separated the cabins, and there were no other guests. In one of those cabins, any man or woman was an island. After her husband leaves, Susan strips to her underwear and lies down on the bed, but can't sleep because of the loud music that is broadcast into her room. The frightened and ineffectual desk clerk (Dennis Weaver) can do nothing to thwart the thugs, and the wife learns that the phone lines to town have been severed. After she complains to the desk clerk, the thugs taunt her so that both she and the audience expect them to rape and/or kill her. Later the thugs take her to a hotel in town and plant marijuana on her to incriminate her. Although she is not harmed and all turns out well, the sense of foreboding that was generated during the motel sequence remains to haunt the audience long after the film is over.

This frightening sequence in *Touch of Evil* is the source of *Psycho* (1960). The only difference is that the Bates Motel is a *motel*. There are many similarities in the settings of the two movies. The Bates Motel is in an isolated part of the country. There are no other guests. The desk clerk, Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins), seems ineffectual and creepy. And the potential victim, Marion Crane, is again played by Janet Leigh. *Psycho*'s suspense is heightened by the fact that she arrives in the middle of the night during a heavy rain and thunderstorm[6].

But unlike *Touch of Evil*, in which, despite the foreshadowing and aura of evil, no harm befalls Susan, in *Psycho* Marion is brutally murdered in a scene that is one of the most frightening in all of film. Her stabbing in the shower is an event that the audience does not want to and at first is not able to believe, because they do not expect to see a film's main character killed before the first fourth of the film has elapsed.

After the *Psycho* motel murder sequence, as they say, the rest is history. That scene firmly established in the viewing public's mind that motels are the loci of vulnerability and horrible violence. Henceforth, seeing a motel – especially an isolated one – in a film can be guaranteed to generate intense audience suspense.

Various subsequent films then utilized motel settings for scenes of great violence.

In *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967, Warren Beaty and Fay Dunnaway, Clyde's brother (Gene Hackman) dies after a shootout with the police when the Barrow gang is discovered in some tourist cabins. Later, what is left of the gang hides out at Pruett's Tourist Court (cabins) in Platte City, Iowa, where they are discovered by the police, who then lie in ambush and kill them in a torrent of gunfire as they drive down the highway after leaving the tourist cabins in an attempt to escape.

In Robert Altman's *Thieves Like Us* (1974)[7], a fictional couple like Bonnie and Clyde, Bowie (Kieth Carradine) and Keechie (Shelly Duvall) go on a similar bank-robbing spree. But they too are doomed. Because of the development of the mass media of the time, radio reports, and newspaper accounts that include photographs of them, it is inevitable that they will soon be caught. They hole up in one of the tourist cabins that is on a gang member's sister's farm. She houses them in Cabin 13 and calls the police to tell them where Bowie is. The sister hold Keechie in the house and they both watch as the police converge on Cabin 13 and almost demolish the front door with a barrage of bullets and shot gun blasts. The noise of the gunfire mixes with Keechie's hysterical screaming to create an ending of extreme horror.

These stories are based on fact. That tourist cabins, cabins, and tourist courts were not in towns where people might recognize them, were away from police departments, and were located in isolated areas made them ideal hideouts for criminals.

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6 The other terrifying scene in the film occurs when Norman Bates traps Lila Crane (Vera Miles) in the basement, a locus of evil, as I discussed in "The Phenomenology of Space: Cellars", at the Sixteenth International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis, July, 1999, in Urbino, Italy.

7 Based on Edward Anderson's novel *Thieves Lie Us*, the source of a l949 film, *They Live by Night.*

Even in *Kindergarten Cop* (1990), a film that is often comic, the two undercover police officers, John Kimble (Arnold Schwarzenegger) and Phoebe O'Hara (Pamela Reed) stay in a motel in a remote area. When Kimble returns to the motel unannounced and hears noises in the bedroom, both he and the audience expect to find Phoebe being captured or killed. But when he enters the bedroom with gun drawn, he only finds his partner in bed with her fiancé, in a scene that helps to sustain the balance of suspense and comedy that permeates the film.

In his1985 adaptation of Tom Stoppard's *Fool for Love*, Robert Altman set it in an isolated tourist court in the desert, apparently to draw on the suspense of such a setting. In contrast, the play's 1983 stage premier was set in only one room of a motel, a claustrophobic setting that emphasized the fact that the man and woman, who have the same father and who have had an ongoing incestuous affair, cannot extricate themselves from each other. In the film, the setting of an isolated motel in the desert seems artificially imposed on the play, probably because a one-room setting does not function well in a wide-screen format, unlike the film of Sartre's *No Exit* (1962) in which the small screen format emphasizes the characters' imprisonment and the fact that "Hell is other people." Unfortunately the setting for the film fails to work well both because it loses the sense of claustrophobia and because by the time Altman made the film in l985, the motel setting had already become a cliché.

In later films the motel remains a cliché.

The structure of *Memento* (2000), which is set in a motel, is clearly intended to confuse the viewer. Not only does the main character suffer from anterograde amnesia, which makes it impossible for him to store new memories, but part of the story is told in black and white in chronological order and part is told in color in reverse chronological order.

The film *Identity* (2001) is by far the bloodiest and most suspenseful of recent films set in motels. The setting is a fairly modern, two-story motel in an isolated area of the Nevada desert. Like *Psycho* the film takes place at night during a rainstorm whose flooding has trapped a group people there. In *Identity* the isolation of the motel, the rain, and nighttime all echo *Psycho*. The creepy desk clerk is reminiscent of the desk clerk in *A Touch of Evil* and of Bates in *Psycho.* Also the fact that the outdoor scenes are filmed in lighting that often makes them look as if they were filmed in black and white provides even more echoes of *A Touch of Evil* and *Psycho.* In *Identity* not only are the roads in both directions from the motel been made impassable by flooding, but, after a while, telephone connections are broken and even the travelers' cell phones go dead, echoing the cut phone lines in *A Touch of Evil*. At the motel, one bloody murder, then another, then another takes place, in a plot reminiscent of Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None.* The murders appear to be being committed by a psychopathic serial killer, who was being transported by a policeman from prison to a special hearing of his case. One by one, each of the people at the motel is murdered. Particularly chilling is the fact than one young boy, who was traveling with his adoptive parents, is apparently the son of the serial killer. His presence leaves the audience simultaneously afraid that the boy will come to harm by his biological father and that the boy himself may become as actively evil as his father.

The film involves scenes that show the killer imagining himself to be various characters who are staying at the motel. It is unclear how much, if any of the violence did take place or was only imagined by the convict. But regardless, the setting, the horror of the murders shown, the terror the characters manifest as each begins to fear being the next victim, makes *Identity* the epitome of films in which motels are the setting for horror, violence, psychosis, murder, and extreme terror. The plot is so confusing that it makes no sense.

Both *Memento* and *identity* have plots that are so convoluted that I suspect that the purpose of each director was to sufficiently confuse the viewer into concluding that because the plots were so complicated, that the film must be conveying some deep psychological meanings. It seems to me that it is the motel setting of each film that dominates the film and generates more suspense than the plot, the characters, or the psychological premises on which the films are based.

In Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* published in 2005 and released as a film in 2007), the motel violence is extreme. The events in the West Texas setting support the old belief that there was "no law west of the Pecos" – because towns and their sheriffs and police were so far apart.

West Texas is an empty, wind-blown desert of wide open, sparsely inhabited space in which early tourist courts, and later, motels thrived. In the novel and film, most of the killer Chigurh's murders occur in motels. A simple catelogue of the slaughter suggests that one is never safe at a motel. It is in or near a motel that Chigurh kills a man in a green guayabera, shoots at but doesn't kill Moss, guns down several strangers during a gun fight, dresses a leg wound he sustained in the gun fight, and kills Moss, two men, and a young girl women outside their motel room, kills the young girl who was hitch-hiking to California, and kills an unidentified Mexican man.

Most recent motel films borrow details from previous films – details that have become clichés. One recent representative and rotten example is *Vacancy.* It has, like *Psycho*, with a car traveling a deserted highway, an isolated motel, and a creepy desk clerk, a seedy motel room, and no other residents. The film borrows from *identity* the almost black screen, which is punctuated by flashes of red. They have no way to escape, cannot make phone calls to the outside world, and are aware that others have been killed there and that they themselves are the next targets for murder.

The writers of *A Touch of Evil* and *Psycho* discovered and utilized the psychologically valid anxiety a traveler used to feel when staying in a tourist court in a desolate and almost unpopulated area, which *Touch of Evil* and *Psycho* demonstrated. Since then, motel violence and fear have become a cliché for horror films such as *Psycho II*, *Psycho III*, *Deranged*, also entitled *Motel Hell*, *Mountain Top Massacre*, *Choking Hazel*, *Hell Ride,* and others. But the association of motels and irrational violence has become so prevalent that I spent the entire time I viewed *Fool for Love* expecting some horror, merely because the setting was a run-down tourist court. I even got uncomfortable when, in *Rainman*, when the Babbit brothers spend the night in an old-fashioned tourist court.

Such details have also been used to produce comedy. Tom Dirks points out that "A satirical parody of scenes from various Hitchcock films, including some from *Psycho*, were included in Mel Brooks' comedy *High Anxiety (1978)*" and he specifies that

> "the shower scene itself has been referenced, spoofed and parodied in numerous films, including Brian De Palma's *The Phantom of the Paradise (1974)* and *Dressed to Kill (1980)*, *Squirm (1976)*, Victor Zimmerman's low-budget *Fade to Black (1980)*, Tobe Hooper's *The Funhouse (1981)*, John De Bello's *Killer Tomatoes Strike Back! (1990)*, Martin Walz' *The Killer Condom (1997, Ger.)*, Wes Craven's *Scream 2 (1997)*, Scott Spiegel's *From Dusk Till Dawn 2: Texas Blood Money (1999)*, and the animated *Looney Tunes: Back in Action (2003)*, in which Bugs acts out with the film's black-and-white footage and a can of Hershey's chocolate syrup poured down the drain[8].

What interests me is the way fiction and film writers utilize the various levels of a house and other spaces which human beings inhabit in order to bring to our conscious attention the phenomenological emotions and associations that lie just barely below our consciousnesses. These films brought to the viewing public, who might never have stayed in a motel, the fears associated with staying there. Aware or not, we, as members of the same culture, have certain associations with upper rooms, attics, main floors, cellars, residence hotels, huts, and motels. And these films about violence and horror in motels confirm for me why I was so irrationally terrified in motels and tourist courts when I was a young child.

Contemporary motels are large, belong to huge chains, have many security features, have rooms that open onto inner hallways, are in the middle of a city, and are all alike. They are indistinguishable from hotels, except that they provide parking spaces. They are so stereotyped that is hard to be frightened in them. So, do I still feel vulnerable and frightened in a motel? If it is configured, but like the tourist courts and motels of my childhood, on a lonely stretch of a highway, and with doors that open to the outside, well, yes, I do. If it is a Holiday Inn in the middle of a city, I am merely bored.

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8 Dirks, op. cit.

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# Destruction and becoming in the psychoterapeutical relationship on the basis of Sabina Spielrein's study entitled 'Destruction as cause of Becoming'

*EMESE MOLNAR*[*]

The life and work of *Sabina Spielrein* is closely interrelated, since the former patient became a doctor studying schizophrenia, treating psychoses, a psychoanalytic researching the sensitive, deep rooted connections in the course of few years' time. She was admitted in 1904 to the Burghözli mental hospital near Zurich with schizoid-type hysterical symptoms. She was the first patient of the then assistant lecturer *Carl Gustav Jung* with whom he practiced psychoanalytic therapy (Etkind, 1999, 266.). She was the 'test case' (McGuire, 1974, 228-230). Her symptoms probably started at the age of four when she saw her father beating her younger brother's naked bottom. From that time on she could not get away from the idea of defecating on his father' hand (Etkind, 1999). These symptoms were later changed to and supplemented with anal arousal and masturbation. *Freud* (1995) highlighted childhood sexuality and traumatisation in this hysterical symptom formation, in which the unconscious phantasies of seducing the parent plays the main role. It well refers to the intensity of the months of 'therapy honeymoon' that *Spielrein* was released from the hospital in ten months' time and she started her medical studies then as an outpatient.

She received a doctoral degree in 1911 defending her dissertation entitled 'The psychological content of a schizophrenic case' (Bettelheim, 1996). It is at that time she started to discover that the sexual drive is not the only force in a human being – as was thought by *Freud* since then. Parallel and opposite to it there exists another instinct – the instinct of destruction, the desire to destroy one's life. The first time she spoke about it publicly was on 25 November 1911 on the meeting of the Vienna psychoanalytic Society. Though this idea was not received with outbursting enthusiasm and neither *Freud* agreed with it initially, he did make a reference to it in his work 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' published nine years later; and later in his life he made Eros and Thanatos as the ideas of the two equivalent, basic instincts of human nature the foundation of his theory (Etkind, 1999). In the meanwhile his relationship with *Jung* became a friendship and on the part of *Spielrein* it probably

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transformed to love, to passion (Carotenuto, 1982). Her private life and scientific career as well as the difficulty and complexity of her role between and next to *Freud* and *Jung* remains interwoven all along. Relying on her own emotions, thoughts and pains, she transformed her experiences into her scientific work: the need for cognition, the importance of being able to love, the sexual fear and the related fear from disintegration and the death instinct inherent in the sexual drive. Her fate and life experience, her illness and recovery, love and disappointment, loneliness and struggling helped her in framing innovative and fruitful ideas in her work. She puts each and every action in her life into her professional work; living through, transferring, reshaping and making it conscious – she wrote and spelled it out. Pain, death, destruction and rebirth play the most important role in her own experiences. As though she were in the deepest depths, tempted by the longing for death, destruction and destroying, and, at the same time, she lived and loved life with unbelievable power and energy.

She first elaborates her ideas of the instinct of destruction and death as well as their relationship with the sexual drive in her productive article of 1912 entitled 'Destruction as Cause of Becoming'. She describes the counterparts of love and disgust as well as their dividuum and the individual and relates them both to the sexual motivation and the destructive component of the sex instincts. When the sexual desire arises we feel fear and distress of passing out – of the destruction of the individual – but we overcome this feeling and long for uniting with the other. It becomes possible, because the passing of the former life – or rather the individual – serves the creating of a new one; the male side dissolves in the female side and the female side undergoes changes, receiving a new form through the foreign intruder. Therefore this change affects the whole organism: destruction and reconstruction takes place. So as we live through pleasure at becoming while driven by the reproductive instinct, in the same way we are driven by the destructive component of the sex instinct in case of disgust and fear (Spielrein, 2008). *Spielrein*'s personal and passionate relationship with *Jung* that went beyond the initial doctor-patient relationship; its complexity and difficulty, as *Jung* himself interpreted to *Freud*, promoted and put into the foreground the basic concepts arising from the psychotherapeutic relationship: the thoughts about the role of transference and especially counter transference, the importance of the healing love as well as the birth of the self-experience therapy. The correspondence between the two great thinkers began due to *Spielrein* in 1906 and in December of the same year *Freud* already writes about the importance of transference to *Jung*: "... our cures are brought about through the fixation of the libido prevailing in the unconscious (transference), and that this transference is most readily obtained in hysteria. Transference provides the impulse necessary for understanding and translating the language of the unconscious; where it is lacking, the patient does not make the effort or does not listen when we submit our translation to him. Essentially, one might say, the cure is effected by love. And actually transference provides the most cogent, indeed, the only unassailable proof that neuroses are determined by the individual's love life" (McGuire, 1974, 11-13).

Therefore the change, about which *Spielrein* also writes, helps to destroy the old, not very well functioning relationships through the love and acceptance in the psychotherapeutic relationship in order to help more effective relationships come into being. Three years later Freud writes about the redirection of a therapist's feelings toward a client – that is he explains the meaning and the importance of the counter transference: "... They help us to develop the thick skin we need and to dominate 'counter-transference', which is after all a permanent problem for us; they teach us to displace our own affects to best advantage. They are a 'blessing in disguise'" (McGuire, 1974, 230-232).

In her above mentioned work *Spielrein* (2008) agrees with *Freud* in saying that the basis of every psychical production is that we long for pleasure and try to avoid pain. Besides, she takes the opinion that the Self, as well as the unconscious processes are governed by such whiffs of mind that are established deeper inside and have no connection with the emotional reactions. The feeling of pleasure is the affirmation of these demands emerging from the deeper parts. It happens that pain causes pleasure, though it should result in sorrow, since pain, to which the self-preserving instinct resists, corresponds to a kind of trauma. Therefore it seems that something deep in our soul, however paradox it may seem, wants this self-injury and reacts to it with pleasure. This destruction that serves becoming may help us recovering from the illness; and the id can reborn from this self-injury.

The self-preserving instinct is a simple instinct with positive aspects only, and static, in which its task is to defend the already existing individual from the outside effects. On the other hand, the reproductive instinct, that has to dissolve the old in order to create the new, has both a positive and a negative component at the same time. It is expressed in the assimilation tendencies when the 'material nature' differentiates. That is why the birth of the negative component calls forth the positive component and vice versa; and that it is dynamic since it intends to 'wake' the individual in a new form. "No change can take place therefore without previously destroying the old state" (Spielrein, 2008, 31). *Spielrein* analyses *Nietzsche*'s idea of the eternal return and describes the notion of superhuman being as in which the close identification of *Nietzsche* with his mother is expressed – in the love relationship with one's mother one sees himself as his own mother and his mother as himself. The longing for cognition is nothing else for her then love, the desire for creation as well as – the mother-sea analogy – the longing for the mother living in ones own depths (Spielrein, 2008). This is in line with the idea of *Winnicott* (1971), according to which it is the pure feminine part of the immature personality that is in contact with the mother – that is the infant becomes the mother and the object becomes the subject. "*Nietzsche*'s conscience does not live in the present due to the autoerotic isolation, rather in its own depths" (Spielrein, 2008, 31) – that belongs to the time when the young child in a passive way behaves like a woman with the mother while suckling. By uniting with the mother in love, he himself becomes a reproducer, a creator, a life-giver. For him the mother is himself and he is – his own mother.

