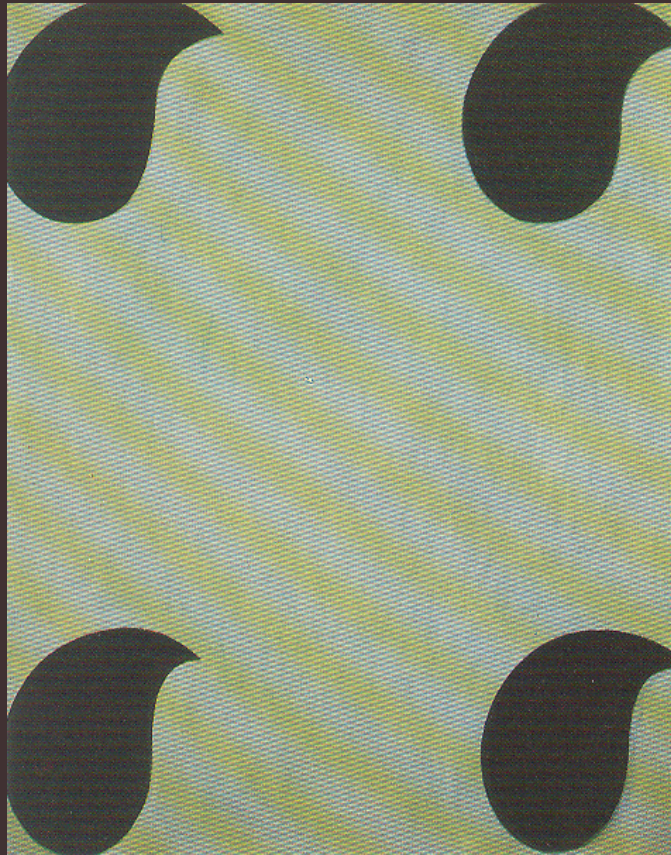


LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS



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LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Edited by FREDERICO PEREIRA

Helsinki | Finland

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

Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada (Lisbon, Portugal)

Janus Pannonius University (Pécs, Hungary)

Group for Psychoanalytic Studies (University of Massachusetts, USA)

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

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P A P E R S

Literature and happiness

NORMAN N. HOLLAND (*)

Literature and happiness – no doubt we are happy when enjoying a literary work, but what is happiness? Historically, happiness has meant two quite different things.

In the older view, that is, in classical and medieval times, you were happy if nothing bad was happening to you. Life consists of what the world or fate does to you. People are helpless before fate. If more good things than bad happen, you are happy. Darrin McMahon (2006), the historian of happiness, points out, “In virtually every Indo-European language, the modern word for happiness is cognate with luck, fortune or fate.” Dutch, for example, uses the same word “geluk” for both happiness and luck. In English, “hap” or “heppe” appeared in Middle English in the thirteenth century, meaning chance, fortune, “an event that befalls one” (*OED* s. v.). It survives in our words “perhaps,” “hapless,” “haphazard,” “happenstance,” and, our topic, “happiness.” I think that Freud’s idea of returning his patients to ordinary unhappiness instead of neurotic unhappiness has something in common with this older, tragic view of happiness.

But since the eighteenth century, since Locke and Jefferson and Adam Smith, we have considered happiness as a state of mind. Happiness is a state of mind and you can try to achieve happiness by your own efforts. This is the view enshrined in the American Declaration of Independence. We are all entitled as an inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness.

Both these views make brain sense, but, so far as literature is concerned, it is the second that matters. When we create or re-create literature, we are pursuing happiness. We are pursuing a certain state of mind. And how do we pursue it?

Think of a rat in a laboratory cage. This rat is supposed to spin its treadmill once, then push a lever five times which delivers a little sugar water. And the rat spins the treadmill and pushes the lever five times, and the rat gets some sugar water, and the rat spins the treadmill and pushes the lever five times, and the rat gets some sugar water, and the rat spins the treadmill and pushes – and so on. Is that a happy rat? Yes! Believe it or not, rats actually look pleased when given sweet things to taste, and they produce the rat equivalent of a disgusted look in response to bitterness (Robinson & Berridge 1993). And how do we know this is a happy rat? Because it keeps on. It spins the treadmill and pushes the lever five times and gets the sugar water and it spins the treadmill and pushes – it keeps on doing it.

In this essay, I want to show you what that laboratory rat has in common with you and me who

(*) Department of English, University of Florida, P. O. Box 117310, Gainesville FL 32611-7310, USA.

go on reading and reading and reading. I want to consider two kinds of reading: one, someone's reading a book just for pleasure and two, people like us reading a book as literary critics.

A well-known psychologist, Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson 1990b) has written about happiness in terms of something he calls *flow*. Flow, he defines as a Zen-like state of total oneness with what you are doing, Flow is the kind of thing we experience when we are entranced or rapt or absorbed in a book or movie. And it feels great.

To achieve flow, to get into this state of mind, Csikszentmihalyi says, you have to be doing something that balances the difficulty of the task and your ability to perform the task. If what you are doing is too hard, you will feel strained. If it's too easy, you will feel bored. You need to hit the happy medium, a nice balance, and then you will be, as we say, in the zone, in the moment – you will feel happy.

There are a lot of ways that we set ourselves up for flow. We go to the gym and lift just the right weight or we run just the right amount. We engage in contests and races, and we risk the agony of defeat in order to experience, every once in a while, the joy of victory. I am an asportual myself, and I do crossword puzzles – I triumph over Will Shortz – or sudoku or chess problems. Or I write essays like this one, and when the writing goes well and people like the essay, I feel good. I'm happy. In short, we set up situations such that we match our skill to the difficulty of the task. We do something not too hard and not too easy. And somehow that makes us happy.

But how? And why? I think the answer lies in our brains. We need to turn from Csikszentmihalyi's psychology to neuropsychology and, I think, to one neuropsychologist in particular, Jaak Panksepp who has worked extensively on the emotions of mammals (including people). Panksepp points to a system that underlies all our other emotions (like Freud's libido); he calls it the SEEKING system (Panksepp 1998, chs. 8-9).

Basically, this is a dopamine system that responds automatically and unconditionally to information from the body like "I'm thirsty" or "I'm hungry." And the system learns about things in the environment that predict satisfactions. You can think of this system as a foraging system, the thing that makes a rat sniff around looking for goodies. It responds to *stimuli that predict rewards*, not to the rewards themselves. The system is active all the time during the day and during REM sleep. It generates search activities, foraging, investigating, sniffing.

Two words that are useful here are "wanting" and "liking," handy terms introduced by Robinson and Berridge (1993). This is a wanting system and not a liking system. Just looking, not consummating. In fact, consummation shuts down this seeking system. Panksepp (1998, p. 148) compares the pattern to eating potato chips. I want a potato chip. I get a potato chip, I eat it, I like it. Now I reach for another potato chip and so on. While I am eating the potato chip, I am not busy seeking another. I just enjoy the one I am eating. Only afterwards do I reach for another.

The core of this SEEKING system consists of pathways leading from nuclei in the substantia nigra and the closely related ventral tegmental area in the midbrain, at the top of the brain stem. These are the most ancient parts of our brains. These nuclei generate dopamine and spritz it out widely into various systems in the higher parts of the brain.

The systems we are concerned with originate in the substantia nigra and the ventral tegmental area and go on the nucleus accumbens in the more modern forebrain. If you stimulate that pathway or, more technically, the lateral hypothalamic corridor, you get right away the most energized exploratory and search behaviors of which an animal is capable. For example, that corridor contains the nigrostriatal system. It generates voluntary movement, like seeking a book.

But for reading, the two systems we want to pay attention to are the mesolimbic system and the mesocortical system. The "meso" in their names refers to the fact that they originate in the ancient midbrain (substantia nigra and ventral tegmental area). From an evolutionary point of view, then, this system must be basic to our survival. And the mesolimbic and mesocortical systems are very basic indeed.

The mesolimbic system has to do with the *feelings* associated with this SEEKING behavior. The mesolimbic system originates in the midbrain – it's "meso" – and more specifically in the substantia nigra. And the "limbic" in its name refers to the limbic system, where emotions originate. The mesolimbic system extends on through the nucleus accumbens and up into the limbic system. It produces that good

feeling, that invigorated feeling, that sense of anticipation, that we have when we actively seek thrills and other rewards. This mesolimbic system maintains a feeling that something exciting and interesting may be going to happen. Think Freud's libido.

The mesocortical system originates in the ventral tegmental area in the midbrain, passes through the nucleus accumbens and on to the motor systems of the frontal and prefrontal cortex. It is in the prefrontal cortex that we do our most advanced thinking. That is also where we plan actions at the most abstract level. The mesocortical system drives the normal cognitive function of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (part of the frontal lobe). For example, it helps us understand correlations in the external world in terms of causality so that we can predict what will reward us. When this system is working normally, it creates a brain state in which animals forage for what they need outside their burrows. They forage and pick things up. Then, if this type of neural activity ceases, they tend to drop the objects. Conversely, if you stimulate this system, an animal gets more and more excited, excessively excited, even crazed.

These two systems (mesocortical and mesolimbic) are much studied these days, because they are involved in drug addictions. They remind me of the old song we used to sing when I was an undergraduate:

Cigarettes and whisky and wild, wild women
They'll drive you crazy, they'll drive you insane ...

Addictions may indeed make you crazy. Think of Freud's wishing and wish-fulfillment. Dreams and schizophrenia may simply be this dopaminergic wanting system with the frontal controls taken off.

But what do cigarettes and whisky and wild, wild women have to do with enjoying literature? How do these two systems that originate in your ancient midbrain work when we are enjoying a book or a movie or a play with our sophisticated frontal lobes?

What is happening when we pick up a book to read or when the play or the movie begins? We have a SEEKING system that says, I think something good is going to happen here. I feel anticipation, interest, excitement. I want to hear the next line of the poem. I want to know what's going to happen in the next chapter of the novel or the next scene of the play. My mind is going to work, but I'm going to feel "flow."

And then it happens. We get that next line, next chapter, next scene. OK. Great! We got what we wanted. The faint puzzle is solved. The desire is satisfied – partially. And for an instant or two we are satisfied. We settle down. And then it starts up again. What's next? I anticipate. I want. And then I get it. I want, and I get, I want, and I get, and that is the rhythm that we experience as we read through the book, or as we watch the play or the movie.