In case of each love we have to differentiate between the emerging ideas of two different kinds. The one is – the way we love, the other – the way we are being loved. In the first case we are the subject and we are in love with the object projected to the outside world. In the second case we become the object of love and we are in love with ourselves. For the man, whose actual task is to conquer the woman, the first ideas are given preference, on the contrary, for the woman, whose task is to bind the man to herself, the latter ideas dominate. In love when the one who is in love dissolves in the love of the subject of love is a new life in the beloved person. "If love is not present than a strange power influences the ideas of the psychological and physical individual, just like the ideas of annihilation or death during sexual acts" (Spielrein, 2008, 32). *Spielrein* explains life and death with the help of the Earth-Water symbolism for which she mainly uses the historical material collected by mainly *Wünsche* and *Kohle.* In The Song of the Nibelungs Brunhild (the Earth), who is in a winter sleep is being redeemed by Siegfried, the victorious light (the Sun): with his sword he cuts through his armour (the layer of ice), and this way inseminates her. Brunhild similarly to Eve, herself acts against the order of her father, and similarly to the expulsion of Eve from the Garden of Eden, Brunhild is expulsed from the divine empire. Because Brunhild broke the order falls asleep in a near-death state, from what the kiss of Siegfried, the spring sun redeems her. "The death-wish is often a wish of dying in love" (Spielrein, 2008, 42). Brunhild dies in the heat of love: "she slowly disappears, dissolves in Siegfried, the flame of the redeemer sun" (Spielrein, 2008, 43). According to *Spielrein* it is important because each image is searching for another one that is similar but not the same in which it can dissolve and can be transformed. This power of comprehension based on the similar idea-content brings forth sympathy, and as a result we would like to give more. This can reach a level where we would wish to give all ourselves to the other person. This phase is accompanied by the most dangerous feeling of happiness, as the dissolution happens in the similar, in love. *Spielrein* (2008) links at this stage the sexual fear of the schizophrenic people with the fear of disintegration. The fear of being completely dissolved, getting lost and being destroyed in the beloved person. This is the fear of loosing one's self (Freud, 1997). "To love and to get lost – these two belong together ever since eternity. To want to love: it means to be ready to die!" (Nietzsche by Spielrein, 2008, 30.) In the psychotherapeutic relation the strong ties emerging in the patient may also strengthen this threat of fusion. This is frightening, but can be very much desired as well. At the same time, in the transfer situation that arises and is getting stronger continuously the imaginations and urges that stand in the way of development must be destroyed – which are destructive in themselves according to the concept system of Klein (1999).

There is a lot of similarity between the northern Siegfried and the eastern Christ: Siegfried (similarly to Christ) is Sun God, whose love is the mother earth. Christ (similarly to Siegfried) is a rescue-type, who sacrifices himself for humankind. When he is crucified on the Tree of Life, he is hanging on it just like a fruit. When he dies he falls on mother earth and similarly to the fruits, inseminates it. This insemination leads to the formation of the new life, the resurrection of the dead (Spielrein, 2008). The death and resurrection of Christ equalized the sin of Adam. When God sentenced Adam and Eve to death, basically he allowed them to taste the forbidden fruit. The other punishment means the same, as Adam must cultivate the soil by the sweat of his brow and Eve has to give birth to her child while suffering great pains. So, we can say, that the punishment is "the damage to the individual, as proliferation demands the destruction of the individual" (Spielrein, 2008, 44). While the child is still in the body of the mother, it does not have a separate life. "In mythology this is phantasm-death, like for example the empire of Persephone, where only a conjecture exists of life and everything seems to be a silhouette. In the 'mother' there is no light and dark, up and down, there are no opposites, as there is no differentiation from the ancient mother, the ancient substance" (Spielrein, 2008, 47). Just like in the psychotherapeutic relationship. When the creature becomes an individual organism that is when life and death exists for him. In terms of psychotherapeutic relationship the condition of convalescence and development or source of the dissolving and release of the transfer. Therefore "life is the source of death, and death is the source of life" (Spielrein, 2008, 47).

*Spielrein* therefore comes to the conclusion that destruction is the basis for all kind of origin and development; and we can find the reason of origin in all kinds of dissociation. The essence of instinct for death is that it cannot be separated from instinct for life, and the continuation of life in another person. Another aspect of love is the desire that aims at the annihilation of its subject; this is why every birth is a death, and every death is a birth at the same time. She relies on the thought of *Freud*, the ambivalence concept of *Bleuler,* the bipolarity concept of *Stekel,* and the idea of *Jung,* who says, that besides every positive thing there is its negative side. It is enough if the instinct strengthens a little bit in ourselves on the other's account and it already seems like we only desire that one. Under normal circumstances the instinct for life is a bit stronger, because existence is the result of destruction, it depends on destruction. Death in itself is horrible, but as a destroying component of it that leads to the origin, it is curing. "You have to know how to rise above yourself (destruction), otherwise how you would be able to create the higher, the child!" (Spielrein, 2008, 33) This is what best explains what happens to the patient in the psychotherapeutic relation: the patient finds to way to himself through the dissolution of transfer, gives birth and creates itself. And in this creation "revives from its own self" (Zsélyi, 2007).

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 139-143**

# Walter Abish's Deconstruction of the Holocaust in *How German Is It*

*REIKO NITTA**

## WALTER ABISH AS AN INNOVATIVE WRITER:

Since his first startling novel, *Alphabetical Africa* (1974, hereafter, AA), Walter Abish has always been recognized as a provocative writer who challenges the limitations of language and literary expressions. His literary experiments, which Jerome Klinkowitz calls "a superrealism" ("Walter Abish and the Surfaces of Life" 419) or "an experimental realism" ("Experimental Realism" 63) can be easily observed in *How German Is It* (1980, hereafter, HG), too, though it adopts a far more realistic narrative than AA.

HG, for example, begins with an interrogative sentence answered by questioning:

> What are the first words a visitor from France can expect to hear upon his arrival at a German airport?
>
> Bonjour?
>
> Or, Guten Tag?
>
> Or, Ihren Pass bitte? (1)

Thousands of people arrive at a German airport every day. It is a familiar scene. But the questions in this opening passage disturb the reader and make him wonder if there is something wrong in this familiar scene. Such a destabilizing interrogative sentence is one of the most distinctive literary devices Abish adopted in HG and gives the initial impression that the book represents a new type of fiction.

The nature of Abish's interrogative sentence in HG is aptly represented by the book's title, "How German Is It." Its interrogative form without a question mark offers the reader a subject to consider while refraining from supplying him with any authorial opinion. It thus functions both as affirmation and interrogation.

Besides the unique usage of interrogation, HG also assumes the characteristics of postmodern narrative which Jean-François Lyotard describes as the conditions of the "delegitimation" of grand narratives (37-41).

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For example, HG lacks a "great hero," an authorized protagonist. At the beginning Ulrich Hargenau may look intelligent, conscientious and observant enough to be a protagonist who represents Abish's point of view. Later, however, he turns out to be completely blind to what is happening around him. He is simply another unreliable character and the initial impression of his reliability is an intended fallacy, one of the tricks Abish uses to emphasize that nothing in this book is what it seems.

As a typical postmodern work, HG also lacks "great dangers," "great voyages," and a "great goal" and is an assortment of only loosely connected elements. And more emphasis is placed on how the book is told than on what is told in it. In other words, Abish is more concerned with how the reader experiences the book than with the text's superficial message.

What is more, HG employs another postmodern characteristic, "peripeteia," a sudden change to a plot. One of the characteristic examples of it in HG is the destruction of a bridge by its watcher, Gottfried. At first he seems one of the most harmless men in the world, but one day, without any apparent explanation, he kills a couple of policemen, destroys his bridge and abandons his career and peaceful domestic life with his wife.

All through HG, Abish makes these literary experiments which defamiliarize the familiar or destabilize the reader's recognition so that the reader cannot help doubting what he usually takes for granted and reconsidering everything in his life.

On the other hand, Abish's sense of humor keeps the reader from desperation even in the grimmest reality and helps him to face it. For example, when the bridge is unexpectedly destroyed, an exaggerated question is asked: "Can absolutely nothing be relied upon any longer?" (247). This question reveals the great uncertainty we live with in reality but a playful tone in its exaggeration softens the tension which it is supposed to express. It is, moreover, neither affirmed nor negated so that a quick cynicism and an easy optimism are both rejected. It is entirely up to the reader how to tackle the uncertainty and by ascribing this responsibility to the reader, the book leaves many possibilities open for the future.

Thus, in HG, Abish presents the subjects to be considered but refrains from indicating what conclusion the reader should draw about them. HG is therefore what Roland Barthes calls "le scriptible" (10) (the writerly text) which makes "du lecteur, non plus un consommateur, mais un producteur du texte" (10) (the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text). And this characteristic enables HG to achieve much more than one author could do in one book. Furthermore, it is predicated on a trust in the reader's appropriate response and human potential so that HG is fundamentally humanistic and, however cynical it may look, enshrines an infinite hope.

## THE ANALYTICAL EMPHASIS ON ABISH'S LITERARY DEVICES

In the analysis of Abish's work, critics such as Dieter Saalman, Richard Walsh, Maarten Van Delden, Paul Wotipka, put their emphasis on his literary devices even when they examine social and historical materials in his work. For example, Van Delden is very conscious of Abish's moral and historical concern but he will not go into the discussion of Abish's personal feeling about the particular subjects, German history and the Holocaust. Instead, he concludes by generalizing them: "The novel's secretiveness... reflects the troubled forgetfulness of a society that has not yet come to terms with its past" (192).

The analytical emphasis of these critics is in a way appropriate because Abish himself announces in the interview with Sylvère Lotringer, "I have introduced German signs" (161). He insists that everything German in the book is designed to represent more than Germany itself. Abish's intention of using Germany as a sign is also intimated by the fact that he wrote HG without visiting Germany. It is probable that he did not want to defile his literary intention by experiencing the real Germany beforehand.

## ABISH'S MORAL AND POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Though Abish's literary devices tend to be emphasized, most of the critics agree that his work is different from those postmodern works with "historical deafness" (xi), which Fredric Jameson refers to as one of the typical postmodern characteristics.

In fact, Abish's most experimental literary expressions reflect his moral and political concerns with the world and the age. Especially in HG, Abish brilliantly demonstrated his ability as an innovative writer by creating a new narrative to deconstruct the Holocaust. The description in this book is mostly limited to a peaceful-looking contemporary daily life but each scene seems to hint of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust and warns the reader against similar dangers elsewhere. However, because this postmodern artifice is designed to make the reader sensitive to any danger in his life and to induce him to work for peace, critics tend to focus on Abish's literary devices and generalize the effects of his usage of Germany and the Holocaust, concluding with a vague moral and political responsibility.

It is also true that critics are all the more careful in relating Abish to the Holocaust because it is too easy to do so. Abish was born to a Jewish middle-class family in Vienna, Austria in 1931, and was forced to flee from his native country soon after the *Anschluss*, the Annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany. His family on his mother's side were rich enough to escape in time but his father's family were all killed in the war. It is, therefore, quite natural if Abish has an irrepressible aversion towards Germany but HG is too refined and sophisticated a book to express merely a tenacious hatred. This is why good critics feel obliged to generalize anything indicating Nazi Germany and the Holocaust into the novel's wider view of the world.

The influence of the Holocaust is, however, ubiquitous in Abish's work. Allusions to Nazi Germany are easily found not only in HG and *Double Vision* (2004) but also in AA and *Eclipse Fever* (1993, hereafter, EF), whose subjects seem at first glance to have nothing to do with the Holocaust. Consequently, discussion of the influence of the Holocaust and his relation to it cannot be avoided in the close examination of his work.

## THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE HOLOCAUST AS A POSTMODERN ANTI-WAR NOVEL

In HG, there are many references to the Holocaust but the most cynical one can probably be found in the 18th and subsequent chapters of the second part called "Sweet Truth." Chapter 18 innocently begins:

> One day, after a particularly heavy downpour the pavement in front of the Karl-Mainz Bakery on the Geigenheimer Strasse in Brumholdstein caved in, exposing a ruptured sewage pipe. Things like that were bound to happen. They could happen anywhere. (136)

This ordinary looking incident, however, reveals the most unusual and the grimmest fact, namely that "all of Brumholdstein is sitting on one mass grave" (139). Then the 33rd chapter opens with an ironical comment, "*Past riches*" (190), and suggestively ponders how one should face the darkest history that a new German model city inherits from the past.

The morbid image of numerous buried bodies under an immaculate model city rightly delivers the same grave message that many other Holocaust works have ever told. Yet the ironic contrast between an insignificant-looking rupture of a sewage pipe and the unprecedented genocide, and the farcical realization of a beautiful new city built on the mass grave, reject the stereotypical reaction to the reality of the Holocaust. These comical elements mitigate one's difficulty in facing the reality of the abhorrent crimes human beings can commit, without reducing their atrocity. Abish's literary art thus enables those who do not know about the Holocaust to face it and understand it as it was.

In *The Holocaust and the Postmodern*, Robert Eaglestone explains that postmodernism developed out of the struggle with a special difficulty of language after the Holocaust: "These writers and survivors, and many others, believe that it is not possible for those who did not survive to understand, in a truthful way, the events of the Holocaust. Language is not enough" (18). Amy Hungerford refers to the same difficulty in *The Holocaust of Texts* (15).

Abish's artistic devices in HG, however, succeeded in making the unimaginable imaginable, not by directly describing the Holocaust itself but by creating a fictitious Germany in a historical narrative with literary, ethical and political importance, and then by deconstructing it to produce what Hungerford calls "the most important 'proof' of the merging of fact and fiction" (15). However, to depict the Holocaust as it was is not Abish's ultimate purpose. As has already been noted, the book defamilializes the familiar and induces the reader to reconsider his daily life in order to overcome the difficulties in it. It is in this generalized moral and political view demonstrated by his postmodern writing that the largest influence of the Holocaust resides.

Eaglestone asserts that "postmodernism in the West begins with thinking about the Holocaust, that postmodernism... is a response to the Holocaust" (2), and illustrates how Emanuel Levinas's exorbitant[1] and Jacques Derrida's decentring[2] involve "a sense of openness towards the future" (299)[3] which may help to prevent another incident like the Holocaust in the future. Being a writerly text, Abish's work also possesses this attribute. In other words, his books always induce the reader to recognize dangers in his daily life and think of the way to attain a better future and peace, because his postmodern literary devices are shaped by a strong sense of responsibility to history and human beings, such as people in Hiroshima would share when they pledge that "the error shall not be repeated"[4]. It is his way of discharging the moral obligation he owes to his experience of the Holocaust.

As he proclaims in the interview with Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory, "My work is indeed political" (21). HG is not only a writerly text but also one of the most effective anti-war novels ever attempted. And it is this effort for the future and for peace that makes Abish unique even among the best postmodern innovative writers.

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## NOTES

1 Eaglestone explains this as “to go out of the wheel track”(281) referring to Levinas’s important “wheel rut” metaphor.

2 Nicholas Royle observes, “if one were looking for a single ‘central ideal’ for Derrida’s work it might be that of *decentring*” (15).

3 Takashi Minatomich also argues that it is because of his Holocaust experience that Levinas tried to be a real thinker for peace (130).

4 The Memorial Cenotaph of the A-bomb in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park carries the epitaph: “Repose ye in Peace, for the error shall not be repeated.”

Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 145-163

# Understanding Al-Mutanabbi's poetry: An application of horneyan theory on neurotics

*RATNA ROSHIDA ABD RAZAK*[*]

ABSTRACT

*This paper is concerned with the 'real self' of al-Mutanabbi, a great poet of the Abbasid period and a famous satirist in the Arabic literature. An effort has been made to discover the deeper aspects of al-Mutanabbi's personality, which constitutes an important aspect of his artistic expression. Using Horney's theories we will explore how al-Mutanabbi, as a neurotic person, overcomes the conflict inherent in his relationship with Kafur, his second patron. A biographical perspective is extremely useful for an understanding of the work of a poet such as al-Mutanabbi and through an analysis of his poems. It is possible to reveal how the poet adopted various strategies to achieve his goals. In al-Mutanabbi's case we try to unearth how the effect of his neurotic conflict had on his motivation. His neurotic conflict might be utilized as a temporary incentive. However the creative urge and creative power can only stem from his desire for self-realization and these energies are only fully utilized in its service. Al-Mutanabbi was distinguished by his ability to live with anxiety, even though a high price might be paid in terms of insecurity and sensitivity.*

> Self-realization does not exclusively, or even primarily, aims at developing one's special gifts. The centre of the process is the evolution of one's potentialities as a human being; hence it involves – in central place – the development of one's capacities for good human relations.
>
> Karen Homey

## INTRODUCTION

This article is concerned with the 'real self' of al-Mutanabbi, a great poet of the Abbasid period. An effort has been made to discover the deeper aspects of al-Mutanabbi personality, which constitutes an important aspect of his artistic expression. Many modern studies on Arabic poetry have

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been more attracted to al-Mutanabbi's verses, concentrating on the construction of the poems and the instruments employed by the poet to compose his polythematic poetry, while ignoring the poet's humanitarianism[1]. Few studies of the poet himself exits and these do not, to any great extent, examine the features of his character of his psychological make-up[2].

Al-Mutanabbi traveled to Egypt at the invitation of its ruler, Kafur, an able Negro eunuch slave of the royal household who had usurped power from the legitimate king. He addressed his first panegyric to his new patron in 346/957, but the panegyrics which he devoted to him barely concealed his regret at losing the favour of Sayf al-Dawlah[3]. His action was compelled by a desire to attain security of the office of governor of the Ikshidid principality. It is generally thought that the poet only agreed to praise his patron because he had promised al-Mutanabbi the governorship of Sayda[4]. For three years the capital held him, while he lectured and courted the great and mighty of Egypt. However, in 350/960, on the day of the Feast of Sacrifices, with a multitude of diversions taking place, he decided to flee from Fustat, after writing a satire against Kafur. Before making his final decision to leave Egypt, al-Mutanabbi didi try to 'win the heart' of another Ikhshidid general, Abu Shuja' Fatik (d. 350/961), whose merits had been reckoned by the Ikhshid Muhammad b. Tughj[5]. Al-Mutanabbi knew Abu Shuja's reputation and vis-à-vis. Thus, we could consider that each other recognized the advantage to be obtained from their relationship. Unfortunately the bond of their friendship was not lasting. In 350/961, Abu Shuja' died and al-Mutanabbi was grief-stricken.

## KAFUR'S PATRONAGE OF AL-MUTANABBI

The question that arises is why he chose to be a panegyrist to Kafur, who was originally a black slave and a eunuch. It is difficult at first to see the attractions of Kafur for al-Mutanabbi, especially since his new patron was a rival of Sayf al-Dawlah, and twice the victor over the Hamdanid[6]. In fact no evidence apart from the poems themselves has been found that al-Mutanabbi had any admiration or respect for Kafur. However, we have to bear in mind that Kafur is a significant figure in Islamic history. His importance lies in the fact that, during the twenty-two years of his rule, he successfully protected the Ikhshidid establishment against dangerous outside pressures stemming from the Fatimids, the Carmathians, the Nubians and the Hamdanids.

Kafur's kunya (agnomen), Abu I-Misk, owed its origin to the Caliph of Baghdad. He was from Lab in Nubia and the nisbah (geneology) al-Labi was given to him by al-Mutanabbi.

كان الأسود اللابي فيهم غراب حوله رخم ويوم

The black Labian among them is, as it were, a raven surrounded by vultures and owls"[7].

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1 (Geert Jan Van Gelder, (ed), 'Al-Mutanabbi's Encumbering Trifles', *Arabic and Middle eastern Literatures*, 2, No. 1, 1999, 0.5).

2 (J.E, Montgomery, 'Al-Mutanabbi and the Psychological Grief", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 115, ii, 1995, pp. 285-292).

3 With this fact, it strikes us to understand al-Mutanabbi's poetry in depth particulary, from a psychological perspective. As far as we know, panegyric is composed to the patron. Whether the poet has to be honest or not, is n ot in question. But the question is why al-Mutanabbi submitted himself to Kafur, if he thought that he could not devote himself wholeheartedly as a panegyrist? See also chapter five: 'Moving Toward People'.

4 Al-Badi'i, *al-Subh al-Munbi'*, p. 6.

5 Ibid., pp. 131-132.

6 R. Blachere, Un poete arabe du iv$^{ème}$ siecle de UHegire (x$^{ème}$ siecle de J.-c): About – Tayyib al-Motanabbi (Paris, 1935), p. 191. All classical sources agree that it was Kafur who started and, initiated the relationship when he knew the famous panegyrist had left Aleppo and was already m Damascus, Ikhshidid territory.

7 Translation by K. Khalaili, 'AI-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem no. 22.

Kafur was brought to Fustat as a young slave. He was bought and sold by several masters until he finally entered the wealthy household of Banu Abbas. It was here that Muhammad al-Ikhshidi, the founder of the Ikhshidid dynasty, came into contact with him. Kafur was intelligent and had a good nature. He was very patient and never lost his temper; in fact he would laugh when he was slapped and teased by members of Banu Abbas's famify[8] whenever they found him in the market. The eunuch's intelligence and devotion flourished under his new master, Muhammad al-Ikhshidi. Tutors were appointed to educate him. Kafur was much impressed with his master, who sponsored his rise to positions of political and military influence. After he was freed, Kafur was appointed as an army officer, eventually being assigned as head of an army which defeated Sayf al-Dawlah at Qinnasrin in 333/945[9].

Kafur proved himself to be a most cunning and resourceful politician. He was able to please both the 'Abbasids and the Fatimids by adopting a policy of rapprochement towards of Fatimid caliph, al-Mu'izz. He tried to maintain friendly relations with him, while at the same time displaying openly his allegiance to the 'Abbasid caliph at Baghdad[10]. He was also very generous, and a benefactor to many people, especially the poor. Nor was he aloof or reserved: his close friends witnessed that he enjoyed the company of boon companions, singing slave-girls and a great number of both black and white slaves. He also devoted much time to scholarly studies. Every night, scholars would read in his court the history of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid dynasties, and composed a history of Egypt for him[11].

Kafur's cleverness and effective diplomacy impressed al-Mutanabbi, and were highly praised in his verses.

يبيد دعوات البغاة بلطفه فإن لم تبد منهم أباد الأعاديا

"Destroying the enmities of aggressors by his gentility and if they do not perish from them, he destroys the enemies"[12].

إذا منعت منك السياسة نفسها فقف وقفة قدامة تتعلم

"If policy denies herself to you, just halt but once before him and you will learn"[13].

Kafur was also rumoured to have been a highly religious and devout person. He would make himself available at his house at dawn and dusk, to receive people in need of his help. He would spend his nights in prayer, prostrating himself in the dust and saying: "My Lord, I pray to you, do not put me under the mercy of any creatures"[14]. The question arises however, whether these would be enough to satisfy al-Mutanabbi. There is little doubt that Kafur possessed not only political power but many admirable personal qualities. It can be argued that choosing a protector is not only a matter of safety. We believe that since al-Mutanabbi knew himself to be a great poet, so he would be willing to serve only a great patron who fully appreciated, and rewarded, his extraordinary talents.

Being aware of Kafur's good reputation, al-Mutanabbi had little hesitation in accepting him as his new patron. He anticipated that his life would improve at Kafur's court, and, more importantly,

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8 Al-Badi'i, *al-Subh al-Munbi'*, p. 110.

9 A.S. Ehrenkreutz, 'Kafur', *Encyclopedia of Islam,* E.Van Dunzel, B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat (eds.), (Leiden: E.J. Brill), vol. 4, 1978, pp. 418-419.

10 Ibn Taghribirdi, *al-Nujum al-Zahirah fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahirah, vol.* 4 (Cairo, 1963), p. 6.

11 *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 'Kafur', vol. 4, p. 418.

12 A.J. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbi, p. 92.

13 Translation by K Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur ", poem 7:19.

14 Ibn Taghribirdi, *al-Nujum al-Zahirah fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahirah, vol.* 4 (Cairo, 1963), p. 6. 22.

that his political future would be more securely based than during the rather euphoric period of his youthful idealism.

Interpreting according to Horneyan theory, we might agree that when al-Mutanabbi's rejection by Sayf al-Dawlah was a catastrophe that aggravated his neurotic conflict: he realized that his relationship with his patron, which had fed his poetry, was not what he had thought. Al-Mutanabbi's strong desire to be accepted and appreciated by a powerful patron was the most visible sign of his need for safety. He did not hesitate to attack Sayf al-Dawlah, who had made his, situation unsafe, and accuse him of disloyalty and unfaithfulness.

Neurosis cannot be defined in terms of symptoms experienced, since these may be absent or unrecognized. In order to understand the neurotic conflict, it is necessary to understand the nature of anxiety. According to Horney, neurosis are brought about by cultural factors, meaning more specifically that neurosis are generated by disturbances in human relationships. She further notes that compulsive drives are specifically neurotic, born out of feelings of isolation, helplessness, fear, and hostility, and that the human being aims at safety more than sexual satisfaction[15]. These neurotic processes arise out of the need to fend off the onset of anxiety, which is related to the individual's feelings towards the environment:

> Basic anxiety is centered on one's environment being dreaded as a whole because it is felt to be unreliable, mendacious, unappreciative, unfair, unjust, begrudging and merciless. The sufferer feels the environment as a menace to his entire development and to his legitimate wishes and strivings. He feels his individuality is in danger of being obliterated, his freedom being taken away, his happiness barred. He feels rendered helpless to defend himself adequately against any Infringements[16].

Al-Mutanabbi's initial view of the environment was idealized and unrealistic. Sayf al-Dawlah's betrayal turned the environment (the court), into one to be 'dreaded' and therefore anxiety producing. It was not so much his physical safety that was threatened, but his self, his identity as a creative individual, which was intimately connected to his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah.

The absence of love is a typical feature of basic anxiety[17]. It could be argued that al-Mutanabbi's basic anxiety brought about a conflict between his emotional and professional dependence on Sayf al-Dawlah, and his need to rebel against his patron's insensitive attitude. The source of such conflicts, according to a Horneyan interpretation, is to be found in a loss of capacity to wish for anything wholeheartedly, since the wishes are dispersed in different directions.

Al-Mutanabbi seems to have ardently wished for two connected things: to be a great poet and to be loved by Sayf al-Dawlah. Obviously, al-Mutanabbi saw both desires as legitimate and linked in his quest for self-actualization but the crisis in his relationship forced him to realize that they were incompatible. So he had to choose between a self-abasing dependence and autonomy. There is no evidence to prove that al-Mutanabbi's behavior was symptomatic of neurosis, but a Horneyan approach would tend to see his lack of insight as stemming from a false pride which makes unreasonable demands on the other, even if the image of the other is idealized rather than debased.

Al-Mutanabbi's suffering, therefore was largely self-inflicted. He experienced pain, unhappiness and gloom because of the abrupt end of his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah which his pride and arrogance had made inevitable. Again, he expressed, with great psychological precision, the sense of being betrayed, together with longing for his beloved who has betrayed him.

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15 K. Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of our Time, p. 30.* Storr further opines that the neurosis that emerges from the interpersonal relationships, "reveals a lack of maturity; an inability to love and lovable; a failure to achieve that relationship of whole person which is the outward sign of an inward integration".

16 K. Horney, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1939), pp. 75-76.

17 Theodor Reik, *Of Love and Lust* (New York: Farra, Straus & Giroux, 1957), p. 171.

From the line below, we could say that al-Mutanabbi is begging his heart to stop longing towards him, as he said:

حببتك قلبى قبل حبك من نأى وقد كان غدارا فكن انت وافيا

"I loved you, my heart, before you loved him who is now distant; He has been treacherous, so you be faithful"

The poet then threaten to discard his heart if it keeps on complaining of being apart from his previous patron, Sayf al-Dawlah.

وأعلم أن البين يشكيك بعده فلست فؤادي إن رأيتك شاكيا

"I know that separation makes you complain after him, But you are not my heart if I see you complaining"

Implicitly, al-Mutanabbi referred to Sayf al-Dawlah as being disloyal.

فإن دموع العين غدر بربها أذا كن إتر الغادرين جواريا

"For the eye's tears betray their master. If they run after the trail of his betrayers"[18].

As we know, al-Mutanabbi was deeply wounded by Sayf al-Dawlah's lack of support during his dispute with Ibn Khalawayh, when the latter hit him in the face with a key and injured him in the presence of his patron, who did not stand up for his panegyrist. He lamented Sayf al-Dawlah's inability to return his devotion, arguing that he was sincere and others were disingenuous:

اقل اشتياقا أيها القلب ربما رأيتك تصفي الود من ليس جازيا

"Less passion, 0 heart, for perhaps. I've seen you give true love to one who is untrue"

Al-Mutanabbi again convinced himself that he was a loyal and devoted man, even to old age. He dared to yearn for Sayf al-Dawlah in spite of the poor treatment he had received.

خلقت ألوفا لو رحلت إلى الصبى لفا رقت شيبى موجع القلب باكيا

"I am by nature so devoted that, were I to travel back to youth again, With heavy heart and weeping eye would I leave grey hair behind"[19].

He dared to separate and prepared himself to die just because of yearning

ما في هوادكم من مهجتي عوض إن مت شوقا ولا فيها لها ثمن

"Get on your way! May every swift she-camel convey you! For today every parting is safe from [the threat of source] on my part"[20].

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18 al-Wahidi, *Diwan p.* 624. Translation by S.P. Stetkevych, 'Qasida 6: 6-8' in *Qasida Poetry,* vol. 2, p. 93.

19 al-Wahidi, *Diwan, p.* 624, S.P. Stetkevych, 'Qasida 6: 11-12' in *Qasida Poetry, vol.* 2, p. 93. S.P. Stetkyvech and Christopher Shackle, (eds.), *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa, Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings.*

20 *Ibid*., poem 10: 6-8. Anxious to please his new patron, and more importantly, like a rejected lover, who is primarily concerned to gratify his own psychological needs, al-Mutanabbi attacked Sayf al-Dawlah in the strongest terms, accusing him of faithless and disloyalty.

Al-Mutanabbi expressed his profound sense of betrayal. What he got in return for the love and devotion was hatred and malice.

جزاء كل قريب منكم ملل وخط كل محب منكم ضغينُ

"The reward of whoever is close to you is weariness and the portion of every lover from you is hatred"[21].

From the Horneyan perspective, the neurotic process is a set of compulsive and conflicting drives to actualize and maintain the fictional idealized image. This sped-for glorious version of one's self is substituted for the lost or hidden real self. Lacking an authentic sense of identity, the neurotic person purports to 'be somebody'. The struggle for authentic self-development crumbles before the overwhelming compulsion to be special, superior and untouchable. Horneyan neurotic theory differs from Freud's theory of neurosis in respect of the ego ideal, narcissism and the superego. This is because Freud was only concerned with certain aspects of the idealized image, and failed to see the person as a whole[22].

In this poem al-Mutanabbi was not concerned with rejected lovers in general, nor was he speaking of his own beloved women; he was grieving over his betrayal by Sayf al-Dawlah. He believed he was not to be blamed for the separation between them. His lover's mind was poisoned of by the poet's rivals. The poet said that he was betrayed by a man lover, called Sayf al-Dawlah.

فلو كان بي من حبيب مقنغ عذرت ولكن من حبيب معمم

"Had my suffering been caused by a beloved in a veil, I could deem it forgivable, but its cause was a well-beloved [friend] in a turban".

It can be argued that al-Mutanabbi, who was frustrated in his relations with Sayf a1-Dawlah, became neurotic, i.e. he experienced a disturbance in his relation to himself and to the other, causing him to lose his healthy self-esteem, which led to the development of an unhealthy neurotic pride[23]. This kind of neurosis takes over the functions of the real self and becomes a tyrannical force driving the person forward to strive after superhuman goals. Optimally, as we have seen, neurotic behaviour is driven by the need to feel safe and to eliminate situations that might lead to anxiety.

Horney also cautions that neurotic conflict is strikingly different from that of normal people, being considerably more severe[24]. It involves a dilemma that apppears to be insoluble, and is always deeply repressed[25]. At Kafur's court, we would expect al-Mutanabbi's psyche to be fragmented by conflict and was driven by 'inner dictates'.

From the Horneyan perspective, the poet's action in leaving his patron solved nothing and, if anything, made matters worse. Al-Mutanabbi had to attempt to recover his inner freedom and strength, as well as emancipate himself from his conflicts. More importantly, he needed to regain the feeling of safety and once more experience satisfaction. So at Kafur's court, Horneyan environmental

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21 *Ibid*., K Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur", poem 10: 14.

22 S. Freud points out: "The artist has also an introvert disposition and has not far go become neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are to clamorous, he longs to attain honour, power, riches, fame and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers his l*Ibid*o too, on to the creation of his wishes in the life of phantasy." See A *General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1962), p. 384.

23 K. Homey, *Our Inner Conflicts*, p. 77.

24 *Ibid*., p. 27.

25 K. Homey, *Neurosis and Human Growth, p.* 37.

factors were equally, if not more, productive of basic anxiety and neurotic conflict than during the later years with Sayf al-Dawlah. This is a clear disparity between Maslovian and Horneyan theories.

Keeping in mind Homey's theory, we will focus on al-Mutanabbi's actual anxiety and his immediate environment as well as his interpersonal relations with Kafur. Homey believes that it is only when the relationship is disturbed that the problem will deteriorate[26]; what happened to al-Mutanabbi is a good case in point. We suggest that he probably never intensely experienced this kind of emotional problem until his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah broke off. Obviously, this is a key issue.

There is no clear evidence to show how neurotic al-Mutanabbi was before his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah. However, it can be argued that his failure to form a realistic judgement of his situation at the time of his youthful rebellion (when he gained the epithet al-Mutanabbi) was a sign of neurosis[27]. We could also consider that the condition under which al-Mutanabbi was brought up is a sign of neurosis[28]. As we know, he came from a poor Kufan family. His father was just a water-carrier. The fact that he had concealed his genealogy should also be taken into consideration. According to Horney:

> Whatever the conditions under which a child grows up, he will, if not mentally defective, learn to cope with others in one way or another and he will probably acquire some skills. But there are also forces in him which he cannot acquire or even develop by learning[29].

Al-Mutanabbi unconsciously attempted to find a solution to his inner conflict, but, more importantly, to assert his independence. Horney's theory states there are three paths open to him in order to solve his problem – moving toward people, moving against people and moving away from people[30]. Although it may seem to us that the three types of reactions are typologies, Horney denies this: "I definitely do not intend in this chapter or the following to establishing a new typology. A typology is certainly desirable but must be established on a much broader basis"[31]. She uses these types as convenient categories in order to make her approach easier to understand.

In leaving Sayf al-Dawlah, al-Mutanabbi moved away from his real self and began to develop in self-alienating ways which caused changes in his whole personality, since each of these three neurotic solutions is compulsive and inflexible[32]. Horney asserts that, in these three solutions, there are three main characteristics of basic conflict, namely helplessness, aggressiveness anddetachment[33].

Al-Mutanabbi's helplessness, characteristic of what Horney describes as 'moving toward people', led to an excessive desire for protection from Kafur. After a certain period, his solution changed to 'moving against people' when his aggressive orientation led to pronouncing his strong wishes for domination and mastery over his patron. Lastly, when he found out these two strategies did not work, he then took the last option, which is 'moving away from people'. At this stage, al-Mutanabbi exhibited marked avoidance of and detachment from others, i.e. from his patron.

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26 K. Homey, *Our loner Conflicts,* p. 19.

27 See chapter one, p. 16, 'al-Mutanabbi (would-be prophet).

28 See chapter one, p. 19. According to Homey, every neurosis begins in childhood. Although understanding the neurosis is impossible without tracing it back to its infantile conditions, a one-sided emphasis on childhood situations as causes of the adult neurosis will be equally ineffective.

29 K.. Homey, *Neurosis and Human Growth,* p. 17.

30 See chapter three, p. 88. See also note 23, 25, 26.

31 K. Homey, *Our Inner Conflicts,* p. 48.

32 Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, points out that the most common type of despair results from not choosing, or willing, to be oneself, but that the deepest for despair to choose 'to be another than himself-whereas to will to be that self which one truly is, is indeed the opposite of despair.

33 See chapter three, p. 88, "... main characteristic of basic anxiety i.e. helplessness, aggressiveness, detachments".

*Moving toward people*

Al-Mutanabbi attempted to resolve his basic anxiety by gaining the protection and affection of Kafur. He was compliant, and strove to please his patron in order to consolidate his position, to be accepted as well as appreciated by Kafur. From the Horneyan perspective, we could say that al-Mutanabbi tried to convert his apparently inescapable inner weakness into an advantage by eulogizing Kafur, in the hope that Kafur would appreciate and protect him. He showed a marked need for affection and approval, and a special need for a 'partner' who could fulfill all his expectations of life, and who would take responsibility for his welfare. He attempted to master life through self-admiration and the exercise of charm. He might say: "If you love me, you won't hurt me".in his first panegyric to Kafur, his personal predicament is deducible from the content of the poem[34]. Because he could not forget Sayf al-Dawlah, al-Mutanabbi mentioned 'Disease' and 'Death' at such an early stage of his relationship with Kafur. It is scarcely credible that he would have experienced any intensity of feelings of any kind towards Kafiar. In the following lines, we can clearly see how al-Mutanabbi expressed his despair, sense of betrayal, and anguish over a lost love. It is all refers to his feelings for Sayf al-Dawlah.

كفى بك داء أن ترى الموت شافيا وحسْبُ المنايا أن يكن أمانيا

"It is disease enough for you that you should consider death as a cure and it is sufficient fog the fates to be the goal of your utmost desires".

تمنّيتها لما تمنيت أن ترى صديقا فأعيا أو عدوا مداجيا

"You desired it once you had desired to see a [true[ friend, who defied you, or a dissembling enemy"[35].

Al-Mutanabbi's strong desire to be accepted and appreciated by his powerful patron was the most visible sign of his need for safety. He did not hesitate to attack Sayf al-Dawlah, who made his situation unsafe, and accused him of disloyalty and unfaithfulness. It could be argued that al-Mutanabbi's need was neurotic, that his love for Sayf al-Dawlah was based on an ideal image, a romantic illusion.

In the verse below, al-Mutanabbi clearly expresses his willingness to offer his loyalty to a new patron in order to regain the life and affection he had lost. Fustat was the ancient capital of Egypt and it was where the official residence of Kafur situated.

ولكن بالفسطاط بحرا أزرته حياتى ونصحى والهوى والقوافيا

'But in al-Fustat there is a sea to which I have brought as visitor My life, my good faith, my passion, my rhymes".

تماشى بأيد كلما وافت الصفا نقشن به صدر البزاة حوافيا

"Moving in unison on limbs unshod and [so hard and firm that]when they trod on rocks they would engrave on them the breasts of falcons"[36].

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34 Instead of begin his *qasida* with erotic prelude, al-Mutanabbi chose to launch it with his true feeling i.e., his sorrows and conflicting emotions.