That is what the experience of reading is in brain terms, a switching back and forth between systems, between wanting and liking, wanting and liking, wanting and liking, as with the potato chip. It's no accident that these dopamine systems are the ones involved in drug addiction. Loving literature is like other kinds of addiction. Just like cigarettes and whisky and wild, wild women, a successful literary experience begins with our wanting and ends with our liking.

A book, then, is what is called a *self-stimulation system*. We ourselves create the stimulus that gets us to seek a satisfaction. And that is what enjoying literature is: a self-stimulation system. When we read a book, we are like the rat in his cage. We are simply being mammals.

Now does this pattern of brain activity mean that a longing for literature is somehow inscribed in our brains. Is it genetic? Some people think so.

It has become a commonplace to insist that literature has an evolutionary value in allowing us to try out solutions to life situations. Or that literature allows us to empathize with other humans. Or that literature makes us better morally. Or wiser.

Now, if that were true, English departments would be populated by saints and sages. I've worked around English departments for more than half a century, and I can only say that has not been my experience.

People like to say that literature lets us try out life possibilities in a situation where there are no adverse consequences, where nothing bad happens if what we try fails. And what possibilities are we considering? Or as Jerry Fodor (1997) puts it:

What if it turns out that, having just used the ring that I got by kidnapping a dwarf to pay off

the giants who built me my new castle, I should discover that it is the very ring that I need in order to continue to be immortal and rule the world? It's important to think out the options betimes, because a thing like that could happen to anyone and you can never have too much insurance.

These are the kinds of life possibilities that we can explore through literature? Come on! Who's kidding whom?

Trying out possibilities is what we do all day long when we think. And we can think about possibilities without anything bad happening as a result. We can empathize or make moral decisions just in our minds – we do this all the time. What does literature add to these adaptive activities?

We don't need to assume some complicated basis. We do literature because we enjoy it. Literature satisfies in the same way that many other things in life do – at least for most people.

So far, I've been discussing normal people, not literary critics like you and me. Normal people just pick up a book or go to the movies or the theater and they enjoy it. But we do more. We go through an extra intellectual step. We make sense of the text. We may read it like formalist critics or like marxists or like psychoanalysts or in terms of culture or through some theorist, Lacan or Bakhtin or Lakoff. What's that all about?

Notice that we perform our act of literary criticism in our own particular way, the marxist way or the psychoanalytic way or the Norm Holland way. We read and interpret – and do criticism – with a distinct personal style.

Now there is something just beginning to emerge in brain science about this notion of a personal style. In fact, there is a bit about it in a recent *Psychology Today* (Starr 2006). Style may stem from the periaqueductal gray, the PAG, a region, again in the ancient brain stem, this time in the dorsal region spanning the midbrain and the pons.

We now have some evidence that all our emotions, rage, fear, lust, disgust – that all these separate systems are somehow anchored in the PAG from where they radiate out to higher parts of the brain (Panksepp 1998). We know from ordinary experience, if nothing else, that each of us as individuals acquires a system of emotional regulation. We learn how to manage our fears, our angers, our lusts, and so on. And there is some evidence that this system involves pathways leading from the PAG to the frontal lobes (Schoore 1994). According to this evidence, early interactions of mother and child form and shape this pathway from the PAG to the orbitofrontal cortex. In other words, we learn at mother's knee how to begin to be the kind of person we are. We begin to acquire a personal style and with it a personal sense of humor (Holland 1982). Early childhood shapes personality, as the psychoanalysts have always said. Now, we are beginning to get from brain science some further information about how that happens.

What happens when you leave mother's knee and go off to graduate school and become a literary critic? You still have those personal preferences from your childhood, those personal ways of seeking pleasure. And you still have this basic dopaminergic pattern in your brain of seeking happiness in the form of wanting, liking, wanting, liking. What is happiness for a literary critic?

My colleague Bernard Paris once said a wise thing to me. He said that we literary critics like those texts best that we can perform best in front of. What does that mean "to perform"? Let me give you some examples.

Paris himself provides a good example. Those who know his work know that he uses the psychology of Karen Horney to analyze literary characters as though they were real people (see, for example, Paris 1974; Paris 1997). What are the texts he likes best? He likes Victorian novels, notably Joseph Conrad, but especially George Eliot. He likes Dostoevsky. In short, he likes those novels that allow him to analyze characters and to do his very particular thing, which is to use Horneyan psychology to show that the novelists themselves didn't really understand how their characters were resolving their problems.

Let me instance a critic who was the man I looked up to most in graduate school. Walter Jackson Bate affected my own thinking for a long time. Bate liked to talk about moral poignance, moral sincerity, acts of what he called the "moral imagination" (see, for example, Bate 1963; Bate 1975). Who did

Bate write about? Keats, surely the most moral of the romantic poets, but above all, Dr. Samuel Johnson, whom he regarded as a great source of moral wisdom. And for years he taught a course in the great critics, from Aristotle to Richards, showing how each elicited moral wisdom from the subjects they wrote about.

By contrast, I could point to a very different kind of critic, my late colleague Leslie Fiedler. Leslie was fond of making outrageous statements, and how did he do that? He would transform the minority into the mainstream. Leslie's great theme, the one that runs through all his work, was bringing whatever was marginal, whatever was outside, on the edges, into the mainstream. Indeed he would replace the mainstream with this thing that was marginal (see, for example, Fiedler 1960; Fiedler 1978). What are the books he liked to work with? Jewish novels. Writings about what he called "freaks." In his most famous essay, he showed that the greatest mainstream American novel, *Huckleberry Finn*, really embodied a homoerotic relationship between two people of different races and that this relationship – outrageous in 1950s America – was true of all the great American novels.

And what about me? For me the important thing is being able to fit all the parts together in a rational way. My favorite works are those that I can treat as a problem to be solved. I find myself treating literary works as like jig-saw puzzles where the aim is to make all the parts fit together. And I'm drawn to works that are in fact obscure and difficult – Kafka, Ingmar Bergman, *Last Year at Marienbad* (see, for example, Holland 1958; Holland 1964). Or things that people think are simple but I can show how complicated they are and how they need my problem-solving skill: Robert Frost; Hollywood movies or soft porn (see, for example, Holland 1988; Holland 1992).

For me, literature is a puzzle, a puzzle I have been trying all my professional life to solve. And that is what you have been seeing in this paper, me being happy because I am solving the puzzle that is literature.

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Half of Oedipus as seen by Freud

MAX DAY (*)

How did Freud come to appreciate the Oedipus Complex and yet not appreciate the importance of Oedipus' name in his psychic development?

Freud graduated from medical school in 1882. He became interested in neurological research and did some creative work. When there seemed to be no financial future in that field and since he was raising a family, he turned to neurology for income. Some of his patients with various diagnoses like conversion hysteria, obsessiveness and paranoia took him back to their childhood sexual traumata. After a while he realized that all of Vienna could not be molesting their children. He realized these stories were memories of phantasies and not of actual events. He then went inwards and backwards in the inner lives of the patients and discovered that childhood sexual phantasies about the parents lay at the root of many such troubles. This he first called the nuclear complex, later the Oedipus complex and still later the family complex.

Where did this concept come from? The story of Oedipus begins with a prophecy to Laius, his father, that his son about to be born would kill him and take his mother, Jocasta, for a wife. This is not an uncommon feeling among men who are about to become fathers, since they are about to be displaced and furthermore will have to help the mother and the child. They usually mask such feelings with pride at what they are producing. This plot often came true for rulers, as in the case of Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander the Great, who murdered his father.

Yet his name, Oedipus, means "swollen feet". Reacting to the threat from his unborn son, his father, Laius, king of Thebes, condemned him to be exposed to death. Reluctant to kill a child, the servant tied his feet with a rope, so that they became swollen – hence the name Oedipus – hung him from a tree and left him. He was later found by another servant, who took pity on him and took him to his city, where he was adopted by the local king. Through court rumors Oedipus found out that he might not be the child of these parents. He also heard of the prophecy that he might kill his father and take his mother for a wife. Fleeing them he met an older man on the road, who arrogantly told him to get out of the way. In an attack of "road rage" he attacked the king of Thebes, his biological father, killed him, guessed the riddle of the Sphinx, which had terrorized Thebes, so that she killed herself, saved Thebes from the plague and married the widowed queen, unbeknownst to both of them, his biological mother.

There are many such stories. Oedipus legends are widespread throughout the world and most cultures. Lowell Edmunds (1985) did extensive research on this legend and its analogies and found six

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

versions in medieval Europe and the Near East, forty-five in western Europe, eleven in Slavic countries and thirteen versions in the Near East, Asia, Africa and the western hemisphere. The theme is universal.

As ruler of Thebes, Oedipus, as depicted by Sophocles, is a very authoritarian and very angry man, threatening to kill the blind seer, a sort of analyst, who reveals that Oedipus is probably the murderer of the previous king as well as of Jocasta's brother. When he recognizes the truth of the prophecy, he turns all the rage on himself, pulls out both his eyeballs as punishment and asks to be banished from Thebes. Earlier he had shown his great intuition in solving the riddle of the sphinx. These two elements, inordinate rage and intuition, should be considered in evaluating what moves him.

First let us see how the theme developed in Freud's thinking and writings. He focused particularly on clinical material, but also the writings of creative people who understood this human dilemma and anthropological understanding of the development of religion in its earliest form as totemism. After fifteen years of clinical experience in the summer of 1897, Freud first wrote of the "nuclear complex", in letters 64 and 71 to Fliess, his mail-order analyst, as the nucleus for all neuroses. In letter 115 (pp. 253-263) he says that hostility to the parents is an integral part of neuroses. It has a decisive effect on adult sexuality.

In "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" (1901) he notes that the unconscious love relationship between the father and daughter and between the son and mother (note the different sequence for both sexes) exists from infancy on. He then saw the Oedipus myth as a poetical rendering of what is typical in these relations.

In "Three Essays on Sexuality" (1905), he notes that the perversions are a residue of the development towards the nuclear complex. After the complex is repressed, those elements of the sexual instinct, which are strongest in the individual emerge once more.

In 1910 in "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" he notes that, when the boy learns of the existence of whores, he realizes that he too, not only his parents, can enjoy sexual life. Then he realizes that his mother is like a whore and all the old wishes to possess his mother re-awaken. He wants his mother and sees his father as a competitor and comes under the influence of the Oedipus complex. This is Freud's first use in his writing of the term Oedipus complex.