35 Translation by K Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem no. 1: 1-2.

36 al-Wahidi, *Diwan, pp.* 624-625. Translation by K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur ", poem no. 1: 13 and 15.

His disappointment in Sayf al-Dawlah was clearly portrayed in his first panegyric to Kafur. From the verses below, we can perceive al-Mutanabbi's unending attachment to Sayf al-Dawlah, and witness the strength of his longing for his former patron, although reconciliation was now impossible. We firmly believe that although explicitly we can understand that al-Mutanabbi was astonishing at his strength to separate from Kafur as his object of longing, we are certain that al-Mutanabbi was actually referring to his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah.

أغالب فيك الشوق الشوق أغلب وأعجب من ذا الهجر والوصل أعجب

"I contend with my yearning regarding you, and yearning prevails, and I marvel at this banishment, and this union were more marvelous".

For him, he would become the aim of hostile fate ever after.

أما تغلط الأيام فى بأن أرى بغيضا تنانى أو حبيب تقرب

"Will not the days err concerning me, in that I may see them remove far the hated one, and bring near the beloved"[37].

From a Horneyan viewpoint, al-Mutanabbi's compulsives, and his need for an ideal partner are part of the same neurotic process, especially his longing to feel secure in the protective love of Sayf al-Dawlah. According to Horney's theory, love in this case comprises all forms of approvalby the other, including admiration, friendship and acceptance[38]. Being loved can be nonsexual, but can satisfy the wish to be accepted. Hence, al-Mutanabbi, who suffered from a lack of love, was willing to submit, comply and please, hoping to gain appreciation and esteem from his new patron.

قواصد كافور توارك غيره ومن قصد البحر استقل السواقيا

"Seeking Kafur, forsaking all others, For him who seeks the sea despises streamlets"[39].

As we have noted, compulsive drives are specifically neurotic; they are born of feelings of isolation, helplessness, fear and hostility, and represent ways of coping with the world, despite these feelings. Gradually we will see how his conflicts produced a state of chronic anxiety in al-Mutanabbi; consequently, his spontaneity was eroded and his behaviour became compulsive, inconsistent and contradictory. He might feel he would be neither sincere nor open in his relations with other people ever again[40].

Al-Mutanabbi initially fulfilled his duties as Kafur's panegyrist by making an extremely magnified appraisal of Kafur's merits.

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37 K. Khalaili, 'AI-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem 9: 1-2.

38 The meaning and significance which 'love' has for the neurotic person varies according to solutions.

39 S.P. Stetkevyh, 'Qasida 6: 20-23', in *Qasida Poetry, vol.* 2, p. 97. According to Arberry's translation, this line says: "as though you viewed as unclear that you should see the air clear. It is ambiguous for what he intended to conveyed. Here 'the sea' represents Kafur's munificence, while 'streamlets' implicity censures Sayf al-Dawlah lack of generosity).

40 Horney notes: "The compulsive nature stems from the fact that the self-idealization is a neurotic solution. When we call a drive compulsive we mean the opposite of spontaneous wishes or strivings. The latter are an expression of the real self; the former are determined by the inner necessities of the neurotic structure." See *Neurosis and Human Growth*, p. 29.

أبا المسك ذا الوجه الذي كنت تائقا إليه وذا الوقت الذي كنت راجيا

"0 Father of Musk, this is the longed-for face; This the hoped-for day!"[41].

Kafur was not just one scent, but embraced all scents belonging to the generous. He was not just an early morning rain-cloud that passes with the day.

أبا كل طيب لا أبا المسك وحده وكل سحاب لا أخص الغواديا

"Father of all Fragrances, not Musk alone, You who are every rain-cloud, not just the morning one!".

يدل بمعنى واحد كل فاخر وقد جمع الرحمن فيك المهانيا

"When every proud man boasts a single virtue, The All-Merciful has joined in you all virtues"[42].

However, in eulogizing Kafur, al-Mutanabbi was still obsessed by his lost relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah; his grief could not be – although he hoped it would be – assuaged by his new patron. For the most part, his first panegyrics to Kafur praise his patron's generosity and intellectual refinement, as well as his past bravery, and clearly show that the poet was full of hope and expectation of being appreciated and rewarded.

The frustration of his self-imposed expectations deepened the misery into which his breach with Sayf al-Dawlah had sunk him[43]. In the following verse, which was written at Kafur's court, we could see al-Mutanabbi's allusion to his despair, desolation and longing for Sayf al-Dawlah.

يضاحك فى ذا العيد كل حبيبه حذائى وأبكى من أحب وأندب

"On this festival, everyone laughs with his own beloved here before my eyes, whilst I weep and bewail the one I love"[44].

If we view his situation according to Homey's theory, we can argue that although al-Mutanabbi might claim that his desire for acceptance, approval and reward was justified, in reality, his demands were driven by his overriding urge to feel safe[45]. The neurotic person's need to gratify this urge is compelling and has to be attained by all means and al-Mutanabbi's every action was oriented towards its fulfillment. According to Homey's theory, the feeling of power for a normal person may be borne out of the realization of his own superior strength, whether it be physical strength or ability, mental capacities, maturity or wisdom. It could also be related to some particular factor: family, political or professional group. By contrast, neurotic striving for power is born out of anxiety, hatred and feeling of inferiority[46].

In the following verses al-Mutanabbi implicitly demands gifts from Kafur which included govemorships, and generalships over armies he had defeated.

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41 Abu al-Misk is a nickname for Kafur and it has been given by the Caliph of Baghdad.

42 Al-Mutanabbi is referring to how he was prepared tc undergo dangers and overcome all difficulties to see Kafur, al-Wahidi, *Diwan, p. 627. S.P.* Stetkevych, 'Qasida 6: 26-29', in *Qasida Poetry, vol. 2*, p. 95.

43 According to Storr, frustration is important in self-discovery because it leads to discover that one is not independent entity. Frustration when all wants are not immediately fulfilled leads us understand that we need and depend on others. See *The Integrity of the Personality, p. 81.*

44 K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur", poem 9: *25.*

45 What we mean by 'to feel safe' is to feel free from emotional problem, to get rid of his basic anxiety.

46 K. Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of our Time,* p. 163.

"When men attain high rank through generosity, You among your generous gifts confer high rank".

In the verses below, he hinted at his hopes of being entrusted by Kafur with a govemorship:

وغير كثير أن يزورك راجلٌ فيرجعُ ملكا للعراقين واليا

"So it is not strange that a man may come to you on foot And return king of the two 'lrags, and governor".

Al-Mutanabbi tried to reveal his actual intentions by mentioning Kafur's generosity even when Kafur defeated attacking armies, he handed over a whole army of defeated and enslaved foes.

فقد تهب الجيش الذي جاء غازيا لسائلك الفرد الذي جاء عافيا

"And you may bestow an army that came attacking On one sole supplicant who came entreating".

He celebrated Kafur"s military achievement.

وتحتقر الدنيا احتقار مجربٍ يرى كل ما فيها وحاشاك فاتيا

"You treat this world with the disdain of one who's tested it And sees that ail that's in it – except you – will perish."

وما كنتَ ممن أدرك الملك بالمنىَ ولكن بأيام أشبنَ النواصيا

"You were not one to gain dominion by mere desire, But by battle-days that turned the forelocks grey"[47].

In the hope of what he considered appropriate reward, al-Mutanabbi tried hard to live up to the expectations of his new patron, or what he believed to be his expectations, even though he had to suppress his own deepest feelings.

The question arises why al-Mutanabbi should insist on exaggerated and inappropriate material rewards. This obsession had a great impact on his life with Kafur. Basically, this is also the question of the claims and demands made by the false pride of the idealized self-image. Horneyan theory would hold that this was because he needed others to give meaning and zest to whatever he did. At this stage, his strategy was to appear 'unselfish', self-sacrificing, compliant, considerate, appreciative, and grateful. We could say that he tried to ignore his true feelings: he did not now care much for other people, except those he loved in the past. He praised Kafur at the expense of Sayf al-Dawlah – as is implied in the following verses. He made an attempt to defend the colour of Kafur:

إنما الجلد ملبسٌ وابيضاضُ النفس خيرٌ منْ ابيضاض القباء

"The skin is but a kind of clothing – purity of soul is better than the whiteness of a qaba".

For him, Kafur's colour and appearance were the two things that white kings and rulers would love to have.

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47 Al-Wahidi, *Diwan,* p. 627. *S.P.* Stetkevych, 'Qasida 6: 30-34', in *Qasida Poetry, vol. 2,* p. 97.

من لبيض الملوك أن تبدلَ اللو ن بلون الأستاذ والسحياء

"Who can pledge that the white kings will replace their colour with that of the master and his mien?"[48].

Kafur was so committed towards his duty. He even felt that he should present himself arinook part at war, in spite of the dust and heat of battle.

ليست لها كفر العجاج كأنما ترى غير صاف أنْ ترى الجو صافيا

"You donned for them black swirling battle dust, As if you found it foul to find fair skies"[49].

According to Horney's theory, a compliant type of person will have a double motivation. In al-Mutanabbi's case, we would consider that when he subordinated himself, he did so because he was driven to avoid friction, and in order to achieve a rapport with the other. When he let the other 'take advantage' of him, i.e. by demanding that he panegyrize to order, in reality this was an expression of compliance and 'goodness'.

We do not mean to imply, however, that al-Mutanabbi did not admire and was not attracted to Kafur, who, in his opinion, radiated the ruthlessness of selfinterest. Therefore Kafur's military prowess, and courage were highlighted in his verses:

وانت الذي تعشى الأسنة اولا وتأنف أن تعشى الأسنة ثانيا

"You are the first to throw yourself before the spearheads, And disdain to be the second".

In this line, the sense is that even though sword-smith may come out with two similar blades of good steel, Kafur would still be able to distinguish it. Kafur would transform his sword to superior level and his enemies' to inferior level

إذا الهندُ سوّت بين سيفيْ كر هبةٍ فسيفك في كفّ تزيلُ التساويا

"If India should make two equal battle-swords, Your sword is in a hand that eliminates equality"[50].

Al-Mutanabbi's exaggerated demands on Kafur constituted what Horney calls a 'bargain with fate'. One aspect of this bargain is the externalization of his needs in the form of 'claims' on others. The poet's claims became more insistent. His false pride allowed him to see himself as a special individual; because of his unique merits all his needs should be gratified and his wishes fulfilled.

In his panegyrics to Kafur, al-Mutanabbi subtly suggested a relationship between Kafur and himself that was beyond that of poet and patron. They have a blood relationship, which comprises mutual rights and obligations.

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48 *K.* Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur, poem *2: 17-19.* The word *qaba'* is originated from the Persian word *qabay.* It is an outer garment with full length sleeves and normally worn by men. It generally reaches the middle of the shank, and is divided down the front and made to overlap over the chest. It is bright in colour and normally made of satin or silk. See Dozy, *Dictionnaire detaille des noms des vetements chez les arabes,* pp. 352-62; Lane, i, viii, 2984.

49 Al-Wahidi, *Diwan,* p. 627. Translation by S.P. Stetkevych, 'Qasida *6: 36',* in *Qasida Poetry,* vol. 2, p. 97.

50 Al-Wahidi, *Diwan,* p. 629. S.P. Stetkevych, ' Qasida *6:* 42-43', in *Qasida Poetry, vol. 2*, p. 97.

ومن قول سام لو رآك لنسله فدى ابن أخى نسلي ونفسى وماليا

"Sam would have said to his progeny had he beheld you 'May my offspring, My soul, and my riches be ransom for my brother's son"[51].

Al-Mutanabbi was also trying to persuade his patron to place great trust in him; his pride made him believe that he could do any task, no matter how hard; he felt capable of handling any challenge.

فآرم بى ما رأردت منىّ فإنى أسدُ القلب آدمي الرواء

"Throw me whiher you wish, for I am lion-heated. though human in appearance".

When hinting that Kafur should appoint him as a governor, al-Mutanabbi was indirectly trying to demonstrating his narcissistic preoccupation with his own superiority.

وفؤادي من الملوك وإن كا ن لسانى يُرَي من الشعراء

"And my heart is that of a king, even though my tongue is seen to be that of a poet"[52].

Narcissism is the psychic state of loving the attributes of one's idealized image. The narcissist believes in his greatness, uniqueness, omnipotence, infallibility and freedom from limitations. He must impress others and needs their admiration. He overlooks flaws or transforms them into virtues. However, his relationships with others are poor; he imagines criticism and become easily enraged by it. He disregards the needs and feelings of others. His work suffers from being too grandiose in its aims. So he often incurs failure through his real limitations[53].

As a narcissistic personality, al-Mutanabbi could be generous towards and solicitous of Kafur, so long as Kafur fed his pride by responding with proper levels of gratitude and servile admiration. Thus, his admirers and devoted supporters would play an important role in his psychological development. For any failure to admire him, even on the slightest point, could result in a cutting retort.

Apart from that, he felt his needs, as well as his tasks were vitally important; therefore, he was eligible for every privilege. He never questioned his rights. He expected other people, especially his patron, to 'love' him 'unconditionally', even though he was actually trying to impinge on Kafur's rights.

But as the months, and years, passed by, it became increasingly clear that Kafur had no intention of satisfying al-Mutanabbi's political ambitions. The memory of the relationship of which al-Mutanabbi dreamed only made him more miserable. Kafur's rewards were not up to al-Mutanabbi's expectations.

Al-Mutanabbi could not bear to be confronted with his own shortcomings. He would feel utterly distraught if he were to be criticized; Kafur's refusal to grant him high office resulted in a smoldering resentment towards his patron. As a consequence, al-Mutanabbi entered into a prolonged poetic silence on the subject of Kafur and it is believed that al-Mutanabbi did not even see his patron for nearly a year and half, and eventually planned to flee Egypt[54].

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51 Translation by K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role', poem 1:44. Sam was the son of Noah. He was believed to be the father of Semites. His brother, Ham was the ancestor of negroes. *See, Encyclopedia of Islam,* vol. 2, Ham.

52 Translation by K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role', poem 2: 23-24

53 K. Homey, *Neurosis and Human Growth, pp.* 192-194.

54 As a living thing, we have to accept the fact that change is a common characteristic of psychological flow. Activity and change are the laws of life. In relationship, we find ourselves sometimes drawing close to others and some time constant flow of images, ideas, memories, anticipation pulling away. So in al-Mutanabbi's case, we believe that when he has a poetic silence, it is an indication of his psychological flow is interrupted.

*Moving against and away from people*

According to Horney's theory, the vindictive drive is a force for actual achievement and success. It's chief aim is to put others to shame or defeat them through one's very success; or to attain power, by rising to prominence, to inflict suffering upon them – mostly of a humiliating kind[55]. It remains unconscious and can only be expressed indirectly and in a disguised form. In al-Mutanabbi s case, he was not able to be openly demanding, nor could he reprimand. In a typical self-effacing person, Horney argues, feeling abused is a common attitude[56]. Because al-Mutanabbi could not assume responsibility for himself, he blamed Kafur for his own shortcomings. Kafur had to be defeated, because al-Mutanabbi wanted to fulfill his overwhelming need to triumph.

Horney perceives that self-effacement and 'goodness' will cause someone to feel abused, be 'stepped on' and 'taken advantage of when his many unconscious claims are not fulfilled. It might then be argued that al-Mutanabbi felt abused or when his patron did not respond with the expected reward for his effort. This feeling of abuse played a crucial role, because it was the beginning of an expansive drive, which led him to feel secretly superior to the abuser. Horney further postulates that 'the crown of martyrdom'[57] cause people to see *themselves as* victims of circumstances. In reality, al-Mutanabbi had been the one who had failed his patron through his implicit demands, which he unendingly imposed upon Kafur. Therefore, we would expect, al-Mutanabbi's compulsive compliance disguised a neurotic need for power, prestige and was fed by ambition. The feeling of being abused would persist in a fluctuating manner, and would result in an increasingly vindictive resentment against the other[58]. His conflict remained unresolved.

Al-Mutanabbi longed to leave Egypt, but abandoning his powerful patron would harm his ambitions. His first attempt to escape from his inner conflict had proved fruitless. He needed to adopt another strategy, that of 'moving against people', in which al-Mutanabbi's needs were expressed in the desire to dominate and control Kafur, to exploit and outsmart him, and to prevail over him[59]. His struggle to fulfill his self-interest was his greatest driving force. Hence, his supreme need was to gain control over the other by any available means.

After four uneasy years of flattering Kafur, in 351/962, al-Mutanabbi succeeded in getting away from his patron. We could consider that apart from 'moving against people', al-Mutanabbi also adopted a 'moving away from people' strategy, simultaneously because after he composed the satire, he left Fustat.

The decision to leave Fustat was prompted by the death of Abu Shuja' al-Fatik, his close friend and also Kafur's governor of Fayyum, in 350/961. According to the authorities, Abu Shuja who had kindred spirit, the valor and splendor, afforded the poet a relief from the ugliness of Kafur. It is worth noting that in lamenting his grief for Abu Shuja, according to J.E. Montgomery in his article, 'Al-Mutanabbi and the Psychology of Grief'[60], al-Mutanabbi displayed an "uncomplicated grief reaction" and "intense and conflicting emotions, such as sadness and anger (and) preoccupation with

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55 The need for vindictive triumph makes a neurotic person highly competitive. He cannot tolerate losing and when it threatens, he can be subject either to violent rage or to distrust of others; they are out to beat him.Therefore, he is constantly scheming to frustrate others.

56 K Homey, *Neurosis and Human Growth, p. 230.*

57 *Ibid*., p. 232. See also chapter three, p. 93, "... the Crown of Martyrdom".

58 *Ibid.*

59 K Homey', *Our Inner Conflicts, p.* 64. According to Jung, individuals stuck at he stage of exaggeration of power (known as mana-personality) try to be both more and less than they tend to believe they have become perfect, holy, or even godlike, but actually less, because they have lost touch with their essential humanity and the fact that no one is perfectly wise, infallible, and flawless. See Jung, Letters G. Adler, (ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

60 *J.E. Montgomery, 'AI-Mutanabbi and the Psychology of Grief, Journal of the American Oriental Society,* p. 292.

the yearning for the lost person[61]. Obviously, these are true feelings of Al-Mutanabbi which he could not conceal, anger towards Kafur and yearning for Sayf al-Dawlah.

Al-Mutanabbi suffered from a compulsive need to achieve security by gaining factual power, prestige and recognition. We could say that his strongest need, however, was actually to protect against his basic anxiety. He might think that the only way of attaining what he wanted was through aggression[62]. He was driven by a desire to assert himself as the strongest, while at the same time he tried to cultivate a level of efficiency and resourcefulness in order to win the esteem of others. He might say to himself: "If I have power, no one can hurt me.

According to Horneyan theory, as a neurotic person al-Mutanabbi could feel at one moment highly esteemed, at another despised. His inner conflict forced him to see himself in extreme terms, for tedious mediocrity cannot be endured by the idealized self and its false pride. The loss of his true identity can be seen in his poetic expressions. His self-dramatization illustrates the divergent forces operating within him.

Al-Mutanabbi might see himself as a superior being when, in his strivings, he tended to be expansive and hold a strong belief in himself in regard to what ire could accomplish. Consequently, he became openly arrogant, ambitious, aggressive and demanding. He felt self-sufficient and disdainful of the other. The appeal of his life "lay in its mastery and chiefly entailed his determination, conscious or unconscious, to overcome every obstacle in or outside himself and the belief that he should be able, and in fact was able to do so"[63].

It is possible to say that al-Mutanabbi needed to master the conflict in himself, as well as the adversities of his own fate, the complications of his life and the difficulties of his relations with other people. According to Horney's view, an expansive type of person will use his intelligence and power to achieve something. In al-Mutanabbi's case, he utilized his intelligence and will power to realize his idealized self, and to achieve his self-glorification, his ambitious pursuits and his vindictive triumph.

What is it that prompted al-Mutanabbi's claim to a governorship? It is possible to say that al-Mutanabbi misjudged his situation. He should have realized that, as panegyrist, he was a servant to Kafur, albeit an important and esteemed one. He owed Kafur allegiance, but it seems to us that al-Mutanabbi was driven to push the boundary of the poet-patron relationship as he had in Aleppo. Kafur's refusal to give him a better place to live was really a great blow to him.

He fled Fustat on the eve of the Feast of Sacrifices, when it was a reception at the court of Ikhshidid. We could consider that this would give a chance to al-Mutanabbi to show his hatred to his patron. Al-Mutanabbi began his satire to Kafur, by revealing the mood of monotonous disappointment.

عيد بأية حال يا عيدُ  بما مضى أم بأمر فيك تجديدُ

"Id How is it you return, 0 'id?[64]. Bearing sorrows past, or bringing tidings new?"

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61 Margaret P. Benner, *Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing,* Springhouse Notes (PPnnsylvania: Springhouse Corporation, 1993), 26. Benner further notes that grieving is a universal reaction, which can affects every aspect of individual's life. Among the symptoms for it, is the preoccupation with image of the deceased person. Other people will regard this as hostile and personal disorganization and excess feelings of helplessness, fear and loneliness. whenever their loving impulses have been rejected or blocked.

62 Storr proposes that aggression arises only in response of frustration. Hate and violence will exhibit whenever their loving impulses have been rejected or blocked.

63 K Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth, p. 189.*

64 This festival is the 'id al-adha, which is celebrated on 10 Dhu al-Hijjah. It is the day on which the pilgrim make a sacrifice in the valley of Mina. On this day as well, Muslims are expected to put on new or best clothes. So the id is a time of renewal of clothes, friendship, and so on.

لولا العُلى لم تجبْ بى ما أجوب بها  وجْناءُ حرفٌ ولا جرداء قيدودُ

He again expressed the feelings of loneliness, isolation and separation, contemplated the situation that he was in now. He wished that he could be as far away as possible from Kafur.

أما الأحبة فالبيداء دونهم  فليت دويك بيدا دونها بيدُ

"Between those that I love and me there lies a barren waste. 0 that wasteland after waste".

Al-Mutanabbi started to rebel against Kafur by producing such invective satire, saying that he did not come from all the ways on the expeditious courtly animals just to receive that kind of bad treatment from Kafur:

وكان أطيبَ من سيفي مضاجعة  أشباه رونقه العيد الأماليدُ

"And sweeter than my sword in my embrace would be Those like it radiant, but lithe and tender"[65].

Al-Mutanabbi was so enmeshed in his neurotic compulsion, that he had to cope with anxiety *as a* consequence. In order to escape his self-hate it is possible that al-Mutanabbi created a "despised self", and made it responsible for his shortcomings. Consequently, his contempt for his despised self served as evidence of the grandeur of his glorified self. He then began his 'search for glory', in which all his energies were transformed from actualizing the potentialities of his actual self to self-idealization – that is, the maintenance of the ideal self. Horney notes that this 'search for glory' is born from compelling inner necessities and it is a kind of creative process[66].

Therefore, in relation to his panegyric to Kafur, it can be suggested that al-Mutanabbi purposely eulogized Kafur, not for money,

وإني لفي بحر من الخير أصلهُ  عطاياك أوجو مدها وهْي مدهُ

"For sure, I am in a sea of bounty whose source is your gifts, which I pray will rise with them as its tide".

but rather for something else which could make him feel proud, i.e. governorship.

وما رغبتي في عسجد أستفيده  ولكنها في مفخر أستجدّهُ

"My desire is not for any gold that I may gain, but rather for some cause for pride that I may take at new"[67].

In the verses above, for instance, which are taken from his panegyric to Kafur, Mutanabbi praises Kafur for his generosity. But, after the poet was given less than he expected, al-Mutanabbi then told Kafur what he actually needed. Certainly, al-Mutanabbi was trying to use Kafur's power and influence in order to fulfil his needs, to achieve success, prestige and recognition. Hence, it is possible

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65 al-Wahidi*, Diwan*, p. 691-692. S.P. Stetkevych*,* 'Qasida 7:14', in *Qasida Poetry, vol. 2, p.* 101.

66 K. Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth, p.* 176. See also chapter three, p. 97, "They set out on a 'search for glory' in which all their energies are transferred...". According to Horney, *the development of pride is the zenith of the process of searching for glory. Initially the person* will have a harmless fantasy in which he imagines himself in some glamorous role. For the second step he proceeds by creating in his mind for what he "really" should become. The next step, which is the decisive one is when his real self fades out and the energies available for self-actualization are transferred to actualization of idealized self.

67 Translation by K. Khalaili, 'Al-Mutanabbi in his Role as Eulogist and Satirist of Kafur', poem no. 4.

to view al-Mutanabbi's relations with Kafur as being based on coercion and greed[68]. Taha Husayn notes in this regard.

> Al-Mutanabbi was acting truly because he wanted to praise Kafur and aimed at nothing else, and he was acting falsely because he did not praise the man out of conviction, but out of greed and for selfish reasons, so that he had to praise Kafur by crediting him with qualities that he did not see in him[69].

Stetkevych, however, comments on Taha Husayn's charge as follows: "it seems rather arbitrary to credit al-Mutanabbi's madih to Kafur with insincerity and his hija' with sincerity; likewise his madih to Sayf al-Dawlah with sincerity and that to Kafur with insincerity"[70].

It seems then, that al-Mutanabbi's compulsive need was to dominate and control his patron, to exploit and outsmart him as well as to prevail upon him. Al-Mutanabbi prided himself on his self-confidence, ambition and power, and his pride drove his desire to attain mastery. That is why, when his long-cherished ambition was thwarted, his hatred for Kafur increased. Horney describes such a person in the following terms:

Al-Mutanabbi glorifies and cultivates in himself everything that means mastery. Mastery with regard to others entails the need to excel and to be superior in some way. He tends to manipulate or dominate others and to make them dependent upon him. Whether he is out for adoration, respect, or recognition, he is concerned with their subordinating themselves to him and looking up to him. He abhors the idea of being compliant, appeasing, or dependent[71]. And furthermore:

Mastery with regard to him means that he is an idealized proud self. Through will power and reason he is the captain of his soul. It disturbs him inordinately to recognise a conflict within himself, or any problem that he cannot solve right away[72].

## CONCLUSION

Drawing on the foregoing analysis, a few points can be made to cast some light on al-Mutanabbi's relationship with Kafur. However, we need to bear in mind that this Horneyan interpretation is tentative.

We have seen that various aspects of neurosis have been symbolically expressed in his poetry. In addition, his invective satire was composed as a means of alleviating his own misery. Al-Mutanabbi's 'moving toward people' or attachment to Kafur, was essentially based on his need for security, for in Kafur he believed he had found a powerful protector. His need to be esteemed and rewarded by his new patron, however, became compulsive, and the originality of his feelings diminished.

In the phase when he was 'moving against people', al-Mutanabbi's overriding desire was to be strong and 'defeat' his patron, but his perception of himself was unclear. Not only was he unaware of the truth about himself, but he was driven to blunt his sensitiveness regarding what was true and what was false in his relationships. Instead of making an effort to forge a good relation with Kafur, he insisted that his patron should fulfil his unreasonable demand.

We have found that Horneyan theory can be helpful in shedding some light on a complex personality like al-Mutanabbi. This is because, in spite of its recognition of the severity of neurotic

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68 S.P: Stetkeyvh, 'Abbasid Panegyric and Political Allegiance', *Qasida Poetry, vol. 1, p: 41.*

69 Taha Husayn, *Ma$^{c}$a al-Mutanabbi,* p. 304.

70 S.P. Stetkevych, 'Abbasid Panegyrics and Political Allegiance', *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 42.

71 K. Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth, p. 214.*

72 *Ibid*., p. 215.

entanglements, it examines the influences which moderate the underlying conflicts, and is concerned with the possibility of their successful resolution. It thus discusses the processes, which led towards a realistic integration of personality. It must be borne in mind, however, that if a Maslovian approach were brought to bear on the Kafur episode, it would yield a very different interpretation.

Butt from a Horneyan viewpoint, we can argue that, because of his neurosis, the initial attachment of Al-Mutanabbi to Kafur was primarily the action of a man reacting to disappointment. If his capacity to be creative had not been damaged by his neurosis, he might have been able consciously, to recognise the realities of his personal life, and hence concentrate fully on a field in which he could have been more productive.

Al-Mutanabbi had ample potentiality in a variety of directions. One of these potentialities was raised to the level of accomplished fact, of great and unique achievement. However, the compulsive nature of his drive has been blurred, and replaced by a belief in innate qualities and gifts. In such a person this compulsive trend stems from a disturbed human relationship. Instead of having the drive to excel, there is the assumption of superior gifts. This is because the drives which in real life interfere with one another and prevent the fulfillment of potentialities, are promoted to the realm of abstract perfection, appearing as several compatible aspects of a rich personality.

Al-Mutanabbi's poetry disguised his neurosis. However, we may ask, if al-Mutanabbi's creativity was damaged by his neurosis, how could he continue to compose poems to Kafur and how did his inner tension elicit his urge to do so? To answer these problems we need first of all to understand how neurosis plays its role as a goad to creativity. Homey affirms that neurotic conflicts may be an incentive for a person's creative work. His conflicts and his search for a way out of them may be the subject of his work[73]. Storr on the other hand, argues that the existence of a severe degree of neurosis does not prevent considerable success particularly in the conventional achievement. There is no connection between neurosis and intelligence, nor between practical effectiveness. There are many ineffective people in this world who are not neurotic, just as there are many neurotics who are far from ineffective[74].

In al-Mutanabbi's case we see the effect that his neurotic conflict had on his motivation. His neurotic conflict might be utilized as a temporary incentive. However, the creative urge and creative power can only stem from his desire for self-realization and these energies are only fully utilized in its service. But when these energies were transposed from the direct experiencing of life to having to prove – that he is something he is not – his creative abilities were bound to be weakened. Therefore, al-Mutanabbi could only retrieve his productivity if his desire for (his drive toward) self-realization were liberated. We could say that al-Mutanabbi created – poetry not because of his neurosis but in spite of it.

Al-Mutanabbi's unique body of work clearly influenced his successors, particularly Abu Firas al-Hamdani, whose early poetry strongly echoes that of al-Mutanabbi. Al-Hamdani also suffered inner turmoil, experiencing extremes of hope and despair. He was also tormented by grief, loneliness and frustration throughout his life, particularly when he was in prison. His poetry can be regarded as a means of obtaining consolation. Al-Mutanabbi was distinguished by his ability to live with anxiety, even though a high price might be paid in terms of insecurity and sensitivity.

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73 K. Homey, *Neurosis and Human Growth, p.* 331. The motivating force for creative activity is seen as the need to transcend the life that is defined in established configuration, whether conscious or unconscious. From this point of view, Ghiselin rejects the idea of creativity as an expression of neurosis because creation is not the exploitation of any fixation, hidden or overt. It is always to some extent an assault on fixation. See Ghiselin, B, 'The Creative Process and Its Relation to the Identification of Creative Talent', in C.W. Taylor (ed.), *The 1955 University of Utah Research Conference on the Identification of Creative Scientific Talent* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1956), pp. 195-203.

74 A. Storr, The Integrity of the Personality, p. 167.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 165-171**

# What is erotomania, in print, on screen, in life?

*GEORGIANA M. M. COLVILE*[*]

The Greek term «erotomania» first appeared in the West in the 17th Century[1] and became more prevalent in the vocabulary of psychiatry than of psychoanalysis. As Paul-Laurent Assoun points out, Freud «mentions it all in all three times[2] in his published works, whereas information on the subject proves overabundant in psychiatric literature»[3]. It was the French psychiatrist Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault (1872-1934), considered by Jacques Lacan as his «one and only master in psychiatry»[4], who gave the word its now well-established meaning. In 1921, Clérambault wrote:

> A complete picture of erotomania is nowhere to be found. The various treatise offer no more than disorganized descriptions that neither draw out its permanent characteristics, nor provide any kind of plan or criteria, as guidelines for a cross-examination. Those characteristics, those criteria and that plan, have yet to be formulated. We have attempted to do so, because the cases of erotomania referred to our department are legion (Cl.:79, see note 5).

His texts on the subject, written between 1913 and 1923, were published posthumously in the volume *L'Erotomanie* (Erotomania)[5] in 1993. Lacan, still under Clérambault's influence, was the first to combine the latter's theories on erotomania with a psychoanalytic approach, in his thesis [*De la Psychose dans ses rapports avec la personnalité* (1932)[6]] on the case of Marguerite Anzieu.

The Robert dictionary inscribes the double meaning of the term «erotomania»:

1 Obsessions characterized by preoccupations of a sexual nature.

2 In Psychoanalysis: Delirious illusion of being loved (My translation).

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1 The word appears in the 1647 edition of Willis's *De melancholia.*

2 Freud applies the term in 1907 to the case of Norbert Hanold in Jensen's *Gradiva*, to Schreber's case in 1911 and includes it in one of his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis,* in 1917.

3 Paul-Laurent Assoun, «Glossaire», *penser/rêver* 5: *Des Erotomanes*: 25. My translation.

4 Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* I, Paris: Seuil, Collection Points, 1966: 79. My translation.

5 Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault, *L'Erotomanie*, Le Plessis-Robinson: Synthélabo, Collection *Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond*, 1993. Ref.: Cl. All translations in this paper are mine.

6 See Elisabeth Roudinesco, *JacquesLacan*, Paris: Fayard, 1993: 46, 55-70.

I'll be mainly discussing the second meaning here, the one brought to light by Clérambault.

As early as 1895, Freud, who exposed a blatant example of erotomania with the Schreber case[7], preferred to use the word «projection»:

> ([...] to designate a primal mode of defense, common to psychoses, neuroses and perversions, through which the subject projects onto another subject or object desires which originate from him, without his being aware of it and which he attributes to another external cause [...][8]),

and from 1946, Melanie Klein refers to«projective identification»:

([...] to designate a specific mode of projection and identification consisting in incorporating one's own persona into the object, in order to harm the latter (ibid.:482).)

In both cases, this description can be applied to erotomaniac delirium.

The 2004 special issue of the psychoanalytic journal *penser/rêver* on erotomaniacs[9], assesses all the studies of erotomania from Esquirol's *Des Maladies mentales* (1838) until today, including both psychoanalytic and psychiatric points of view and without entirely omitting the primary meaning of sexual obsession. The present paper is based both on such recent texts and on Clérambault's still relevant work. I will illustrate my point by analysing two works of fiction: first a British novel by Ian McEwan (born 1948), *Enduring Love* (1997)[10] and second, a recent French film, *Anna M.* (2007), directed by Michel Spinosa (born 1963).

Here are a few essential notions and patterns from Clérambault's still pertinent writings: «The word erotomania mainly applies to a syndrome» (Cl.:64) and «Erotomaniac delirium is a syndrome of morbid passion. It is not an interpretative delirium» (Ibid.:65). The delirium is that of the Subject, as projected onto the Object of his/her passion. It all begins with a basic delirious Postulate: «The Object started it all, it is he/she who loves the most or loves one-sidedly» (Ibid.:67) and «the componants of the feelings generating a Postulate are: Pride, Desire and Hope» (Ibid.). The Object can sometimes be an important or famous personality. The best-known case analyzed by Clérambault is Léa-Anna, 53, who, convinced that the king of England was in love with her, kept travelling to London, where she would wait for him outside Buckingham Palace. She would also imagine any English or American officers seen in Paris to be emissaries from the British sovereign. Furthermore, the Subject, certain that he/she is passionately loved by the Object, remains equally convinced that the latter is free and refuses to accept the validity of that person's marriage. Clérambault insists that the main source of Erotomania is Pride, usually sexual Pride as opposed to Love (Cl.:62). He adds that erotomaniacs often love platonically, while claiming the primacy of Passion, frequently combined with a strong religious faith, as in the case of the Mystics. The Subject, who expects the utmost from the Object, pursues that person relentlessly. The quest begins in an optimistic mode, leading the Subject to read positive signs into the unsuspecting Object's behavior. Later the Subject's unrequited love turns to hatred and violence. The Subject lies to the Object, manipulates and harrasses him/her, making his/her life unbearable. Such antisocial behavior may go as far as murder and the Subject often ends up in a psychiatric institution. Pure Erotomania, including no other kinds of deliria, can last up to 37 years according to Clérambault and usually remains incurable. Although Clérambault quotes more cases of Women erotomaniacs, he also mentions various male Subjects. He never underestimates the danger presented by such patients, which the police, for example, tends to ignore, as both McEwan and Spinosa show.

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7 Sigmund Freud, «Psychoanalytic Notes upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoïa (Dementia Paranoides-1911), in *Cinq Psychanalyses* (Freud's Case Histories), translated by Marie Bonaparte and Rudolph M. Loewenstein, Paris: PUF, 1954, 1993: 263-324.

8 Elisabeth Roudinesco & Michel Plon, *Dictionnaire de la psychanalyse*, Paris: Fayard, 1997: 821.

9 *Penser/rêver* No.5, Spring 2004: *Des Erotomanes*, Michel Gribinski, Ed., Ref. PR.

10 Ian McEwan, *Enduring Love*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1998, 2004, Ref.: EL.

The issue of *penser/rêver* on *Les Erotomanes*, consisting of texts written almost a century after Clérambault's, indicates new scientific discoveries and social changes, from the point of view of sixteen pschoanalysts and academics. A collective introduction provides a short history of erotomania, a glossary of terms referring to the disease, and a tribute to Clérambault, with precisions and updates re-the latter's thesis.The religious question is broached:«erotomania feeds into religious beliefs: faith is erotomaniac, in that its avowed aim is to guarantee the father's love» (PR.: 14-15), the most extreme case being Schreber's. Philippe Comar differentiates feminine from masculine erotomania, according to the two meanings of the term: «'insane illusions of being loved' [...] only affect women and pertain to psychosis [...] obsesssions characterized by preoccupations of a sexual nature' [...] are more typically masculine and pertain to neurosis» (ibid.:83). Jackie Pingeaud underscores the imaginary side of erotomania by referring to Antiquity (Ovid, Lucretius, Virgil, Terence). Other authors establish affinities between erotomania and psychoanalytic transference as an illusion of love. Finally, Miguel de Arambuja develops the idea of love as representing a hallucinatory, parallel life for erotomaniacs:

> For the lover, there is a dream state and there is life. Life enables him to explore the dream of love [...] For the erotomaniac, dream takes the place of life: he can no longer dream since life itself has become a space in which to unfold his oneiric fabric. From that point on, the term 'delirium' will be applied («L'Amour des certitudes», PR: 15).