In 1913 in "Totem and Taboo" (Part 1, The Horror of Incest", p. 17) he expands the aim of the boy's incestuous desire to include his sister as well as his mother. The normal boy liberates himself from this immature attraction, while the neurotic remains fixated with these incestuous wishes. Creative writers center their work on incest often in poetry (Rank, 1907, 1912). Savage people dread it. In the same essay (p. 129), he notes that the two basic laws of totemism are not to kill the totem animal and to avoid intercourse with members of the opposite sex (32) of the totem clan. If one kills the totem animal, one becomes a totem. If one substitutes father for the totem, the Oedipus theme is apparent. Primitive people even describe the totem as their common ancestor and father. If the totem animal is the father, the two totemic prohibitions become clear – not to kill the father and not to have intercourse with women of the same totem clan. Both are crimes of Oedipus.

He pursues Darwin's theory of the "primal horde" (p. 143). The sons of the horde are forced into celibacy, while the father of the horde keeps all the women to himself. They then arise and kill him so they may enjoy the women. Then they feel guilt and obey his values and live peaceably. This series of events gives rise to the two taboos of totemism – not to kill the father and not to have sexual relations with women of the same totemic clan.

In the same essay (p. 156) he sees the beginnings of religion, morality, society and art as having a common origin in the Oedipus complex.

In the section on dreams in "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" (1915-1916), he notes that in many people in dreams and often in waking life there is the wish to get rid of the parent of the same sex. Sometimes it is masked by affectionate impulses when the parent is ill and one wants to put a stop to his suffering. This complex may be re-enforced when the marriage cools off and the parent turns even more to the child of the opposite sex.

In chapter XXI of "The Introductory Lectures" (1915), in considering the development of the libido in individual psychology, he notes that the choice of a love-object well before puberty is almost

identical with the earlier love-object for the oral pleasure-instinct. He moves from the mother's breast to the mother. By then repression has withdrawn his sexual aims from his awareness. It also gives rise to resistance to the ideas of psycho-analysis. This same Oedipus complex gives rise to feelings of guilt and morality. This can easily be observed in pre-latency boys in their relation to the mother and father, even though the child may show affection to the father at other times. Attempts to court the mother are frank and open. A similar development occurs in girls. In addition he notes that the common parental attraction to the child of the opposite sex enhances these Oedipal feelings but does not give rise to them. With the birth of more children, the Oedipus complex is enlarged to the family complex. The child openly shows his resentment for the newcomers. The feelings towards the mother may be transferred to the young sister. The little girl may take an older brother as a substitute for the father and may take a younger sister as a substitute for the child she yearned for from her father. Much of this can be observed directly or recalled consciously by people without analysis. Theodor Reik (1915-1916) showed that puberty rites among savages represented a re-birth in the sense of releasing the boy from his incestuous bond with his mother and reconciling him with his father. Mythology shows that incest detested by humans was permitted to the gods. Incestuous sister-marriage was sanctified for Egyptian Pharaohs and the Inca rulers of Peru. Direct observation of children shows that the Oedipus complex of feelings is due to more than retrospective phantasying. At puberty when the sexual urges become powerful the old, familiar incestuous love-objects are freshly re-invested with libido. The human either follows or reacts against these powerful, libidinal urges. To grow up and join society he must detach himself from his parents emotionally. The son must detach his libidinal feelings from his mother and find a real outside love-object. He reconciles himself with his father if he has remained in opposition to him. If he has become subservient to him in reaction to his infantile rebelliousness, he must free himself from his pressure. These tasks must be faced by everyone. Neurotics do not arrive at a solution. In them the son remains bowed to his father's authority and cannot transfer his libidinal strivings to an outside sexual love-object. The same fate awaits the neurotic daughter. In this sense the Oedipus complex is the nucleus of neuroses. He mentions that Otto Rank (1912) showed that dramatists of every period chose material from the Oedipus and incest complex in various forms and disguises. He adds that the Encyclopedist, Diderot, also noted that the savage left to himself preserved his foolishness, had the violent passions to strangle his father and lie with his mother. These elements are found in the dreams of normal people and neurotics. That is why he dealt with dreams first.

In "From The History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1914), he discusses the sexual development of the Wolf-Man and sees that the patient saw "his father as a castrator and the menace of his infantile sexuality in spite of what was in other respects an inverted (or negative) Oedipus complex" (p. 119).

In "Some Character Types Met With in Psycho-analytic Work: II Those Wrecked by Success" (1916), Freud uses a play by Ibsen to show the universality of the Oedipus complex especially in the heart of a maid who wants to get rid of her mistress and take over the master of the house, the father. Rebecca, the daughter of a deceased midwife, is adopted by Dr. West. When he dies she goes to work in Rosmersholm, a sad house where the wife is childless. Rebecca decides to get rid of her mistress. She shows her a medical book, where it says that the purpose of marriage is to produce children. Since the mistress cannot do that, she throws herself into a mill-race. For a year Rebecca and Rosmer live in the same house. When rumors spread about them, he asks her to become his second wife. She cannot marry him and confesses to him and to Kroll, the pastor, who is the brother of the deceased wife, that she got rid of the wife. She confesses that she had had an affair with another man. Kroll, arrives one day to humiliate her by telling her that she is the illegitimate child of Dr. West, who adopted her after her mother's death. She is distraught because she had been Dr. West's mistress. Under the influence of her Oedipus complex, she had twice repeated it. Thus an artist like Ibsen appreciated the power of the Oedipus complex.

In "A Child is Being Beaten" (1919) he thinks that probably perversions and fetishism and other such illnesses are scars of the solution to the Oedipus Complex. In the same essay, he discusses beating phantasies which girls may have of boys being beaten. They originate in phantasies of the girl being beaten by the father with great sexual pleasure for her. They arise when the father has made great

efforts to win the girl's affection, which increases her hatred towards and competition with the mother, on whom she may have affectionate dependence. She is involved in the agitations of the parental complex (p. 186). She may change her unconscious phantasy to the conscious one of a man beating boys. The boy may begin with the passive phantasy of being beaten by the father and then changes it to being beaten by the mother, thus evading his homosexual wishes towards the father.

In an editor's note to "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), the editor reminds us that "the earliest of the regressive identifications, those derived from the dissolution of the Oedipus Complex come to occupy a special position and form the nucleus of the super-ego".

In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920), he says the neurotic does not recall infantile sexuality but rather current re-workings of the Oedipus conflict often as forms of transference. The inability to master the parent of the opposite sex and especially the birth of another child leaves the person with deep feelings of inferiority.

In "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1921) he points out that as seen in psycho-analysis the earliest sexual wishes towards the parent of the opposite sex persist in the unconscious.

In "Psycho-analysis and Telepathy" (1921) Freud tells of his analysis of a young man, who tried to break off a relationship with a famous demi-mondaine. She stood for a married woman he had been having a secret affair with for years. He decided to marry her daughter and pursued her. She agreed but was found to be too neurotic. She went into analysis and there discovered she had known of her mother's affair with the man because of her Oedipus complex.

In "Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality" (1922), he sees the origins of normal jealousy in the Oedipus or brother-sister complex of the first sexual period. It includes grief at the thought of the loss of the loved object, enmity towards the successful rival and self-criticism to account for the loss.

In "A Short Account of Psycho-analysis" (1923) he repeats the enormously important role played by the Oedipus complex, stemming from the child's relationship to his two parents arising because of the long period of the dependence on his parents and the two eras of sexual development at the ages of three to five and again from puberty on. A third factor in human intellectual activity has "created the great institutions of religion, law, ethics and all forms of civic life to help the individual master his Oedipus complex and divert his libido from its infantile attachments into social ones that are ultimately desired".

What ultimately happens to the Oedipus complex? In "Dissolution of the Oedipus complex" (1924) Freud notes that the Oedipus complex is the central phenomenon of early childhood sexuality. Then it seems to succumb. What brings about its destruction? Powerful disappointments. The little girl, who regards herself as the apple of her father's eye, may receive harsh punishments from him. The little boy, who regards his mother as his property, finds one day she has brought a competitor onto the scene in the form of a sibling. With such powerful experiences, lack of satisfaction of the Oedipal wishes leads to its dissolution. There may also be a phylogenetic factor, when the next phase of latency sets in.

The phallic phase, which is contemporaneous with the Oedipal period comes to an end because of threats of castration. The permanent withdrawal of the breast in the oral period and the daily requirement to empty one's bowel do not lead to the fear of loss of the penis or of castration. Rather for the boy, it is his becoming aware of the girl being penis-less, that leads to his believing in the threat of castration. The boy either sees himself as a competitor to his father for his mother's affection or wants to take his mother's place with the father. Either solution requires the loss of his penis. His narcissistic pleasure in his penis leads him to turn away from the Oedipus complex. This is achieved by his giving up the object cathexis to the mother and identifying with the father by introjecting the authority of the father into the ego to form his super-ego. The libidinal trends of the Oedipus complex are desexualized, sublimated and inhibited in their aim. The impulses are changed into affection. This process preserves the genital but removes its function. With this comes sexual latency. Rather than repressed, the Oedipus complex is destroyed. If it is merely repressed it may have later pathogenic effects.

What is the process in the little girl? Freud confesses that the material for girls is full of gaps. She, too, has an Oedipus complex, a super-ego and latency period. When she observes the penis in the boy during play with playmates, she imagines she was deprived of a penis because of her inferiority or hopes it

will yet grow. When it does not grow, she accepts castration as a fact, not as a threat, as is true for the boy. Without a threat of castration, there is less of a motive for setting up a super-ego. She hopes to take the mother's place with the father and develops a feminine attitude towards the father. As compensation for renouncing the hopes for a penis, she yearns for a baby from her father. Since this wish is not satisfied, she gives up her Oedipus complex. The wish for a penis and for a child remain strong in her future sexual life. The lesser strength of her sadistic contribution makes her more affectionate. All in all he doubts his picture of the sexual life of the girl is yet clear.

In "Inhibition, Symptom and Anxiety" (1926) he reviews the case of Little Hans, where the boy wishes to get the father out of the way. He had seen a playmate fall down and hurt himself and a horse fall down. As he got better, he wanted to be a horse and even jumped on his father and bit him. He hates and loves his father. He represses his hatred towards his father and displaces the conflict onto the horse so that he fears a horse will bite him.