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In his ambiguously titled novel *Enduring Love*, Ian McEwan overtly refers to Clérambault's writings on erotomania and its «syndrome». The narrator and focalizer Joe Rose, a successful journalist, c.45, becomes the Object of the homosexual passion of Jed Parry, a jobless young man of about 28. The point of view is the Object/Victim's, a narrator too disturbed by harrassment from the Subject to be entirely reliable. Readers of both sexes will tend to identify with him. The Subject's point of view, on the other hand, emerges in Jed's letters to Joe, the last of which constitutes the extradiegetic second Appendix.

The story begins in the country, near London, where Joe and his partner Clarissa happen to witness a balloon accident. Joe rushes to assist the pilot and his young son, soon to be joined by four other men, including Jed Parry. The balloon then rises into the air, with the child in the basket and the five volunteers hanging onto the sides. They soon all let go, except for a doctor who finally falls onto the ground to an instantaneous death. On his way to help, Joe meets Jed Parry who immediately falls in love with him and interprets his every word and gesture as an expression of reciprocal love. As Jed tries to force Joe, an atheist, to pray with him, a case of erotomania is born. Soon the latter follows Joe everywhere, prowls around his house and bombards him with love letters and phone calls. This behavior causes Joe's happy relationship with Clarissa to deteriorate. Jed becomes increasingly agressive and Joe is unable to convince the police or even Clarissa of the danger involved. Jed's violence escalates in a restaurant, where hired killers erroneously wound a stranger instead of murdering Joe, and finally the latter, having acquired a gun, returns home just in time to save Clarissa from Jed's knife. Jed is then confined to a psychiatric institution and the Joe/Clarissa couple splits up. Nevertheless, the final chapter announces a reconciliation, as is confirmed in Appendix I.

The novel consciously illustrates Clérambault's theories, modernised by McEwan, who chooses to confront two men, entangled in a fake homosexual relationship. The situation makes all three protagonists unhappy, but the focalization magnifies the Object/Victim's torments. Towards the middle of the story, Joe remembers Clérambault's syndrome and recalls the Lea Anna in love with George V case (EL: 123-124). This rational diagnosis enables the protagonist to regain some self-confidence. Two more references to Clérambault occur and Joe comes to think of Jed as «a de Clérambault, my de Clérambault» (EL: 207), meaning the syndrome. Appendix I constitutes a metatext, merging reality with the imaginary as in an erotomaniac's mind; McEwan reproduces an article from the *British*

*Review of Psychiatry*, presenting a case of Pure Erotomania, with an introduction to Clérambault's syndrome, including a reference to the Léa-Anna case and followed by more recent theories, such as analyses of homosexual cases by Mullen and Pathe and a report of legal changes effected to protect the victims of erotomaniacs. The case in point coincides with the plot of the novel and the persons involved are designated by the characters' initials. A bibliography situates Appendix I in a real context and seems to posit the novel as a fictional version of an authentic case.

Appendix II produces a «Letter from Mr J.Parry, written towards the end of his third year after admittance [...] forwarded to Dr.R.Wenn at his request» (EL:244-5). This love letter introduces the theory that an erotomaniac, when placed in a good institution and properly cared for, can settle down with his delirious love (whether religious, profane or both) and live quite happily.The psychotic protagonists of Patrick McGrath's *Spider* (1990) and Sebastian Faulks' *Engleby* (2008) meet with destinies similar to Jed's.

Michel Spinosa's film *Anna M.* reads as quite clinical. In an interview[11], the director and the actress Isabelle Carré recount their initial scientific research on romantic jealousy and erotomania. Unlike McEwan, they never refer to their sources in the film. For Spinosa, the pathology unfolds theatrically, in three acts: Hope, Vexation and Hatred. Anna, the Subject, is the focalizer. The initial M. is a homophone of «aime», meaning 'loves' in French. She is about 30 and works at the National Library. The Object of her obsession is André Zanewsky, a married doctor working at the Hôtel Dieu, fortyish, acted by Gilbert Melki.

The plot unfolds as follows: one evening, after helping her young colleague Ellénore, Anna works late at the library before going home to her neurotic mother and little dog. That night, she throws herself under a car. Cut to a hospital. Anna has a long scar on her leg and is being examined by Dr.Zanewsky, a typical good physician, kind but professional.Until now Anna has been seen taking care of others, while noone looks after her. Her lack of affection creates a perfect basis for the erotomaniac postulate that the doctor loves her. Accordingly, she interprets a banal exchange as a love declaration:

Anna: Will we be seeing each other again?

Dr: Of course we will.

Anna: When?

Dr: Let's make an appointment, alright?

The mechanics of erotomania are then set in motion and Anna's delirium becomes sexual. She follows Zanewsky everywhere, gives him unwanted presents and invades his privacy. At home Anna writes him love letters, phones him and masturbates to her fantasies. Just as Jed refuses to acknowledge Clarissa, Anna denies the existence of André's wife Marie in his life, yet she follows Marie and rudely confronts her at the antique shop where she works. Anna makes the couple's life miserable and when they jointly resist her, her delirious love turns into anger, then hatred. At the peak of her madness, the young woman interprets a message on the radio for a rendez-vous at a hotel, as being for her from Zanewsky. When he fails to show up, she picks up a railway employee named Albert and takes him to the hotel. In the morning she uses Albert's car to crash into André's, bangs her head against a wall, has the doctor arrested for assault, then withdraws her complaint to be forgiven. Anna's behavior culminates into her breaking into and trashing the Zanewskys' apartment.

We next see an angry, rebellious Anna in a psychiatric hospital. A visit from Ellénore calms her a little. When a fainting fit reveals her pregnancy, by Albert, she begins a campaign of good conduct and is soon released, after expressing remorse for her odious behavior and agreeing to live with an aunt in the country till the baby's birth. Once outside, she retraces her steps in a desperate attempt to track down Zanewsky who has left town and noone helps her. When Albert rejects her, she collapses at the

[11] Interview of Michel Spinosa and Isabelle Carré by Olivier Bombarda, on the DVD of the film, Diaphana, 2007.

hotel in a violent anxiety fit, reminiscent of Polanski's 1965 film *Repulsion*. Finally Ellénore, who seems to love her, rescues and takes charge of her.

The last episode shows the two young women on a hike in the mountains, with Anna's now two-year-old daughter. They seem quite happy. Ellénore is then seen visiting a chapel alone, to the sound of Anna's voice, reading a text about the Sacred Heart.

In the final sequence, Anna wanders away from her sleeping child to a spot overlooking a footpath; unseen, she watches passing hikers and among them appear André and Marie Zanewsky. The film ends with Anna's Mona Lisa smile[12]. Normally the infernal cycle of erotomania should resume, but to Spinosa this is a scene of acceptance, Anna having attained a new spiritual dimension. The words heard in the chapel can now be understood as proclaiming Anna's new state of renunciation. The open conclusion suggests that erotomania can evolve into a harmless, neo-mystical delirium.

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The novel and film in point both reconstitute Clérambault's erotomaniac patterns, but they develop the characters differently. Both plots evolve around the Subject-Object-Object's Partner triangle and function according to Roger Foster's Round and Flat character dichotomy. However, while McEwan presents three Round characters, Spinosa only grants Anna that status, as his subjective, compassionate camera maintains her at the center of the image and the spectator sees André and Marie Zanewsky through her eyes. Melki's muted acting enhances his stereotypical character: the reassuring doctor, the good husband and protector of his fragile wife. Anna's delirious vision of André Z. as a prince charming is reinforced by a sartorial code, such as Jane Campion used for Sam Neil in *The Piano* (1993) – uncomfortable too small clothes made him look virginal and insecure[13]; here the dark, handsome doctor, often seen from a high angle, wearing a romantic black coat and white scarf, is distanced from Anna at the end of the film, by an unprincely tracksuit.

A filmmaker visually fuses a character's body with an actor's. Spectators enjoy identifying an actor and connecting him with a specific type of role: here a French audience will recognize Isabelle Carré, who played a young woman afflicted with Alzheimer's in Zabou Breitman's *Se souvenir des belles choses* (2001), and Gilbert Melki who recently acted a fireman, Object and Victim of an adolescent girl's erotomania cum pyromania in Claire Simon's *Ca Brûle* (2006). The reader of a novel, however, can only imagine a character's physique. Thus, when in his screen adaptation of *Enduring Love*[14], Roger Michell presents Jed (Rhys Ifans) as a hippie, he is interpreting the character hypothetically.

Since McEwan makes Joe the focalizer, the reader becomes the spectator of Jed, who is simultaneously the Subject within the structure of erotomania and the Object in the narrative apparatus. McEwan also deliberately pluralizes the internal focalization by occasionally giving Jed's or Clarissa's point of view, using dialogues, letters and phone calls, so that Joe's dominant focalization never becomes exclusive. The narrator's credibility fluctuates between his own emotional reponse to Jed's behaviour and Clérambault's scientific explanation.

However individualistic the erotomaniac Subjects in both fictions may appear, their behavior will be at least partly stereotypical from the moment they meet their Object. Those characters were constructed according to the scientific pattern of the erotomaniac, as defined by Clérambault and others. In spite of the literary or cinematic story woven around the protagonists, Anna and Jed remain paradigmatic cases of a specific psychic mecanism. Seen from that angle, Anna's character can no

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12 Isabelle Carré uses this expression in the afore-mentioned DVD interview.

13 See Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema*, London: Routledge, 1997.

14 *Enduring Love*, directed by Roger Michell, Pathé, Film Four, 2004.

longer be read as completely round, since she is the main Actant in the model of erotomania, according to Propp and Greimas. Indeed, all the characters are Actants rather than Actors in Spinosa's psychodrama.

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How does erotomania concern us today? The word has become unpopular. A reference to the illness can provoke reactions of mockery, due to the primary meaning of sexual obsession, or the ridiculous case of Lea-Anna... yet something familiar or déjà-vu disturbs and puzzles us. As in Freud's *Unheimliche/Uncanny*[15], the erotomaniac is both familiar and unfamiliar to us. The familiarity comes from our experience of being «in love», which always includes a degree of overexcitement and loss of contact with reality. Strangeness and fear set in when the liminal, transitory state of amorous passion degenerates into a delirious obsession, which can drive the Subject to crime. Personally, I reacted with such disgust to the characters of Jed and Anna, that I felt the need to write this analysis of their cases.

The founder of surrealism, André Breton, coined the expression «l'amour fou»/mad love[16], to describe a desire so strong that it seemed to originate from those surreal states, including madness, which fascinated the surrealists. Surrealist love was preceded by medieval Courtly Love, Romantic Love and Mystical Love, so many quests for the Absolute.The phrase «being in love» seems more appropriate here than the verb «to love». It is usually an ephemeral feeling, in which delirium plays a varying part. The Subject reinvents the Object according to a preconceived idea. Marguerite Duras declares, in her film *Destroy, she said* (1969), where all the characters are in love and psychotic: «One says 'I love you' to Love, not to a person». Truffaut's *The Story of Adèle H.* (1975), ends with the young Adèle Hugo drifting about Barbados, insane and homeless; she comes face to face with the Object of her erotomania without recognizing him, being trapped in the mecanical pursuit of her obsession!

Erotomania is never far from the ordinary «in love» state. Clérambault wrote in 1921: «Normal people under the spell of Passion often go through delirious moments, during which they should be locked up» (Cl.:118). A collective text from *penser/rêver*, expresses the same idea:

What amorous passion can claim to be devoid of erotomania? Love at first sight, at first glance – a glance so active in the delirium of passion – that's erotomania. (PR.:14).

An erotomaniac's delirium, like a normal amorous state, includes a strong dose of Narcissism. Flaubert's Emma Bovary, returning from her first adulterous tryst, looks in the mirror and exclaims: «I've got a lover!». Since no such situation materializes for Anna M., she invents it. McEwan and Spinosa emphasize the narcissistic effect by giving their protagonists similar first names: Joe and Jed, Anna and André. The Subject so passionately desires to be loved by the Object, that s/he decides and finally believes that this is the case, by projecting his/her desire onto the Other. The Subject then universalises the Object's non-existent love and finds proofs of it everywhere. Elisabeth Roudinesco thus decribes Lacan's patient Marguerite Anzieu: «her delirium would suddenly start up at random, when she was reading. All M. had to do was open a newspaper, in order to discover references to her private life in it»[17]. Similarly, Anna M. imagines two strangers in a restaurant to be discussing her and Zanewsky and becomes aggressive.

Naturally, not everyone lapses into erotomania. The ideal breeding ground for the disease is a person with an underpriviledged family background, marred by poverty, drunkenness, violence etc.

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15 Sigmund Freud, «The Uncanny», in *Creativity and the Unconscious*, New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1958: 122-161.

16 André Breton, *L'Amour fou*, Paris: Gallimard, 1937, a novel celebrating the poet's meeting with his second wife Jacqueline Lamba, and its inspirational repercussions.

17 Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan,* Paris: Fayard, 1993: 66, my translation.

These negative elements all figure in Clérambault's case analyses. McEwan's Jed had lost his father when he was 8, was neglected by his mother and had no friends. There is no mention of Anna's father and her mother seems infantile and self-centered. The spectator imagines Anna to be anybody's daughter, what André Green calls «l'enfant de ça» (the child of that/of the id)[18]. The pattern repeats itself, when Anna becomes pregnant from a one-night-stand. Her daughter's future could well be as precarious as Madame Bovary's child's.

Erotomaniacs, like junkies, can become dangerous predators. They have remained infantile or regressed to infancy, cannot control their *id* and are capable of murder to obtain what they want. What's to be done with/for erotomaniacs? Clérambault, during the first two decades of the 20th century, had them institutionalized; we now know that living conditions in psychiatric institutions were then worse than in prisons. Contemporary British novelists McEwan, Faulks and McGrath also recommend internment for their erotomaniac protagonists, but in different institutions. Their protagonists happily accept benevolent supervision and a life without responsibilities, usually in the country; they appreciate the manual activities required of them, such as gardening and handicrafts and are especially grateful to be allowed to live in peace with their delirious fantasies. Jed is free to write love letters to Joe and these are regularly intercepted, so the Object can also live his life in peace. The descriptions of such places may be utopian or cynical, but they provide a solution.

Spinosa only has Anna institutionalized for 3 months. Unlike Jed, she won't tolerate being locked up, even surrounded by a beautiful park, takes no interest in art classes and feels like a caged animal. Consequently she is soon released, and undergoes a relapse.The difference lies in the implied author's focalization. McEwan distances himself from Jed by writing from Joe's point of view, and Jed's internment seems to be the best course of action. Conversely, from the beginning of the film, Spinosa's subjective camera eye empathizes with his pathetic young protagonist, spendidly interpreted by the lovely Isabelle Carré. His film has an open ending, in natural surroundings, and Anna's fate seems as uncertain as Freud's interpretations of female sexuality...

Concerning the reader/spectator's reaction, if we reject the idea of erotomania, then we must like Love. Consciously or not, most people aspire to a quest for knowledge of the self and the other in harmony, as the supposed outcome of a shared amorous state; however utopian, believing in and aspiring to it keeps people alive and enhances their development. On the other hand, erotomania remains one of the most negative and static consequences of a one-way amorous state. Erotomania is anti-love, a petrified, virtual image of love, as it appears in video games, where every form of violence is permitted. In short, erotomania clearly constitutes a form of Death Drive or «Thanatomania».

[18] Title of a book by André Green, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1973 and my suggested translation.

**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 173-179**

# Cold comfort in *The Comfort of Strangers*: Ian McEwan's modern gothic

*CLAIRE KAHANE*[*]

> "In my view the danger arising from the inner working of the death instinct is the first cause of anxiety".
>
> Melanie Klein[1]

> "Why do we do this? Why do writers do this, and why do readers want it? Why do we reach into ourselves to find the worst thing that can be thought?"
>
> Robert Stone, quoted by Ian McEwan[2]

Last year I presented a paper on Ian McEwan's early stories, which, I argued, seduce the reader into a disturbing confrontation with the perverse imagination. As I pointed out then, although McEwan's later fiction assimilates perverse desire into a more subtle exploration of modern sensibility, it typically includes a startling scene that violently disrupts the ordinary life of his protagonist – itself a kind of sadistic writerly ploy that offers readers a perverse pleasure. Today I want to explore McEwan's use of the perverse in *The Comfort of Strangers*, his most gothic novel (made into a film in 1991, with a screenplay by Harold Pinter). Although as is typical of the gothic, this novel defers the shocking event – a horrifically perverse scene – until the climax, and thus doesn't fit the more typical pattern of McEwan's fiction, in which the traumatic event occurs fairly early, it raises a more general generic question: what do we want from the gothic, a genre which has traditionally been linked to perverse desire?

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[1] Klein, M. (1948). A Contribution to the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 29:114-123.

[2] McEwan remarks in an interview: "In 1986 I was at the Adelaide literary festival where I read the scene from *The Child in Time* in which the little girl is stolen from a supermarket. ... As soon as I was done, Robert Stone got to his feet and delivered a most passionate speech. It really seemed to come from the heart. He said, "Why do we do this? Why do writers do this, and why do readers want it? Why do we reach into ourselves to find the worst thing that can be thought? Literature, especially contemporary literature, keeps reaching for the worst possible case. "I still don't have a clear answer. ... perhaps we need to play out our fears within the safe confines of the imaginary, as a form of hopeful exorcism".

From its inception in the 18th century the gothic has embraced the erotic macabre, casting a dark shadow on enlightenment views of human psychology. Significantly, as we might recall, the gothic began as a spin off of the Burkean sublime, an aesthetic category essentially linked to affect, producing terror and astonishment – an aesthetics of shock and awe. In the face of sublime astonishment, Burke wrote, "the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other." (On the Sublime, 58) The horror of the mind being entirely filled with its *object* is the horror gothic fiction depicts; perversely titillating the reader with the prospect of obliteration, the Gothic probes the limits of the psyche through a protagonist's melodramatic confrontation with a fearsome and evil Other.

Moreover, beginning with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the architecture of space has been integral to that confrontation. The classic gothic plot typically situated its protagonist in an imprisoning medieval castle or other labyrinthean structure, its dark and enclosing spaces evoking in the reader fears of helpless entrapment, which as several critics have noted, recall infantile fantasies of a fearsome maternal body. The modern gothic situates its dangers in more realistic and contemporary contexts, more ordinary and familiar places, in the modern city, for example, which has its own labyrinthean spaces – the dark alleyways and barely lit streets so beloved of the masters of cinematic terror as well as the basements and attics of ordinary houses. But whether interior or exterior, these physical sites are constructed to induce a feeling of helplessness in the face of a powerful other, of an anxious vulnerability with which the reader is made to identify. What is remarkable is that in McEwan's modern gothic, the sense of helplessness is itself made suspect; it is a "*culpable* helplessness," a feeling that in the novel *Saturday* McEwan suggested was especially pervasive in our post 9/11 modern times[3]. Why culpable? Where does the guilt come from? What prohibition is being transgressed? What perverse pleasure taken? And what is the relation of that pleasure to "the worst thing that can be thought" as Robert Stone had asked?