In "The Question of Lay-analysis" (1926) he reviews the wish of the young boy to understand where babies come from. This ends with his thinking of procreating a child in someone else or in himself. This is one possible solution for the forbidden incestuous wishes. Similarly the ambivalent feelings towards a physician of adoration or mistrust derive in transference from parts of the Oedipal conflict.

In "Female Sexuality" (1931) he points out that the girl's development is different from the boy's. She is originally attached to the mother and later has a powerful attachment to the father, which may stem from this earlier powerful attachment to the mother. The pre-oedipal attachment to the mother may be so powerful and many-sided that it may last into the fifth year, so that there may not be a strong attachment to men. So there need not be an exact parallelism of the Oedipal period between boys and girls.

He notes that female sexuality is more complicated. His original view was that the girl started off with pleasure in her clitoris and only in puberty got pleasure from her vagina. He notes that some observers have found that girls can have pleasure in the vagina earlier. When she accepts her own castration state, she sees the male as powerful and herself as inferior. Rebelling against this state of affairs, she may follow three different routes of development. She may have a revulsion against sexuality, give up her clitoridal activity and with it her masculinity. She may cling with defiant self-assertiveness to her masculinity. She may hope for a penis and this may lead to a homosexual object choice. She may in a circuitous manner reach the normal female attitude of choosing her father as the love object.

Having reviewed the development in Freud's thinking of the Oedipus complex, some questions arise. The focus is entirely on sexuality in relation to both parents and its ultimate effects on humankind. What is left out is the role of abandonment, mutilation, adoption, rumors of not belonging, sensitivity and above all his name – Oedipus. It means "swollen foot". Freud knew Greek and yet left this out of the development of his concept of the Oedipus Complex.

In part this may have been due to the kind of patients he had, erotic borderlines, then understood as hysterics.

Part of this may be understood because it was not till 1923 that Freud began to see aggression as a separate drive, not as part of anal-erotism. There must have been a deep feeling of inferiority in Oedipus, because of the swollen feet and having been adopted. This must have greatly increased his sensitivity and probably intuition. These come into play when he surmises he is the child of the local king and is destined to kill him and take over the queen. He leaves town and on the way he kills the old man who orders him out of the way, correctly guesses the meaning of the riddle of the Sphinx, saves Thebes and is rewarded with the queen, his biological mother.

In addition to Freud's own gradual development in psychic theory from the phallic phase back to the anal phase, he was a natural for appreciating the Oedipus conflict. He was born to a twenty year old mother, the third wife of Jacob Freud, who was then forty years old, with whom he had an ambivalent relationship. Competition with the father must have been uppermost in his development. Hence he could appreciate the intensity of the Oedipus complex and its role in human development and yet overlook the rage and sensitivity that came with being called "Swollen Feet".

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The other within

SHERRY LUTZ ZIVLEY (*)

In *Peut-on Appliquer la Littérature à la Psychanalyse?*¹ Pierre Bayard argues that a reader can discover psychological truths from literary works without relying on psychoanalytic theories. He recommends approaching a work of literature inductively, seeking to discover what one can learn from it rather than approaching a work deductively, seeking evidence of an established psychoanalytic theory. Bayard believes that works of literature may reveal truths about the human experience that are not discussed by Freud or other psychiatrists. Bayard's approach to literature is like James Herzog's approach to a patient. Herzog says tries to construct a theoretical structure on the basis of the specifics of the patient, instead of taking a theoretical structure and applying it to a patient.² Despite their enormous scope, Freud and other theorists have surely not told us everything there is to know about being human.

Several years ago, I sought to account for the incredible emotional power of Plath's poetry and discovered that Plath's speakers often demonstrate the same symptoms as institutionalized schizophrenics – desire for oblivion or death, paranoia, split personalities, occasional rages, and the use of schizophrenic imagery, language, logic. But I accessed this understanding of Plath's poetry through the back door, by analyzing her poetry, discovering these symptoms, and then serendipitously stumbling upon psychological theories that accounted for what I had discovered.

I want to explore a phenomenon in four poems and in Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion*. In each of the four poems, the speaker denies a part of him or herself, a part I am calling "the other within." These speakers do not have multiple personalities, nor do they have the kind of external self that protects the internal self that R. D. Laing describes. Rather they perceive of themselves of having an internal other who is ruining their lives, but over whom they have no control. In Sylvia Plath's "Lesbos,"³ the speaker talks to another part her self, treating that more positive side as an other who is destroying her. In Cynthia Macdonald's "The Stained-Glass Woman,"⁴ a bitter, acerbic woman discovers that she can become human, but ends up denying the sensitive side of herself. In two "fat" poems, Delmore Schwartz's "The Heavy Bear"⁵ and Cynthia Mactonald's "Inventory," the speaker treats his or her body as an other

(*) University of Houston, Department of English, Houston, TX 77204-3012, USA.

¹ Paris: Minuit, 2004.

² "The Dead Father," The Dead Father Symposium, Association for Psychoanalytic Medicine, Columbia University, New York, 29 April 2006.

³ *Collected Poems*, New York: Harper & Row, 1981, pp. 227-230.

⁴ *Transplants*, New York: George Brazillier, 1976, pp. 3-4.

⁵ *Amputations*, New York: George Brazillier, 1972, pp. 7-8.

⁶ *Summer Knowledge*, New York: Doubleday, 1959, pp. 74-75.

who is ruling his or her life. In contrast, in *Sometimes a Great Notion*, Ken Kesey portrays the two different sides of his own personality as two rival protagonists who manage to move toward understanding each other.

In “Lesbos” Plath treats two different aspects of her personality as two separate characters. Plath’s poem was probably occasioned by her anger at Assia Wevill for her affair with Ted Hughes and by the visit of a neighbor who brought kittens to her house. Although Plath may have begun “Lesbos” by focusing on the difference between herself and Assia, her neighbor, or both, she quickly modulates into a diatribe spoken by her own angry, paranoid, hating, unhappy self against her mother-, daddy-, and husband-pleasing, good student, optimistic, traditional self.

Plath almost was almost certainly influenced in treating the two selves as two separate people by T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”⁷ Plath’s “I should wear tiger pants” echoes Prufrock’s “I shall wear my trousers rolled,” and Plath’s phrase, “the sea / Where it drives in, white and black” echoes Prufrock’s “the waves blown back/ When the wind blows the water white and black.” Both poems end with the same recognition: that the two selves will never be reconciled and that one will be banished.

In an attempt to protect what R. D. Laing would call her ideal or inner self. Plath’s speaker blames others, her “doggy husband,” whom she announces is “impotent,” her “schizophrenic,” “kicking,” “unstrung puppet” of a daughter, the kittens, and, most of all, her alternate self – the one with the “cute décor” who dotes on her “smil[ing],” “fat snail,” her infant son.

She fails to recognize that she herself may be the source of much of her suffering. By the end of the poem, she insists that she will never reconcile with her alternate ego, saying, “Even in your Zen heaven we shant meet.” Her future looks as bleak as does Prufrock’s when he says of the mermaids, “I do not think that they will sing to me.” Where Prufrock is too filled with self-doubt to accept his more assertive self, Plath’s speaker is too filled with loathing of her more positive self to be able to seek a more integrated and fulfilling life.

Another poem in which the speaker defines herself as bipartite is Cynthia Macdonald’s “The Stained Glass Woman.” In Stanza I, the speaker explains that she is made of stained glass. She is “[g]lowing, refractive, transparent, colorful,” but “[a]lso unbending, fragile, and sharp.” She says that she “fall[s] apart easily” because nothing can hold her together. She explains,

Lead works

In window junction points, but not in joints.
Other metals are too inflexible. Rubber stretches.
Clay crumbles. Plastics
Are cut by the motion of my glass anxiety.

In Stanza II, she falls in love and discovers the human side of herself. She says that only when the weather changes, when she is angry, or when she sees a Tiffany construction does she “ache where the seams once were.” In Stanza III, when her lover leaves her, she returns to again being the acerbic stained-glass woman. In an act of suicide/murder she kills the feeling, sensitive side of herself and says

The woman with the blood
Reddening the water in the tub
Is the one who can be cut.

By rejecting her sensitive self, she is choosing to remain bitter, lonely, and unhappy.

The speakers of two poems, Delmore Schwartz’s “The Heavy Bear” and Cynthia Macdonald’s

⁷ T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1952, pp. 3-7.

“Inventory,” blame their problems on their fat bodies, as if those bodies are separate, uncontrollable others.

In “The Heavy Bear,” the speaker calls his body “[t]he heavy bear who goes with me,” “[t]hat inescapable animal,” who “[s]tretches to embrace the very dear / [w]ith whom I would walk without him near” and “[t]ouches her grossly.” He says that the heavy bear “[s]tumbles, flounders, and strives to be fed / [d]ragging me with him in his mouthing care.” The speaker also blames his “brutish” body for his aggression, saying it is the bear who “[b]oxed his brother” and who “dishevel[d] all. He even says that it is the bear, who fears death. The speaker never acknowledges that the bear is a part of himself, a part of himself that he might, if he accepted that fact, be able to change.

Macdonald’s “Inventory” is a poem that is reminiscent of the children’s memory game, my grandmother’s trunk. The speaker says of her overweight body, “I carry a suitcase everywhere with me... / It weighs between nineteen and ninety pounds depending on / [w]hat I put inside.” She admits that “[I]t interferes” and that the “suitcase” is what people “remembered best about me.” Like the heavy bear, her suitcase interferes with everything in her life. She admits

At dinner it prevented me, as it always does when
I sit in
a booth, from getting close to the table.

She says, “[w]hen we got into bed it was the same old story: [t]hree of us.” She says “He tried, but got / [s]o tired he fell asleep.” She complains “my case gets between me / [a]nd friends, especially / If they are not agile or are easily bruised.” In both of these poems, the speakers recognize that their obesity gets between them and possible friends and lovers, but they treat their bodies as if they are separate beings over whom they have no control.

The characters in these four poems refuse to accept any connection with or responsibility for the other within them and are therefore doomed to continue to suffer.