In the traditional gothic, whether the protagonist was the evil Gothic male, himself demonically overpowered by his own transgressive desire, or the Gothic female victim, relentlessly pursued by a dangerous male other, both played out a sadomasochistic drama of compulsive lust and helpless surrender by acting out roles that were conventionally gendered; typically it was the woman who enacted the masochistic position. McEwan's modern gothic revitalizes this exhausted pattern by destabilizing the conventional gendering of perverse desire, exploring the attractions of an erotic surrender to the putative death-drive – the Gothic subject par excellence – for both sexes, in a more psychologically sophisticated way[4]. Indeed, as *The Comfort of Strangers* shows, it is not a question of evil but of psychological forces to which we reluctantly but helplessly submit that is the subject of the modern gothic; it is the nature of our wishes that terrifies and astonishes, and induces guilt.

So what are the wishes that *The Comfort of Strangers* explores?

The plot is simple and yet full of psychological twists and turns of phrase that gesture toward a perverse deviation. The protagonists, Colin and Mary, an unmarried British couple in a devitalized relationship, have chosen to return to Venice, the scene of a previous idyllic holiday, to try to rekindle their desire and decide their future. They are in many ways typical of a young modern couple today: narcissistic, aimless, looking for a vitality that they seem to have lost. While there is a significant difference between them – Mary is a divorced mother of two, her absent children linking her to a maternal form of Eros that is unavailable to the self-absorbed Colin – they are too *familiar* (literally

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3 In this context, let me suggest that the gothic's popularity has always been symptomatic of a widespread social and political apprehension, of a sense of helpless vulnerability that the gothic aesthetic particularly engages. It is no accident, for example, that gothic literature emerged in the late 18th century in Britain, when political revolution was in the air, when monarchies were threatened by the political movements in U.S. and France, where the sons rebelled against the authority of self-indulgent paternalistic kings (as in Freud's myth of the primal horde). Externalizing genuine fears, it at the same time eroticizes and parodies them through aesthetic conventions that play with the truly fearsome and make it pleasurable.

4 Here the novel asserts its link to the fiction of transgression and limits, and especially to the writings of Georges Bataille.

like family) to one another. “This was no longer a great passion. The pleasure was in its unhurried friendliness, the familiarity of its rituals and procedures, the secure precision-fit of limbs and bodies, *comfortable*, like a cast returned to its mold” (17, italics mine).

Given this too-close fit, how can a space be carved out for desire? By de-familiarizing their relationship, the novel suggests, by encountering the uncanny and repudiated Other, externalized in the guise of the strange couple with whom they become obsessively involved. Robert – a hirsute physically apelike figure seems to embody McEwan’s well-known interest in Darwinian evolution and his mysteriously fragile wife Caroline.

> “A squat figure... He was shorter than Colin, but his arms were exceptionally long and muscular. His hands too were large,the backs covered with matted hair. He wore a tightfitting black shirt, of an artificial semitransparent material, unbuttoned in a neat V almost to his waist. On a chain around his neck hung a gold imitation razor blade which lay slightly askew on the thick pelt of chest hair. Over his shoulder he carried a camera” (26).

A Venetian who had lived in London, Robert has inherited his grandfather’s palazzo, and identifies with his family’s patriarchal history, insisting that women desire to be dominated by strong men, contemptuous of feminist calls for equality and dismissing their radical demand that rapists be castrated. Caroline, a Canadian who seems more girl than woman has been confined to the palazzo because of a mysterious back injury. Although both act to seduce Mary and Colin into their shared sado-masochistic scenario, it is Colin alone who is the beautiful object of desire, and for Robert, a specifically homoerotic object that his camera has repeatedly and surreptitiously captured in photos. This symbolic capture, what Christian Metz called “an instantaneous *abduction of the object* out of the world into another world, into another kind of time... definitive, like death” (1985, 84, italics mine) – and thus a kind of rape – will be made all too real by the end[5].

Venice, although never named and therefore in a sense, “unreal,” is an ideal city for this perverse drama. Once known as the “La Dominante” and the “Queen of the Adriatic” and often cited as one of the most beautiful cities in the world, Venice is rhetorically gendered female[6]. But although a once-dominant queen, and still architecturally preserved whole out of the past, Venice now embodies a kind of *fin de siecle* fantasy of decadent and failing beauty to which tourists flock with their cameras in a scopophilic orgy. Indeed, unlike a beautiful aesthetic object the novel shows this fantasmatic city to be subject to real time and disintegration, a material symbol of the end of a civilization as it inevitably succumbs to modern pollution and rising water levels. In what seems an intentional interplay with Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*, a kind of ghostly pregenitor text that haunts this novel, McEwan not only explores its Dionysian temptations but also catalogues visible and symptomatic details of its decay – waste residue, dustbins, black flies, and a hospital that is ironically itself a figure of disease[7].

But perhaps most important for any Gothic plot, Venice is a confusing labyrinth of dark and narrow passageways that lure the visitor into its precincts, a city where an outsider inevitably loses his or her bearings, as Colin and Mary repeatedly do, before they are taken in hand by the sinister Robert. Indeed, getting lost seems to be their unconscious goal. As Adam Phillips reminds us, in contrast to being lost – a more primitive state in which there is no object of desire, no direction, no boundaries to the self and the other (and one could argue that both Mary and Colin are already lost in this sense before they go to

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5 Christian Metz, “Photography and Fetish,” *October*, Vol. 34, (Autumn, 1985), pp. 81-90

6 Venice has long been fictionally exploited as the site of decadent sensuality.

7 McEwan, whose fiction is always haunted by literary echoes, puts this novel into ghostly conversation with Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*, which tracks the erotic captivation of a bourgeois vacationer by a beautiful boy, whom he secretly and voyeuristically pursues in spite of the cholera contagion spreading in the city. But Robert, in spite of his voyeuristic pursuit of Colin, is no Ashenbach; Robert’s obsession with his past humiliation, and his consequent will to control, demands a more perverse enactment, the destruction of the beautiful object, an act that serves to reassert his own potency, even as he unconsciously courts the punishment that will follow.

Venice) – "getting lost" is a more complex and ambivalent enactment[8]; it defers the goal of "getting there," temporarily deviates from an anxiety-provoking object, or resists finding it; but it is also a way of losing (throwing off) one's familiar orientation in order to discover the excitement of the unfamiliar, in a kind of rebirth though the perverse. Getting lost, Colin and Mary encounter the black-shirted Robert, and while his masculinist, fascistic ideas repel them, his very alien certainties and sadistic stance offer an ironic "comfort" – unsettling their familiar relationship, and indeed, their very assumptions about the nature of their desire, and opening up a risky kind of freedom, a liberated Eros.

Thus after their first visit to the palazzo, after Robert has both openly admired Colin's beauty and broken the genteel surface of Colin's merely conversational sparring by actually punching him in the stomach – a physical act of domination which neither verbally acknowledges – Colin and Mary lock themselves into their hotel-room for several days, indulging in their newly aroused lust, interspersing their sexual acts with intimate talk, "formulating" as McEwan somewhat ironically writes, "theories about the past"(79) " – about sex, about the difference between men and women's orgasms, about their childhood, all of which McEwan ironically undercuts by his use of indirect discourse, as if to suggest that their comfortable talk is a cover-up of an uncomfortable recognition. Thus, as he slyly notes, they avoided any mention of "the cause of their renewal" (81).

Yet McEwan's text indicates the perverse nature of "the cause" through their playful and sexually arousing exchanges of fantasies that "won from the listener consent to a lifetime of subjection and humiliation." They "cling to each other like children" fearful of separation; they "joked about handcuffing themselves together and throwing away the key," an allusion to Paolo and Francesca, who, we might recall, subordinated reason to desire (Dante, Inf. 5.38-9). Sharing fantasies of erotic domination "that came from nowhere, out of the dark," they imagine the body of the other as a helpless passive instrument of desire, without subjectivity, to be used and abused. In short, in this interval, Mcewan allows them the erotic freedom of a child-like pre-oedipal Eden, where perverse subjection is innocent play. But the risks of imagining such total entrapment, objectification and absolute control of the other become apparent when their flirtation with perverse desire ends in Colin's real death.

In the closing pages of the novel, having, in an uncanny repetition, returned to Robert's palazzo, Colin and Mary are separated. Colin is compelled to go with Robert to the public male enclave, Robert's bar, while Mary remains in the house with Caroline, and in each gendered site the revelations unfold: on the male side, Robert openly indulges in a homoerotic flirtation in order to humiliate (and metaphorically castrate) Colin and thereby assert his own power. Colin's response is unusual: almost as if he sensed some awful future that awaited him, he has a momentary impulse to escape social relations and their constraints altogether, to surrender to the solitary sensuality of the moment, acting out a primal narcissism that is impossible[9]. As Colin, walking *forward* with Robert toward the inevitable climax, looks *behind* him, McEwan's diction exposes Colin's desire:

> A narrow commercial street, barely more than an alley, broke the line of weatherbeaten houses. It wound under shopping awnings and under washing... and vanished enticingly into shadow. It asked to be explored, but explored alone, without consultations with, or obligations towards, a companion. to step down there now as if completely free, to be released from the arduous states of play of psychological condition, to have leisure to be open... to perception, to the world whose breathtaking, incessant cascade against the senses was so easily and habitually ignored... to step down there now... melt into the shadow, would be so very easy[10]. (106)

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8 Remarks delivered in a talk to the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis.

9 Freud (1914) postulated an early stage of primal narcissism during which time an infant is preoccupied with its self and with its own pleasure while being oblivious of the needs of others.

10 This is clearly an echo of the end of D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, when Paul, devastated by his mother's death, considers his options:

> On every side the immense dark silence seemed pressing him, so tiny a spark, into extinction, and yet, almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night, in which everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror, and holding each other in

Meanwhile, back at the palazzo, Caroline, having drugged Mary into helpless passivity, confesses her masochistic devotion to Robert's sadistic demands, showing Mary the photographs of Colin – the captured object – that have become their aphrodisiac. When Robert and Colin return, all the secret machinations of Robert and Caroline's plot, and of McEwan's, are now ready to be revealed. At the climax, in what is the novel's most macabre scene, Mary, unable to warn Colin of his danger, is compelled to watch helplessly as Colin is essentially *raped*, that is, sexually objectified, "feminized" and then killed. But not before McEwan suggests ironies that compound the perverse play of the novel. Thus for example, before Robert kills Colin, he and Caroline manually explore Colin's face and body in a physical re-enactment of an earlier scene in which Mary, looking at Colin asleep, had "examine[d] his face as one might a statue's in all its exquisite detail" (55). Mary had enjoyed Colin as a work of art; Robert and Caroline enjoy him as an erotic fetish object that keeps their own passion alive[11]. The two are analogous, McEwan suggests, thus linking aesthetic pleasure to perverse desire.

And what is perverse desire? The novel develops its own perverse answer when, pinned to the wall, kissed on the lips, the terrified and astonished Colin at his climactic moment asks the novel's underlying question, "What do you want?" Denying that they either "want" or "need," Robert and Caroline leave unspoken the relevant but missing third term "desire" – but Robert acts it out when he quickly and casually slits Colin's wrist. Significantly, the act itself is described in a modifying dependent phrase so that it is easy for the reader to miss. Only through a moment of deferred understanding – a *nachtraglichkeit* that heightens the horror – do we realize what has just occurred, and understand that the slit is a castration *that has been sought*: a theme on which the novel has already played variations. More thematically, the slit is also a metaphor for the breach in the social and linguistic surface, like the breach in the ego that defines trauma, that reveals repudiated desire, that opens up the abyss, the gap, the void, what can't be spoken. Indeed, whatever term we use, finally, the word itself acts as a fetish, a means of screening while simultaneously pointing to the unspeakable Real toward which the gothic leads.

This is the "what happens" to reveal desire. But McEwan is also interested in why it happens. Indeed, McEwan offers us an array of motives for Robert's act, by giving an entire chapter to Robert's story within the larger story – itself a quasi-gothic tale of love, transgression, and punishment, of being beaten by his sadistic and tyrannical father and, even worse, exiled from his confirming gaze because of his envious sisters' treachery and his mother's inability to rescue him. No stranger to psychoanalytic narrative, McEwan leans on Freud's discussion of masochism in "A Child is Being Beaten," in which the child's fantasy of being beaten by the father is transformed into a masochistic gratification, and thus suggests the negative oedipal structure of Robert's obsessive desire. But Robert's tale also points to other motives. Certainly given the novel's play with narcissistic surfaces, Robert's act – the feminizing/castration/killing of Colin – is a reenactment of his own trauma with the roles reversed; it is a narcissistic triumph over his infantile humiliation[12]. But perhaps an

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embrace, there in a darkness that outpassed them all, and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness, and yet not nothing.

"Mother!" he whispered – "mother!"

She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself. He wanted her to touch him, have him alongside with her.

But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly. (654)

Colin, however, does opt to surrender to the darkness.

[11] The function of beauty and art in western culture is two-fold, to nourish and make whole on the one hand through a healing immersion in what Christopher Bollas has called "the aesthetic moment," but also to surrender one's subjectivity to the external object as master. In this art is both transitional object and fetish object.

[12] My reading of this scene owes much to Marilyn Fabe, Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at UC Berkeley and psychoanalytic interpreter extraordinaire.

even more compelling motive is Robert's unconscious rage at *maternal* helplessness as well as his identification with it. For he constructs a perverse primal scene that, in order to gratify and arouse, *must be watched* by a mother-woman who is unable to prevent the death of her beloved. In spite of its being a function of patriarchal power, the culpability of the mother who is powerless to rescue her child demands punishment, just as Robert unconsciously demands it of himself at the end by leaving clues for the police. So Mary is made to watch, unable to rescue her lover as he sinks to the floor, his eyes blazing at her across the room in disbelief[13]:

> "Mary?" he said anxiously, like someone calling in a dark room, "Mary?"
> I'm coming," Mary said. "I'm over here."

There is a terrible familiarity in the dialogue of this scene: we can hear the anxious child afraid of the dark calling for his mother, and yet we know that like the iconic mother Mary who was unable to alter her son's destiny, this Mary can't help either; her assurance is false: she can only watch as her beloved Colin, figured here as her child, bleeds to death. This is perhaps the worst thing that can be thought: Robert thinks it; McEwan thinks it. And like Mary we are forced to "watch" it, to think it also as we read.

Why do we read it? Why do writers write it? And why is the gothic again so popular in our time? Does the answer lie in our common sense of culpable helplessness, of having submitted to the lure of passivity and disintegration in the face of the overwhelming power of the Other? Certainly among Western nations the sense of helplessness has increased exponentially in recent years. As McEwan once speculated, "perhaps we need to play out our fears within the safe confines of the imaginary, as a form of hopeful exorcism." The gothic is such an imaginary structure, a play area for the dark side of the psyche[14].

At the denouement, the point of view becomes Mary's; hers is the maternally inflected feminist consciousness that McEwan uses to reflect on what has happened: "How... the sexual imagination, men's ancient dreams of hurting, and women's of being hurt, embodied and declared a powerful single organizing principle, which distorted all relations, all truth" (126). That principle, Mary had asserted earlier (80), is patriarchy, which has resisted and perverted the evolution of sexual relations. In creating Robert as the arch-villain obsessed with patriarchal law and in showing its perverting effects on men and women, McEwan seems to believe this too; yet he also suggests that Mary's view of a single principle is too restricted, that there is a primal masochism that precedes the social organization of sexuality, that the erotics of pain, giving it or receiving it, is a primal primate urge which, although patriarchy has divided its enactment according to gender, belongs to both men and women.

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[13] In both novel and film, we as audience are made to be, like Mary, helplessly present at a scene that has been prepared for us. McEwan here manipulates the experience of *nachtraglichkeit*, the sudden recognition of a past desire, hinted at throughout the novel and film, that has drawn the characters back to the palazzo, a past scene in which the future had been already inscribed, a primal scene of wounding that now we watch from a distance in paralyzed fascination. (One might recall the etymology of that term in the Roman amulet called the fascinum=the phallic fetish that paralyzes).

[14] McEwan describes his interest "in writing at the edge of human experience. But now I was beginning to take character more seriously. These moments of crisis were to become a way of exploring and testing character. How we might withstand, or fail to withstand, an extreme experience, what moral qualities and questions are brought forward, how we live with the consequences of our decisions, how memory torments, what time does, what resources we have to fall back on. At the time this was hardly a conscious choice or a systematic program; it was simply how it came out in a number of novels, beginning with this one. And of course, these scenes – the stealing of the child, the black dogs, the fall from a helium balloon, and so on – offered attractive fictional possibilities in themselves. They presented challenges of pace, description, a sort of drumbeat of sentences, cadences you can only get from action scenes. They also offered a means of exerting a hold over the reader. And I could have action and ideas. I developed a taste for these various elements over a period of time". In short, McEwan places his work in the tradition of "transgressive fiction," which, as Wikipedia notes, is "based on the premise that knowledge is to be found at the edge of experience and that the body is the site for gaining knowledge."

Yet this too is a single organizing principle, so let me turn the screw of interrogation one last time, and suggest with Freud that perhaps the death drive, cause of the desire which masochism enacts, is not the last word; perhaps like D.H. Lawrence before him, McEwan envisions another more positive outcome in an Eros liberated: to lose the old exhausted self and its restrictive norms in the service of some kind of vital rebirth – the shock that restores a connection to the Real. Does McEwan imagine a psychological evolution and cultural revitalization through the perverse? Destruction in the service of becoming? In subsequent fictions McEwan would temper the gothic excess, delving more deeply into character, but continue to write "at the edge of human experience" seeking on that margin answers to such questions.

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**Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 181-188**

# Animals as objects of transition

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## INTRODUCTION

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade,
what is that you express in your eyes?
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

(Whitman 1980, 58)

Art is not a mirror. It mediates and represents social relations in schema of signs which require a receptive and preconditioned reader in order to be meaningful. And it is at the level of what those signs connote, often unconsciously, that ideologies are reproduced (Parker & Pollock, 1981: 119). At the same time human society manipulates terms like «nature» and «natural» in order to naturalise its own socio-political parameters. In a situation where "hierarchy becomes a natural order» (Fairclough, 1992), what appears to survive as a prime symbol from the collective cultural capital, acts as an intemedaiator because its inherent significance determines the values of the present" (Pollock, 1999: 10). In this framework, the traditional discipline of art history has to be expanded and challenged by new insights and by alternative perspectives. (www.enotes.com/twienth.century.criticism)

In human childhood development, a *transitional object* (Winnicott, 1965) is something, usually a physical object, which takes the place of the mother-child bond. When the young child begins to separate the 'me' from the 'not-me' and evolves from complete dependence to a stage of relative independence, it uses transitional objects in reference to a particular developmental sequence. With 'transition' Winnicott means an intermediate developmental phase between the psychic and external reality. In this 'transitional space' we can find the 'transitional object'.