More interesting than characters who deny a part of themselves are the two protagonists of Ken Kesey’s very complex novel, *Sometimes a Great Notion*,⁸ a familial, cultural, sociological, and geographical description of the Oregon logging town in which he grew up. In the novel the two protagonists are sibling rivals who represent two parts of Kesey’s own personality. When Gordon Lish wrote to Kesey and asked, “Where are you going in *Great Notion*? What is it you’re testing?” Kesey replied, “For one thing, I want to find out which side of me really is: the woodsy, logger side – complete with homespun homilies and crackerbarrel corniness, a valid side of me that I like – or its opposition. The two Stamper brothers in the novel are each one of the ways that I think I am.”⁹

Someone who has read only *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and Tom Wolfe’s *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* might imagine Kesey to be just a well-read, well-educated, anti-establishment, marijuana-, peyote-, LSD-ingesting hippy, like Leeland Stamper in the novel. But another important part of Kesey is the man who is devoted to his family of origin and to his own nuclear family, who grew up in the logging country of the Pacific north west, who played football and went to college on a scholarship, not an academic or creative-writing scholarship, but a wrestling scholarship, a man like Leeland’s elder half-brother, Hank Stamper.

The sibling rivalry demonstrated in the early parts of the novel dramatize the antagonism between these two sides of Kesey’s character. The conflict explodes when the child Leeland discovers that his older half-brother, Hank, is having sex with Leeland’s mother (Hank’s stepmother). Hank is a superb athlete and logger, serves as the patriarch of his immediate family and logging business, is admired

⁸ New York: Viking, 1964.

⁹ Lish, “What the Hell You Looking in Here for, Daisy Mae?” An interview with Ken Kesey,” *Genesis West* 2 (5), (1963), p. 26.

by his male friends, and is adored by women. He is happy as a logger and at home in the harsh climate of the Pacific Northwest. In contrast, Leeland is a bookish nerd who is sickly, inept at physical activities, and unable to defend himself from bullies. He despises the logging community, but feels at home at Princeton.

When Leeland finally returns home to try to take revenge on Hank, they are at odds over everything. Hank flourishes as a logger. Leeland hates and is inept at logging. Leeland thinks of Hank and his peers as uneducated boors. Hank thinks his little brother is a sissy who needs to grow up. At Hank's prodding, Leeland gradually gets physically stronger. He also comes to realize that his older brother is far more educated and more well-read than he imagined.

Leeland is invested with only hate for and a yearning to get revenge on his older brother for sleeping with his own mother. He becomes one of the precipitating causes to the family's sequence of catastrophes, when he pretends to be ill in order to stay home and try to seduce his older brother's wife. As a result, the loggers must work with an inadequate man power, there is an accident, a beloved cousin drowns, and the brothers' father loses an arm and eventually dies from his injuries. But Leeland gets his revenge. Because of the accident, Hank returns home early and discovers his brother and his wife in bed together. But, unknowingly, Hank gets his own revenge, when Leeland later discovers that his mother wrote love letters to Hank and sent poems Leeland had written to Hank. Most painful of all, Leeland discovers that he had been able to attend prep school and Princeton only because Hank had been supporting him and his mother.

At the novel's climax, the brothers confront one another in a fistfight that they fight to an exhausted draw. Throughout the novel they faced each other openly, and, in so doing, came to understand and to acknowledge each other. That acknowledgement lets them begin – just barely begin – but begin, nevertheless – to understand each other and to move toward a reconciliation when Leeland volunteers to assist Hank in the very dangerous task of running a raft of logs down a churning, flood-swollen river, an attempt in which they may both die. But they are attempting it together. Although the novel ends as they begin the run, a rapprochement has begun because the brothers recognized and acknowledged each other.

This novel seems to me to suggest that we cannot choose to eradicate a part of our personality, but we can work to understand and come to terms with it and begin, thereby, to evolve. The unwanted side of one's self may have some value, and even if it does not, one needs to examine and learn about it in order to deal with it. I think the implication is that to struggle to come to terms with and cooperate with various parts of one's self is the only way a person can grow and become a more integrated human being.

Fat Girl: Fusion, confusion, and the primal scene re-configured

EMILY FOX-KALES (*)

Filmmaker, novelist and screenwriter Catherine Breillat has been described as a “porno auteuriste,” an *enfant terrible* who published an erotic novel (*L’Homme Facile*) at age 17 and appeared in Bertolucci’s *Last Tango in Paris* (1982) as a young actress – a “notorious transgressor” whose films often elicit aggressive responses from audiences in their graphic depiction of female sexuality, particularly as they explore the erotic lives of adolescent girls. In her 2001 film *Fat Girl* (released in France as *A Ma Soeur!*) she continues her sexual investigation with a simple story of two sisters, the beautiful 15-year old Elena, and 12 year-old overweight Anaïs, during a family vacation at a seaside resort where Elena is seduced by Fernando, an Italian law student, as her sister looks on. But this is no typical coming-of-age story. In what has been referred to as the film’s “coda,” *Fat Girl* ends abruptly with the a series of brutal images during which both Elena and the girls’ mother are horrifically murdered at a highway rest stop, suddenly forcing Anaïs into her own sexual initiation.

Despite Breillat’s reputation for explicit sexual imagery, the film works hard to de-eroticize Elena’s seduction. Rather (as in her other films, most notably *Romance* (1999), its focus is on the woman as desiring subject rather than fetishistic object of the male gaze. Elena’s naked body is neither fragmented by the camera nor is her conventional “anorectic chic” bonyness glamourized; she is no nymphet, a la Kevin Spacey’s teenage seductress in *American Beauty* (1999). Breillat shoots the two seduction scenes which are the core of the film’s structure (the first is 25 minutes long, 1/3 of total running time) in a series of languid long shots; the camera remains cool and dispassionate – literally keeping its distance as the sexual dance plays against abstract monochromatic green color patterns of the bedroom mise-en-scene. The camera appears to be more interested in documenting the semi-comic, awkward process of adolescent sexual behavior, clinically observing Fernando’s calculated caresses and cajolings interspersed with extended conversation as Elena’s struggles with her notions of romantic love, respectability, and desire to please her first lover.

Equally important in terms of the privileging of female desire is the film’s focus on Elena’s active curiosity and engagement of sexual experience, a subversion of the conventional notion of the virgin as innocent victim of the unscrupulous seducer – although it is clear that Fernando indeed has precious few scruples; he runs the gamut of coercive techniques to win his prey – sophistication, threats, sulks,

(*) Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School. E-mail: efkales@comcast.net

protestations of ardor and promises of futurity, finally convincing Elena to first engage in anal intercourse as a “proof of love”: “the back way doesn’t count” he knowingly reassures her.

The film’s central theme then, would appear to be the deconstruction of sexual rituals, organized here around the social myth of virginity. Elena’s hesitation to “lose” her virginity makes her vulnerable to Fernando’s deception (believing a ring he steals from his mother to be a token of his eternal love) just as her conditioned over-valuation of virginity serves to repress the full expression of her desire. Thus the film interrogates the tension between desire and shame embedded in the construct of virginity, a conflict which Elena seeks to mitigate with romantic notions of love and permanence. After her first night with Fernando, she asks him “Do you love me all the same? Will you wait for me to [pass my exams] so you can marry me?”

This duality is mimicked by Anais as she rehearses her own sexual future; she practices kissing while swimming in the pool, asking an imaginary lover: “How can you disgust me and attract me at the same time?” Later she stares at her pudgy body in the mirror, lifting up her dress to expose her developing breasts, and announces to the image: “Slut!”

But while Anais is forced to postpone her own fantasies of sexual encounter – trapped in the cocoon of her still pre-pubescent round body as she trudges through her dreary summer *ennui* behind her curvaceous sister and passionate boyfriend – as a “fat girl,” her social invisibility and marginalization also gives her the ability to penetrate not only Fernando’s deception but her sister’s self-deception as well. Unlike Elena, who needs to believe that she should only lose her virginity to the man she loves, Anais announces early in the film her own radical sexual ideology: “The first time should be with nobody” ... “a boy I don’t love.” Unlike her sister’s sentimental romanticism, Anais is a precocious cynic; she separates sex from love, thinks virginity worship is “stupid,” and with a wisdom far beyond her 12 years, comforts the eventually betrayed Elena with the tough truth that her summer seducer has “already forgotten you.”¹

Reading the film as a feminist, ideological, or developmental text on adolescent sexuality, however, is not sufficient to explain the two central elements of its structure: the long seduction scenes at the core, and the abrupt violent conclusion. For illumination here we look to Freud’s original formulation of the primal scene, in which the act of *looking* provides the link between the psychoanalytic understanding of sexual development and the spectatorial gaze intrinsic to film theory.

Despite much controversy in the century that followed the publication in 1914 of the Wolf Man case – during which Freud shifted both from an original insistence that the infant actually *witness* his parents’ intercourse to the position that it may be imagined in fantasy (perhaps as a displacement onto the parents of a prior observation of copulating animals) as well as from the initial view that it is not the origin for neurosis but rather universal and “phylogenetic,” – the primal scene nonetheless remains fundamental to the psychoanalytic understanding of infantile sexual life, trauma, the Oedipal conflict, and adult psychic development. And central to its importance is the notion that the infant’s real or imagined experience of the primal scene contains elements of *both* arousal and fear, pleasure and anxiety, and (later on) curiosity and shame – a mixed bag of responses to be re-enacted throughout subsequent stages of psycho-sexual life. And so it is with Anais, pretending to be asleep in her bed across the room but “peeping” through her fingers to look at the unfolding scene of her sister’s lovemaking. Importantly, it is a look that has already been forbidden. Before Fernando’s secret arrival in the bedroom, Elena has ordered Anais to go to sleep, warning: “You hear nothing and see nothing.” As we watch Anais watch, her gaze mediating the complex nature of this forbidden seeing for the film’s spectator, we enter the territory identified in *The Imaginary Signifier* (1975) in which Metz links the pleasures of cinematic spectatorship to scopophilia and the sexual drives – both scopic and invocatory (the pulsion invocante,

¹ In *Romance* the protagonist says: “Love is stupid. It’s just a power trip” and states her desire “to be fucked... without any sentimental bullshit.”

the desire to hear) rooting it in the tension of the “unauthorized observation” of the primal scene, the keyhole “Peeping Tom” aspect of illicit pleasure that Bazin described as the “quasi-obscurity” (1959) of cinematic voyeurism.

The camera moves from its framing of the couple on Elena’s bed to Anais lying, wide awake, in hers; most of the sexual intercourse is then recorded through the long shot from across the room that tells us we are filtering what follows through her point of view. The camera’s subject is Anais’ face as she processes the sounds we hear in the background – cries of pain from her sister, loud noises and moans from Fernando. Here the privileging of the aural, rather than the visual, may refer us back to Freud’s analysis of hysteria in the case of Dora whose trauma derives from the disturbing sounds of her father’s heavy breathing in the parental bedroom next door. (It is also interesting to note here, in view of the anal penetration taking place in this scene, Freud’s speculation in the *Introductory Lectures* that the primal scene fantasy originates in the child witnessing *more ferarum* – dogs copulating from behind).

In the 2nd, shorter bedroom scene in which Elena decides to allow vaginal penetration, (reflecting developmentally the progression from anal to genital stage) the camera focuses exclusively on Anais in her bed while only the legs of the coital couple are visible on their bed across the room in another continuous long shot. They are filmed in soft blurred focus – as if the event might be taking place in the past or in Anais’ fantasy, which would be consistent with Freud’s revision of his theory. The sounds of Fernando’s panting and groans are augmented in the diegetic space, while this time, Elena remains silent, until finally Anais turns away, curls into a foetal position, and cries. Are the tears for herself, or her sister at this point? Since the film is also interested in the sibling relationship (significantly it was released in France as “A MA SOEUR!; and Breillat herself says it was about “A soul with two bodies”) the question of sibling identity fusion – as well as the more obvious rivalry and periodic camaraderie – is thematically and cinematographically active throughout and may thus partly explain Anais’ tearful response to her sister’s painful defloration. In a scene reminiscent of Bergman’s *Persona*, Anais and Elena stare into the mirror, Elena noting that despite their striking difference, “I do feel as if I belong to you... Hating you is like hating a part of myself.” At other points in the film the two girls’ identity appears purposely confused, so at times their voices in dialogue are indistinguishable, or they wear the same color. Anais’ tears also serve as yet another reference to the film’s ideology – the loss of what Breillat calls Elena’s “sentimental ethics” along with her virginity. But the powerful affects contained in the image of Anais’ body, convulsively shaking in the foetal position, also enact the rage, impotence, fear and exclusion that mark the other side of the pleasureable voyeurism and arousal that Freud attributed to the primal scene experience. In this context it is important to go beyond sibling fusion to the fact that Elena and her summertime lover serve as parent surrogates within her family: the “real” father appears only briefly, only to bark at his daughters and complain about business to his wife before disappearing back to Paris and his office; the mother is self-absorbed, ineffectual and disorganized, unavailable to either of her children, detached and seemingly clueless as to their inner lives. In contrast, Elena, when not engaging in aggression and competition with her kid sister, is touchingly maternal: Anais reminisces “You played mommy with me when I was a baby” and Elena, (perhaps penitent the morning after her cruel treatment of Anais during her tryst) swaddles her in a towel at the pool and feeds her a huge piece of bread at the breakfast table; later, when Anais is carsick, it is Elena who holds her head while the irritated mother puffs on a cigarette from a distance. In turn, as Anais tags after these parent surrogates she complains bitterly about being the “ball and chain,” of the parental diad who exclude her yet force her to witness their sexual intercourse.² Moreover all children,

² In one of the film’s most poignant scenes on a deserted beach, left alone while Elena (in her slinky red dress) and her lover continue their sexual play, Anais lies at the water’s edge, and gets her own dress wet: she is discovered, naked and shivering, by the couple, who look down at her fat awkward body squatting next to a blasted tree stump; whereupon Anais, exposed and humiliated by their gaze, looks down in shame.

Freud claimed, would adopt from the primal scene experience “what may be called a *sadistic view of coition*.” Thus Anais as child may well be interpreting the scene as Fernando the father assaulting and hurting Elena the mother, suggesting the traumatic potential in her forced witnessing of their intercourse. Equally important in this context is the sadomasochistic and perverse processes Freud was to describe in his essay “A Child is Being Beaten,” (1919) in which the witnessing child experiences the guilt, fear, and erotic pleasure of watching another (initially a sibling) being beaten by an adult.

We must also remember too that beyond its relationship to trauma and pathology, Freud saw the primal scene experience not only as crucial in organizing the Oedipal conflict but also in the pre-genital stage as well, where the child, awakening during the night experiences the oral rage of frustrated desire; after all, now he is not able to access the mother or her breast because she is being assaulted by the formidable father. This oral aggression, which Arlow (1978) identified in Mishima’s use of fire in his novels as a symbolic vengeance on the copulating parents, is enacted in *Fat Girl* by Anais’ constant and compulsive eating. In the scene at the café where Elena and Fernando meet, Elena flirts with her new boyfriend as he sensuously kisses her fingers, while Anais, ever the observer, shovels in huge mouthfuls of a banana split across the table; in still other scenes she is filmed biting on a long phallic-like taffy candy while her sister and Fernando continue their courtship. During the fateful ride back to Paris at the end of the film, she sits in the back seat devouring snacks, spilling an occasional chip on her plump thighs. While the depiction of food as substitution for repressed sexual appetites is an all too common trope of the outsize woman, here it gains resonance within the context of the primitive oral aggression associated with the primal scene dynamic.

And it is at the beginning of this long car ride back to Paris that the film abruptly shifts from its languorous rhythm of sleepy seaside resort and the summertime seduction as the two sisters drive north with their mother along the grim highway, huge trucks and roaring motorcycles crowding their small car as night closes in, and we appear to be leaving the sharply realized world of the film for a nightmarish symbolic landscape. The frazzled and exhausted mother finally pulls in to a deserted rest stop, where both she and Elena fall asleep. Anais once again wakeful and watchful, stares out into the night (still eating her taffy) when suddenly the windshield is shattered by a wild and disheveled man wielding an ax. In quick succession he decapitates Elena, strangles the mother, and drags Anais into the woods, where he stuffs her yellow panties into her mouth, and rapes her. After only a brief struggle, she puts her arms around him, mirroring Elena’s gesture earlier when she “gives up” her virginity to Fernando.³ In both scenes, the gesture is poignant, more awkward child seeking protection from harm than desiring woman. Then Anais removes the gag from her mouth (it seems clear to her attacker she is not going to scream) and looks at him wordlessly. The glance they exchange is ambiguous; it might seem to contain some tenderness. Then the man disappears as suddenly as he had arrived. The police just as mysteriously appear, wrap the two bodies and other evidence in plastic, and escort Anais from the woods. She denies being raped, declaring “You don’t have to believe me if you don’t want to.”⁴ It is within this very disavowal that the many meanings of the film and its startling conclusion are embedded. First, it is not in Anais’ view, a rape, but the enactment of her ideological project to have her first lover be “nobody” – a completely anonymous man who suddenly appears from “nowhere.” Second, (given Breillat’s choice of this over a previous ending in which a hospital doctor is examining her after the attack) it is to the police that Anais makes the denial; the patriarchal law of the father who would encode her experience as crime, – or resisting any attempt to interpret the fantasy which she keeps hidden in her unconscious beyond the symbolic order of language and analysis.

³ Breillat wanted one continuous take (long tracking shot) which only a stunt man could do, which she feels worked because “it is a quiet body that puts Anais on the ground and assaults her. An actor would have been much less assured in his moves. He taught Anais how to fall. “Symbolism takes the place of realism (the yellow panties as a mouth gag) – but it proves to be even more violent.”

⁴ Breillat sees rape as a potentially liberating experience, which disturbs some critics and has won her the support of the male critical establishment, according to Ginette Vincendeau in *Sight and Sound*.

Nonetheless, it could be argued that the entire finale is indeed Anais' sadomasochistic primal scene fantasy projected on the screen in which she transforms her unconscious rage and aggression, the "residue" material of the summer's experience, into a lurid rendition of Red Riding Hood's forest encounter with the ravishing wolf. Significantly, by creating the fantasy (much like the cinema director) Anais also masters the traumatic aspects of her experience by reversing her passive position as mere witness to the primal scene. Instead, she becomes both active author of the scene as well as its protagonist; in this fantasy the rapist most vehemently rejects her sister and mother to chose Anais as the object of his desire. And as the creator of this scene, Anais forces *us* – we have no choice, just like she had none in the bedroom – to look at the image of her own sexual assault, thereby forcing us also to confront our own ambivalence – be it fascination, shock, or arousal, both simultaneously horrified and fascinated as we witness the violent images enacted upon the screen.

Anais' gaze in the film's final image, a freeze frame of her face turning to look out at the camera (Breillat's *homage* to the ending of another adolescent narrative in Truffaut's *400 Blows*) has been alternately described as triumphant, defiant, hopeful, and dissociated⁵ – but ultimately remains enigmatic. Thus, as we confront cinema's strange and disturbing capacity to make the invisible visible on the screen before us, like all film spectators we are left with the task – as Mulvey famously said of *Peeping Tom* (1960), Michael Powell's seminal film on scopophilia – "to decipher the hieroglyph that the voyeur may see but cannot understand."

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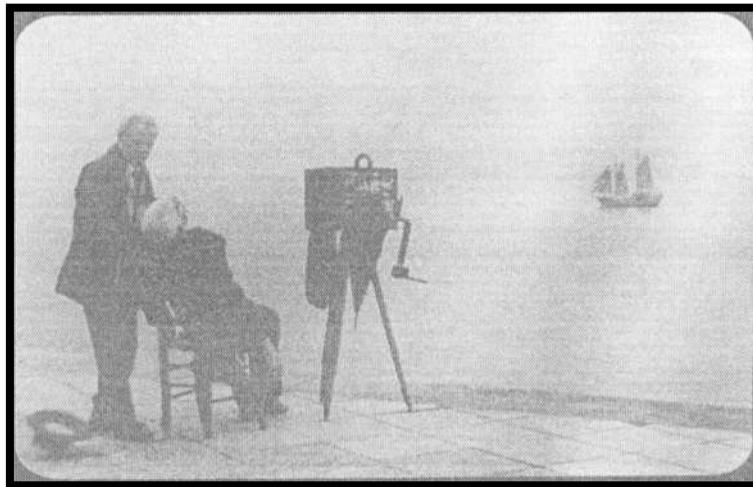
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⁵ See Hussey, op. cit., for a discussion on the dissociative theme in the film, including Anais' song about the werewolf presaging the rape, and notes that her final gaze is not direct but rather off to the right of the spectator – i.e. dissociated.