We claim that animal figures are used diahronically in a way that hepls society to gain this transitional space, separating from the mother bonds of previous order, and adjusting in reference to a particular developmental sequence. Of course any kind of schematic transition from natural to societal order is extremelly problematic. We should mention, thus, that we are referring to animals as collective representations and not as subjects (or objects for others) of natural world. Apart from that we should point that this is a multicated procedure and of course there are many parameters involved. Yet, one thing remain intact: That texts are produced in particular cultures and societies and in particular historical circumstances. In turn, they shape and are shaped by those cultures as they are

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read and re-read in changing circumstances by different groups, with different commitments, engagements and interests. But to do that they use symbols and rituals that transcend time despite their evolutions. Eternal symbols like animals are re-absorbed into the ideological frameworks within which the cultures develop.

## ANIMALS IN LITERATURE

Symbols survive time because they act as objects of ritualisation, expressing the symbolic order and relations of power and values made for cohesion of the society. Humans, having the capacity to create and even manipulate symbols, drawn their symbolisms from both natural and social reality and represent them in various forms of expression. Forms like written "logos", literature.

Animals have held an important place in written literature for thousands of years. And prior to written languages, ancient people told animal stories by drawing symbolic visual narratives on the walls of their caves. These early examples of animals in literary history generally were imbued with religious and allegorical significance, making them strong ritualistic tools, to express deep ontological questions.

Yet at the same time they were carriers of social and political connotations, tools of the «proper socialisation»: Composed around the sixth century B.C., Aesop's Fables continue to serve as standards of moral didacticism using animals as examples for humans or choices to follow or avoid. For the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, animals such as bulls and lions, as well as hybrid creatures like the griffin and sphinx, played important roles in the development of literature itself and in the creation of complex mythological systems that influenced everything from the stories told to the study of the stars. The Judeo-Christian tradition introduced other symbolic animal figures into literature. Stories in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible have provided vivid and lasting images of animals that represent various human and godly attributes, including the snake, the swine, and the lamb (www.jenniferdevlincalkins.net).

Similarly, other cultures, in Asia, India, Africa, south and "Indian America", have used stories of animals to explain the mysteries of life and the universe. The tremendous importance of animals in those cultures may be seen in the fact that they were used as objects of personification, naming humans, in a ritual of some qualities transition. In the European Middle Ages literary animals were placed into the formal structure of the bestiary, to teach a moral or religious lesson. As the process of socialisation and the construction of "social role" became more liberal in the age of Enlightenment (Sutton Smith, 1986, p. 222-3) moral allegories gave way to satire, which served not so much to teach lessons as to ridicule social, religious and political corruption. "Frequently angry and cynical about the state of the world, satirists such as Jonathan Swift used some of the less desirable traits of animals to skewer the less desirable traits of humans" (www.enotes.com/twienth.century.criticism).

Romanticism, «in rebellion against the coming of mass society (Cox, 1996, p. 80), saw in nature «the glimpses of a lost paradise». The coindentity of the nature with this tremendous notion, puts on trial the collective – and through it the individual – «Self Image», contributing into a massive cultural shock, but also loads it with plenty of mystique notions.

"The nineteenth century ushered in an era of Romanticism, where poets such as William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Keats wrote of the beauty and freedom of animals in their natural wild state and the potential for humans to unleash their creativity by emulating that wildness" (ibid).

The conflict between the individual and the family (Somerville, 1982) that was seen as the new foundation of societal order was to be solved within a discourse in need of economic control, (Cunningham, 1991). The industrialisation led to the establishment of institutions aiming to force homogeny (ibid) in morals and in behaviours.

In Victorian England and America animals in literature took on a more literal meaning, in part because of the publication of Charles Darwin's shocking and controversial On the Origin of Species (1859, 1998), which advanced the theory that human beings had not been created separately from animals in order to lead and dominate but had instead evolved from animals and were thus merely another link in a chain millions of years old.

Darwin's work found much of Western society of his era into turmoil as many began to question their own metaphysical and ontological beliefs. With science, the new religion (Cunningham, 1991) elevating animals to a new level in the human and natural worlds, and rapidly spreading industrialization exploiting both humans and animals, concern for animal welfare became a major social issue. Animals, part of the inherited by Romantic discourse "noble aboriginal's world", were used once again so society to be able to absorb changes in actual and symbolic order. Animal figures were hired to express the good and the evil in human nature, «creators» of «a covenant theology» that cut God in two pieces, one expressed by maternal forgiveness (Laverenz, 1980), the other by paternal severity, embodiment of the day of judgement itself (Cox, 1996, p. 41). Society could once again express through this collective representation its anxieties and fears and hopes for its future.

Humane societies and antivivisection organizations sprang up around England and the United States, and writers began to include examples of noble and heroic companion animals in their works. Similarly, tales of animal abuse arose, in which animals were seen as the victims of human greed, ignorance, and brutal industrialization. In the twentieth century many writers turned to old animal stories and genres to produce revolutionary works dealing with the uniquely modern themes of paranoia, alienation, and futility. James Joyce revived and modernized elements of Greek mythology that featured allegorical animal figures, and Franz Kafka used the traditional animal fable style to tell jarring stories of twentieth-century angst. In the latter part of the century literal and figurative animals became particularly important in gender studies and women's literature. Recognizing parallels between their own struggles for equality and the abuses of the natural world, women imagined themselves as caged and voiceless, like the animals they portrayed in their writing.

That way they were used as objects of transition, in order the social subject to be able to "separate itself" from the maternal bonds of the previous state, in reference to a particular developmental sequence of their society (Winnicot, 1965).

## WHAT DO THE ANIMALS REPRESENT?

"What manner of life is this, which may be compared
with the life of a night light whose extinction is not accomplished
until the last drop of oil has burnt away?"

(Fabre, 1919, 2002)

Rarely, writers engage the "real" animal; more often it is used as a mirror. This may be because humans (especially in western culture) tend to see animals as the "other," "grouping them as types, naming these groups and caging them in generalities" (www.enotes.com, www.jenniferdevlincalkins.net). It may be because the very act of writing essentially separates the human that writes from all other animal species. "To write the animal effectively requires awareness of the irony of attempting to create the animal from what has been used to cage it", (ibid) human culture and within it writing. This is what Pam Ore calls "keys hanging cold/on the gatehooks of language" (Ore, 2005: 4).

In this attitude contributes the almost ubiquitous notion of a hierarchy of life, from the Great Chain of Being to the concept of Universal Oneness to the greatly entrenched, "ethically simplistic, speciesm" (www.enotes.com).

Given the ratio of the West there are few texts that reflect the concept of Supernature found from anthropologists in "primitive" cultures across the world. Yet, as it was pointed (o.p) this hierarchy has resulted in a literature that is heavily weighted to a few paradigms, primarily mammals and birds. The representation of animals in literature for human socio-psychological purposes may be seen in the fact that we choose those who are associated with us and with our needs. As mentioned «there are a few invertebrate species found across literature, those typically associated with humans (e.g. bees, fleas, ticks), and a handful of reptile, fish, and amphibian species» (http:www.jenniferdevlincalkins.net). However, all writing about animals, whether mirroring humans or actually elucidating the animal itself, provides a picture of how humans view and have viewed animals. In some cases these texts provide an empathetic space where the gap in being is bridged "the paper nautilus constructs her thin glass shell. Giving her perishable souvenir of hope" (Moore, 1994: 121-122)

Primarily they are inserted into writing for the human to understand the human. And that is what makes them transitional objects in the meaning that they are either sites of critical self-interrogation concerning exilic identity and critique to social hierarchy, or they are objects of legitimation of a social order, being translated into natural. The quantity and quality of the equilibrium between those two functions, is imbued to the needs of any society in transition. And any kind of transition might need objects of transition, translating and replacing at the same time the nature, the "archaic mother" as Kristeva, 1989, uses the term).

In that task, it is not accidental that ancient texts, oral folklore and religious-philosophical musings tend to drive the perception, and therefore the portrayal, of animals in literature. Not only Oedipus Sphinx still represents human nature into the desert land of his or her soul, but texts, such as the 5000 year old Sumerian cuneiform tablets and the 3000 year old Indus Valley text the Rig Veda, name animal groups, such as dogs, and give them roles in spiritual as well as everyday life. To the Sumerian dog "a dream is a joy" (Sumerian Proverbs: collection 5: c.6.1.05 72) while the Indus Valley deity Yama has "two guardian dogs…who watch over men" (Rig Veda 10.14.11). The Greek mythology used those figures to express the controversies conflicts and evolutions of society. And ancient texts have often generated and reinforced the hierarchy of animals with the notion that humans "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (The Holy Bible Genesis 1:28) and through this expand the hierarchy and relations of power as natural orders, in fact Devine orders, into human life.

The tendency human, like a substitute of "the" creator, to group, name and thereby simplify other species can be seen across ancient religious literature like Holy Bible, "and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Genesis 2:19).

Yet there are other, more "humanitarian" approaches concerning animals, such as the Koran's idea that humans must give care to them, because of their dependence upon human agency. The very peculiar circumstances of the rise and construction of Arabs as a "nation" (http://www.alfavita.gr/artra/art) and the peculiar economy founded in the desert, made this notion achievable. There was less hierarchy, less separation, and more need to collective encounters at the time.

Modern texts are influenced by these ancient texts in their integration of the character traits of particular animals as symbols, omens and metaphors such as the starling in William Shakespeare's Henry IV, the raven in Poe's The Raven and the whale in Herman Melville's Moby Dick. At this level, the animals both illustrate something about their own nature as well as about the nature of the environment/society in which they find themselves.

And that is why they were and are used even recently by poets such as Angelou, or Sikelianos and Ritsos and Artists like Tsimino that we will use case-studies in the next pages, to express the needs of human nature and their evolving societies.

## OBJECTS OF TRANSITION

As written before a *transitional object* is something, usually a physical object, which takes the place of the mother-child bond. When the young child begins to separate the 'me' from the 'not-me' and evolves from complete dependence to a stage of relative independence, it uses transitional objects in reference to a particular developmental sequence. With 'transition' Winnicott (1965) means an intermediate developmental phase between the psychic and external reality. In this 'transitional space' we can find the 'transitional object'.

The textual Animal, differentiated from the «real animal» (as in literature different animals were categorized according to the single trait unique to each of them that might teach a moral or religious lesson) expresses in history that transition from the natural dependence into the human independence. And that is why they were employed whenever that independency had to be explored into different groups of people.

For instance, Seventeenth-century poets of postwar England address the aftermath of regicide through traditional elegy and funereal lament. As the century wears on, however, artists come to write about the beheading of the king using a more sophisticated sentimental idiom. Poets such as John Denham, Margaret Cavendish, and Andrew Marvell utilize the allegorical figure of the stalked deer to illustrate more clearly the brutality of which men are capable and to vivify the pain and suffering experienced by the vanquished monarch. This essay examines their methods and reasons for fusing Charles's memory with the pathetic symbol of the hunted stag.

If we think about it, a deer is always on alert for enemies, and industrialisation seemed like an enemy to the Romantics. In that realm after all, the «wave of illusioned naturalism» was developed having deer as one of its prime symbols. A naturalism in search of a nature violated by the industrial hierarchy, a nature ready to raise and take its revenge.

Fairchild argued that the late 18$^{th}$ and early 19$^{th}$ century wave of illusioned naturalism «involved not only the cult of scenery but also the cult of the child ,the peasant and the savage» (Quoted to Cox, 1996: 82 ), revealing with the common characteristics ascribing to these , the anti-industrial symbolic discourse of the era.

Not accidentally when America was facing similar dilemmas regarding its purity and its true nature, in the post Vietnam period, the deer, an Anglosaxon archetype, was employed once again to express the inner struggles of society in Michael Tsimino's film the «Deer hunter».

The same effort to express the sociopolitical framework of an era happens when Angelou uses the caged bird to create a symbol of all the caged. As critic Pierre A. Walker notes, when Angelou wrote I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings at the end of the 1960s, one of the necessary and accepted features of literature was thematic unity, and one of Angelou's goals was to create a book that satisfied this criterion. The structure of the text, which resembles a series of short stories, is not chronological but rather thematic. Walker believes that Angelou succeeded in emphasizing identity, racism, rape, and literacy, despite the narrative's episodic quality.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is the 1969 story about the early years of African-American writer and poet. Illustrates how strength of character and a love of literature can help overcome social and gender odds and Angelou's description of being raped as an eight-year-old child overwhelms the book, although it is presented briefly in the text. Rape is used as a metaphor for the suffering of her race and gender. Another metaphor, that of a bird struggling to escape its cage, is a central image throughout the work, which consists of "a sequence of lessons about resisting racist, and not only, oppression". Angelou's treatment of racism delivers a thematic unity to the book, but it is far more than a simple denunciation of colonialism and racism. Literacy, and seizing the power of words, help young Maya cope with her bewildering world; in an era – in which the economic, political and ideological power of the dominant version of the west to colonise the minds and bodies of others was being challenged by new discourses and struggles of liberation.

In that framework books become her refuge as she works through her trauma, and yet her work is still profoundly relevant today when forms of oppression and power have evolved but by no means disappeared.

Caged Bird nominated in 1970 and remained on top for two years is a fundamental text. It has been used in educational settings from high schools to universities, and the book has been celebrated for creating new literary avenues for the American memoir. However, the book's graphic depiction of childhood rape, racism, and sexuality has caused it to be challenged or banned in some schools and libraries, as "moral panic" (Hall, 1984) never seize to exist as a conservative movement to control through censorship social criticism and evolution.

Having the need to exclude paradigms and material in order to use only a few case-studies due to lack of space, we move forward to some Greek texts.

On the contrary, in the 60's the Greek literature has chosen symbols too, but there are symbols expressing the Greek agricultural way of life. Those symbols do exist in American literature too, but what we compare here is the symbols that prevailed as literature representations gaining publicity and respect, in the same era of transition, in the mid of the previous century. After all the bird is also a common symbol, as it prevails in Greek folk songs, written in the 19th century, when Greek society had to gain its liberty from Ottoman empire and felt caged too. Caged and in search for objects of transition to gain its independence from the stepmother of the era. But, in the Greek example of the 60's, the bear and the cow are prevail, as Greek society is in an era of urbanization and seeks to express its soul that is going to be lost. Sikelianos in Holly Road (Iera Odos, in Orfika, 1984) gives us the image of a caged bear, a mother bear seeing her newly born bearing being abused, unable to offer any help. In order to fully understand the poem it is important to realise its socio-historic framework. In Balkans there were the ritual gypsies to hung around exhibiting caged bears, gaining money in folklore festivities or in other everyday occasions. In that poem, the bear, the mother, our true nature and nature itself, becomes symbol of caged humanity, «a huge, martyr symbol of the entire world, present and passed and bypast, a huge, martyr symbol symbol of the entire pain, present, past and bypast, the ancient pain that has not been completed yet as a tax of the soul. Because she is yet to "Hedes", to underworld. Here Sikelianos also plays with the archaic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, having Eurydice as the human collective soul and Orpheus as humanity, as man itself.

Tied up with her baby, the bear tired, has no strength to keep on dancing but she has to bend the head as her owner exercised violence over her, being the symbol of all brutal, dominating powers. In the most strong icon of the poem the owner pushes the chain that holds the nose of the baby and the baby starts dancing in front of the devastated mother that maintains her dance with tears in her eyes while the babe is incapable 'to guess the time length of the pain in front oh him and the bitterness of the slavery that was mirrored in the eyes of the mother as she lies eyes upon him.

Sikelianos connects the animal figure with the ancient myths we examined and with the Magna matter the Earth and the Nature, creating a tremendous transitional object. That of caged mother-bear.

In Ritsos (1981) the cow, symbol of Greek farmer life and thus of the underprivileged, and not of any religion as the text points, functions also as a «a huge, martyr symbol of the entire world, as a huge martyr symbol symbol of humanity's the entire pain», but at the same time she carries side by side with pain something more: A fundamental wisdom, following the «progressive ideology» of its Poet (Ritsos) that at the end world and the struggles will be justified, she is able, after one more hard day, to look the beauty of the scenery, the beauty of the world in silence.

Caged herself, participating through that in the eternal struggle for the justification of justice, she looks at the red, mauve, golden sunset, silent, hurted in the bones in the back, in the forehead» and patient :possibly knowing the denial, and the surrender and the arrogance and the hostility, beneath and under the agreement».

«Liking with its bloody tongue the tongue of its water image (a reference to Narcissus) from outside the «inside», her inner wound, liking the silent, tremendous, round wound of the world – she might stop being thirsty. Maybe it is only our own blood able to make us stop being thirsty».

Cow's importance is obvious in the text when Orestis, the ancient mythical hero, refers: «Do not omit or mistook the cow if you want to comprehend what i m really saying» (Ritsos, 1981: 82). And that is also true for all the animal figures and the texts we examined.

## CONCLUSIONS

A class of literature focuses on relationships between humans and animals. Many such works (from Eliot to Hemingway and Kundera)[1] focus on very specific animals and their human companions. Within it a class of literature explore the relationship between narrator and companion animals. And yet another class focuses on another function:

We claim that animal figures are used diachronically in order society to gain this transitional space, separating from the mother bonds of previous order, and adjusting in reference to a particular developmental sequence. Textual animals, like other collective enterprises, consist a collective representation: reflecting «the arrangements of the society and historical era in which it is carried on» (Stone, 1982). Eternal symbols like animals gain the archetype status and survive time, re-absorbed into the ideological frameworks within which the cultures develop. For instance, though all animal texts have the potential to engage the reader empathetically and emotionally with the focal animal/species, they often gloss over individual differences among animals within groups. This is a result of a desire to capture the essence of the other rather than its actuality and a lack of interest/awareness in variation in other species. The very unity of the species in which a single lion represents all lions results in a sense of immortality for the animal thus linking it to the mythological. But this is a mythology used as a justification or critique of social hierarchy, embodying the beliefs and the disbeliefs of our kind. There is a hegemonic version of nature, in the sense that attitudes that should be omitted from human behaviour, are excluded from natural order in order to shape it accordingly to societal "needs". For instance the widespread homosexuality in animal kingdom never gained the publicity it required, and the term "natural" is used to describe a homophobic human sexuality, having social connotations.

The qualities and quantities of this function differ. In this realm political writers were and are able to express their evolving societies and human nature/identity, by exerting specific animals from the entire kingdom, powerful figures such as the deer or the bird the cow or the bear, in constant dialogue with the sociopolitical connotations of their eras.

The bond that the human feels for the nonhuman animal is rendered immediate and periodically the author successfully describes aspects of the animal itself developing them in the way the human characters are developed. There is always a space in these texts, however, where the ultimately mystery of the animal is maintained. And that mystery becomes symbol of the entire mystery of social and psychological needs becomes symbol of the entire mystery of the human existence too.

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[1] Interestingly there is an evolution even in the transition, related to choice of the animal, the era, character and sociopolitical circumstances. For instance in Hemingway's texts animals are to prove the values of a macho world and heroe, and hunting is projected as a thrill, while in Kundera's novel The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Karenin the dog, is clearly a developed character even if only through the eyes of the humans with whom he interacts.

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