The wandering of Homer's or any other Ulysses: Necessity or choice

EVANGELIA DIAMANTOPOULOU (*)

“Thessaloniki – December 1954: a vessel starts its journey and a wandering photographer dies just at the time that he is trying to capture the moment. This is how a dialogue starts that will become the pretext for another journey”. This is a scene recorded in “Ulysses Gaze”, a film by the Greek director Thodoros Angelopoulos, which was projected and awarded in Cannes in 1995. The director of the film stated that the inspiration for the title of the film was the Italian sculptor Giuseppe Manzu who had wished his last work to be Ulysses' gaze, for he believed that the entire human experience is reflected in his gaze. The film is about the wandering of a person from Greece in the northern countries of the Balkans in order to discover three unedited films of the Manakia brothers, the first film makers in



(*) Leonidou 28, Chaidari 12461, Athens, Greece. E-mail: evaldiamantopoulou@yahoo.gr

Greece and the wider parts of the Balkans at the beginning of the twentieth century. Angelopoulos' hero, like a modern Ulysses, confronts different difficulties and problems which have to do with his wandering in regions where riots, violence, police controlling and curfews prevail due to intense political and border changes. In the meantime, despite all those difficulties and problems moments of acquaintances and creative coexistence with other people intervene in terms of cooperation, friendship and love affairs. Moreover, the element of loss and death is emphasized as it is directly woven into life, as is the element of love in the two – fold theme: love and death. Indeed, through traveling, which is the subject – matter in his films, T. A. reveals his tragic attitude towards life. He manifests his agreement with Heraclites' suggestion that it's impossible to cross the same river twice, by taking the leading role from "being" to "becoming". His work, though, is tragic because the journey, prevailing in life and knowledge, is a route with no way out, where the man himself constantly struggles with opposing views. In other words, this journey is to become a farewell, a bridge between arrival and departure, which is exactly the director's aim: a meeting of two gazes, the beginning and the end of the twentieth century, in the records of the twentieth century Balkan history, together with the history of the cinema of the twentieth century, linked with the wanderer, the hero of the film searching for truth. In fact, Angelopoulos repeats the same story of the epic poet, Homer, taking Ulysses as the archetype. Homer, though, focuses on the narration, the description of facts and events, in other words, more than the general sentimental and psychological state of his hero. He refers, of course, to Ulysses' nostalgia for his country, Ithaca, and his family – especially his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus – but this reference functions as a moving force for an adventurous voyage and is important for the plot. Nevertheless, Ulysses' ten year adventure, even if it is characterized by a natural cause of nostalgia for beloved areas and beloved persons, being a very long voyage cannot exclude other emotional situations defined by other causes and eventually forming particular choices. Besides, any man could be Ulysses that is an existence that runs a route through time, obviously having a past, present and future – in other words he lives in the past, present and future – and in this effort to exist through action, depending on situations, he expresses certain desires conflicting most of the time with his remote objectives. It so happens what Aristotle says in his work "Of soul" that logic forces us, being humans who have a sense of time, to resist by looking into the future, while desire itself dictates to us to seek something thinking of the present; the pleasure of the present time seems to be the absolute pleasure and the absolute good, as man is unable to foresee the future. Even in the Homeric description, then, we can detect elements that show Ulysses as a human being with needs and desires connected with his direct present, and not only his nostalgic mood related to future aims.

Starting with the issue of desire for knowledge and communication, Ulysses in rhapsody Z of *Odyssey* ignores being shipwrecked, and asks Nausēka for information about Phaeakes' island and its people saying: "Having endured much, I chanced on you and I don't know other people who reside in this country and enjoy living here. Come on, show me the town....". Moreover, Ulysses himself, when he describes his adventure with Polyphemos, the Cyclops, in rhapsody I, says: "and then my shipmates would urge me... to set sail immediately. But I didn't listen... I wanted to see him and receive his hospitable presents. This willpower for direct contact with the knowledge of the present situation is further elaborated by Dantis presented as Ulysses' irrevocable need in his "Hell" saying: "When I left for Gaeta, unburdening myself of Kirca, who had kept me for longer than a year, neither my son's sweetness, nor my sympathy for my aged father or the fair love that would please Penelope, could quench the thirst burning inside me to become acquainted with passions and virtues of a man in the world. Brothers, I cry out, you who came out here in the west, facing myriad dangers, in this short span of life, do not refuse the path to the sun.... respect your noble sperm: you have been created not to be animals but to follow knowledge and virtue." Furthermore, the Greek poet Konstantinos Kavafis refers to the above short term pleasure of knowledge, even projecting its materialistic dimension, when he urges every future Ulysses saying: "You'd better stop at Phoenicians' trade shops and get pretty goods, mother-of-pearl and coral, amber and ebony and hedonic perfumes of all kinds." Another issue, that Homer points out with discretion in *Odyssey*, is the issue of Ulysses' willpower to experience passion and danger. In the first case, in rhapsody M, he has an intense desire to indulge in Sirens' seducing song. The fact that he had taken all precautions

even forbidding his shipmates to untie him despite begging them doesn't mean that he suffered less. Besides, this risky attitude is also confirmed by his desire to take a close look at Scylla, the mythical monster that ate six of his shipmates directly in front of him.

But both the descent into Hades and his acquaintance with the underworld – without always being dictated to by fate – indicates a man who disregards every danger in the face of the possibility that is given to him to get to know the real face of death first hand. For although he could have been limited to the oracle of the seer Tiressia and return, he doesn't resist the temptation to encounter his dead friends and his mother, as well as legendary characters, such as Hercules, and share with them the drama of the underworld. A comparable reference to the acquaintance with the mystery of death occurs in the *Odyssey* of James Joyce when Leopold Bloom accompanies his friend who has died unexpectedly to his last residence. Here, of course, the contact with death is more adapted to human measures as it occurs only by being part of the mourning process. It shows, however, the special relationship between mankind and death as one of his axes and as one of the greatest existential questions. This brings us to the second axis which is called "love" so that we can see how the one situation of the Homeric hero functions. Throughout his journey, Ulysses will be inspired by the love of two goddesses, the witch Circe and the nymph Calypso and also by a queen to be, Nauseka. Homer, of course, refers to love without any response on the part of Ulysses. Despite that fact, he is presented as living an experience with them; as enjoying their indulgences and as sleeping with the two goddesses. The continual reference to Ulysses' nostalgia for Penelope and his long term desire to be with her again, therefore, does not contradict with his immediate desire for love. This desire is expressed moreover both in his polite and complimentary behavior towards the three women and in his recognition of their superior natural beauty as well as his disposition not to reveal their existence to his wife. The fact, nonetheless, that from his ten years of traveling he stayed for seven years on the island of Kalypso must have some connection with his personal choice. That which must be emphasized is that the reason for his relationship with the three women is not only one of bodily attraction and erotic lust but also of a more general communicative disposition. Proof of this is the fact that what matters to him is his untidy appearance when he meets Nauseka and takes care to adjust it, as well as when parting he promises that he will remember her forever. In the cinematic version of Thodoros Angelopoulos it is within this platonic relationship of Ulysses with Nauseka that Ulysses' personal desire is depicted more clearly when Ulysses requests the young girl to wait for him.

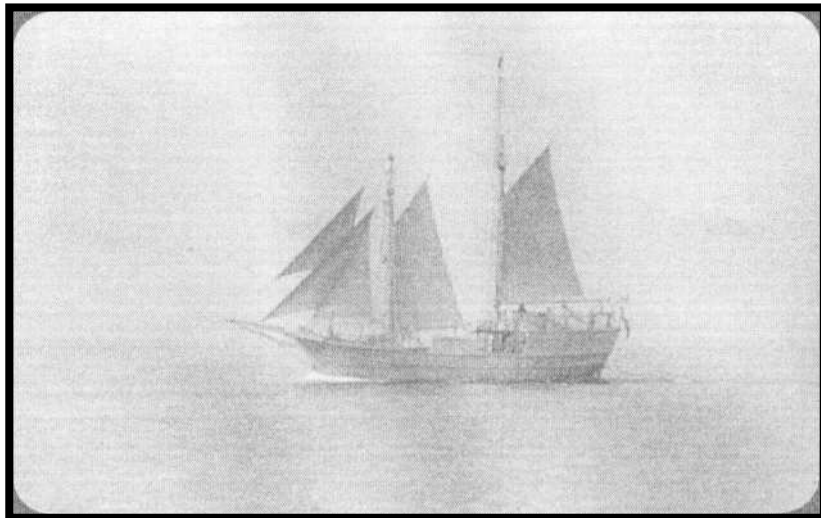
What is it, therefore, that determines the Homeric journey or whatever *Odyssey* towards Homeric or whatever other Ithaca? Clearly, a desire to return to stable and secured values or to discover and conquer



something new will always function as the motivating force. It is this motivating force, anyway, that is nourished by a continual reminder because when recalling something which induces pleasure, we try with passion to believe it to be the present.

But that present functions more with a background of imagination and of a dream world and for that reason, in many cases, that which follows in the course of existence and real time is cancelled and excluded from the real present. It maybe the case that the initial acute desire to return, nostalgia, or the achievement of any objective remains and functions as a guide for the journey, but what cannot be ignored are other smaller desires that interrupt along the journey and participate substantially in the aesthetic, psychic and spiritual indulgence of the traveler. That, in other words, which in other cases Freud called overwhelming desire which comes into sharp contrast with other desires of the subjective and demonstrate invariance in the moral and aesthetic values of his personality, functions also in the case of Homeric and whatever other Ulysses with the meaning of an unexpected, present and daily desire. This desire is a steadfast part of man's nature which wants to live in the present and from this angle, we can say that the choice of a perpetual seduction, of a journey with no end, is determined since the journey is an embodiment of the person Ulysses of whom the gaze wants to embrace eternity.

In the cinematic version of this Ulysses, Thodoros Angelopoulos expresses his own opinion with the divulging monologue of Ulysses: "When I return, it will be with another man's clothes, another man's name. My coming will be unexpected. If you look at me unbelieving and say: *you are not he*, I'll show you signs and you will believe me. I'll tell you about the lemon tree in your garden, the corner window that lets in the moonlight. And then signs of the body, signs of love, and as we climb trembling to our old room, between one embrace and the next, between lovers' calls, I will tell you about the journey all the night long and then all the nights to come. The whole human adventure between one embrace and the next, between lovers' calls. The story that never ends....."



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“Kubla Khan”: Genesis of an archetype

ROBERT SILHOL (*)

«Kubla Khan» has been so often cited as a dream specimen that a curious belief has grown up – accepted even in scholarly quarters – that the work now floats in a vast sea of psychoanalytic interpretation. But in fact scarcely more than an occasional Freudian or Jungian spray ever reaches the poem.

(Norman Fruman, *Coleridge: The Damaged Angel*, 394)

I

The circumstances of the composition of «Kubla Khan» (1797) are well known, at least if we trust Coleridge's reminiscences, some nineteen years afterwards (1816), though many questions arise as to his trustworthiness.¹

For the time being, however, it is simpler to retain the general picture drawn by the poet in his introductory account, for, in the end, all we have at our disposal is a text, a piece of discourse, and the question of knowing whether it is the result of a deliberate intention or not can in no way lead us to a fuller understanding of «Kubla Khan.» The particular circumstances described by Coleridge evoke the idea of what takes place when a dreamer, on awakening, reports his or her dream. The 1816 annotation gives a good, although general, description of the process: while reading – and here we already have an example of what psychoanalysis calls *day's residue* –, the poet fell asleep, and in a state of “profound”

(*) Université Paris 7 – Denis Diderot, UFR d'Études anglophones, Institut d'anglais Charles V, 10 rue Charles V, 75004 Paris, France.

¹ Several critics have indeed questioned the poet's testimony and have even gone as far as considering the dream-poem as a «Coleridgean hoax,» a «parody, or lyrical *jeu d'esprit*, let us say,» in the words of Robert F. Fleissner in his *Sources, Meaning, and Influences of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan'*. Fleissner, who has read exhaustively on the subject and drawn an impressive list of Kubla Khan criticism, discusses this issue; he particularly mentions E. Schneider, W. B. Ober and W. J. Bate among those who have chosen not to trust Coleridge's statement. On the «validity of the poet's prefatory material,» see Fleissner's final comment: «... the romantic description in the published preface would appear to reveal, at best, poetic license; it simply should not now be accepted too literally.» (p. 63)

sleep composed, or rather reports he composed, from two to three hundred lines (“he could not have composed less than...”), nevertheless prudently adding: “if that indeed can be called composition.” On awakening, he seems to remember those lines and starts putting them down on paper until, unfortunately, he is disturbed by a caller. When he resumes his task, an hour or so later, the “vision” has disappeared “with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images...”²

Can we take Coleridge at his word and accept that “Kubla Khan” is only a *fragment* of what could have been a much longer poem had he not been disturbed? I do not think so, and it is my opinion that we should simply take the said “fragment” as the complete narrative of the mentioned dream, and therefore as a *complete poem*; in other words, there is no reason to imagine it could have had a sequence. Indeed, dreaming one composes a complete, and generally splendid, piece of work is a well-known experience, a fantasy in fact which is never – at least to my knowledge – followed by actual realization. As it is, then, what we have is a poem written after a dream, remarkably, therefore, like the account of such a dream, that is to say of what remained of the “actual” dream that took place while the poet was asleep.

I know that Coleridge insisted that what he dreamt was the poem itself, the text as we have it, with words, lines and stanzas complete, but however fascinating a remark this may be it needn’t have any bearing on the nature of our *object*, as I have just remarked above. Indeed, no one can tell what was really dreamt: the images of which the poem is made and which the poet would have put into words, or these words themselves, these lines even, organized as we can see them in the final text, complete with rimes, alliterations and assonances? But this, in the end, is of little importance to us since – as is the case with all dreams, let me repeat this – what is left of what the dreamer experienced during sleep is only what he or she remembers *afterwards*. In fact, our hesitations when it comes to defining our object are just an *effect* of the *literary* nature of “Kubla Khan” and nothing else. When confronted with a text like Coleridge’s poem, our doubts as to the very nature of the material under analysis form part of our own reading response to it, that is to say of our literary experience. From the world of dreams,³ the poem inherited a lack of coherence between its three parts⁴ – or at least a coherence that is not easy to establish –, and some imprecision in the scenes described or in the characters mentioned: “pleasure-dome,” “demon-lover,” “the shadow of the dome of pleasure,” “a vision,” “a miracle of rare device.” Naturally, these terms and images can be found in the works of others, Milton being the most prominent example, but they are nonetheless strongly reminiscent of what one may oneself have dreamt: “caverns measureless to man,” “chasm,” not to mention some of the adjectives: “sacred,” “holy and enchanted.” Thus, although “Kubla Khan” should not be taken for a piece of pre-surrealist automatic writing (for Coleridge dreamt, and wrote, a romantic poem), the enterprise resulted in the description, the evocation rather, of a universe that one might think closer to... “truth” – whatever that is –, a world, let us say, exceeding the limits of simple concrete perception, more authentic perhaps, beyond appearances certainly, and with no ordinary status. And from this point of view, I think we must admit the enterprise was successful.⁵

² We shall not know however whether these lines found their way into the finished poem, and if so where in the text.

³ This has naturally been noted by most critics.

⁴ Many – in accordance with the Crewe manuscript – only distinguish two parts, the last twenty four lines being considered as a more or less conscious part and of a different nature therefore as the preceding thirty lines which could be more readily taken to correspond to what the poet’s alludes to in his 1816 presentation. Once again, such a distinction does not seem of great importance to me and I prefer to look at the text published by Coleridge as a single unit. The three parts I distinguish – and some editions of the poem present the same division – simply correspond to the three different moments in the unconscious drama reported in the poem (a dream in two parts followed by the associations linked to it, or a dream in three parts); they are not to be considered as consciously devised “stanzas,” although I may, now and then, use the word. About the discrepancies between the manuscript and the various printed editions of the poem (2, 3 or 4 parts) and for a discussion of the variants, see Shelton and Skeat.)

⁵ Irrespective of the *illusion* I am discussing further down and based on it, no doubt. It is not improbable that “Kubla Khan” generates, in some readers, shall I say, if not in all, the feeling of entering a new and unknown domain, not, perhaps, the “undiscovered country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns,” but a *territory* close to it. This is an illusion, of course, nothing other than the “stuff” of which our dreams are made, but it is a necessary illusion, an illusion whose structure is that of language and with which we face up to the material world, remote, silent and unfeeling.

Except that for the psychoanalytic critic, the mysterious, strange world referred to in the poem is not so mysterious and can lead us to a more precise, and satisfactory, description of the way humans function. I hope it will be understood that I make a distinction between the pleasure of the reader, of myself as a reader, and what is involved in the task of the analyst, of the scientist who questions our object: however connected, the two enterprises are definitely of a different nature; this is not always understood or taken into consideration; and yet, the same distinction can be made between what the dreamer experiences when he or she dreams and what is at work and is being experienced in the analysis of the dream later on.⁶

It is this difference in nature between the two operations which always prompts me to insist that what the psychoanalytic critic unearths from texts in no way diminishes the pleasure of the reader, although this reassurance doesn't generally suffice to convince "readers." All this to repeat that the ambiguous and difficult task of the analyst is to try and find out what unseen forces were at work in the production of a text, try to see – and hear might be more appropriate here – beyond what we can consider as the "first manifest meaning" of literary discourse. There shouldn't be anything surprising in such an expression, but one may fear it equates dream and literature too easily and without further ado. Let's us therefore for the time being consider it as our hypothesis (a well-known if not well accepted proposition, although the idea that literature has a symbolical dimension is always readily accepted). Quite psychoanalytically – and again there is nothing new in this –, our hypothesis distinguishes various levels of meaning in a text: what we first encounter on reading is akin to a surface, an architectonic layer, but also a screen (and this last point is what distinguishes psychoanalytic criticism from, let us say, standard literary criticism). This surface constitutes a necessary factor or component of literary pleasure but it should not be taken for the sole and ultimate source from which the text proceeds; for indeed for psychoanalysis, unconscious desire is the real "architect" of literary discourse, its prime promoter.

Which amounts to saying that between dream and literature, and this means discourse, any discourse, there is a similarity of *structure*: first, an unconscious "core," and then, *afterwards*, the representation of it. This, naturally, corresponds to the structure of the dream described by Freud, but it may not be so obvious that it can also apply to literature. Here is what we have learnt from Freud, as is no doubt well known: the dream proper, what happens during sleep, must be carefully distinguished from the memory we have of such an unconscious experience. It may be that the original terms, *Traumgedanken* and *manifest content*, were somewhat awkwardly chosen, particularly the first term, but the distinction is quite clear: what takes place during sleep, what "visits" the dreamer – the dream as we shall never know it⁷ –, corresponds to the "dream-thoughts," *Traumgedanken*, while what follows, what is reminisced as best

I realize the meaning I have given "stuff," here, does not correspond to the one given to the word by Shakespeare in Prospero's renunciation scene (*The Tempest*, IV, 1, 158); yet, if one pays attention to what precedes the famous phrase, the emphasis does seem to be, if not on language, at least on the literary illusion:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like the insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (150-158)

(Sterling's *Tragedie of Darius* (1603) and even Marlowe's *Faustus* have been given as possible sources of this passage. Naturally, the occurrence of "towers," "gorgeous palaces," "solemn temples" and even of the great "globe" cannot go by unnoticed to readers of "Kubla Khan;" a coincidence no doubt, but interesting all the same.)

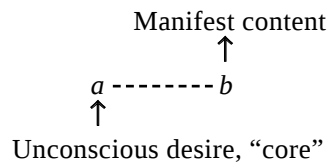
⁶ I have dealt with the problem of the articulation of the (unconscious) experience constituted by a dream and its interpretation by the dreamer in: "Descartes interprète ses songes." *Gradiva, Revue européenne d'anthropologie littéraire*, Lisbon/Paris, Vol. III, N°2, (1998): 179-201.

⁷ And this perfectly justifies the concept of unconscious: on one hand unconscious desire, on the other, representation.

we can be labeled “dream-content,” *Inhalt* or, to be quite specific, *manifeste Inhalt*, (which reinforces the opposition with what was only “latent” and unknown before analysis). In the end, and Freud is adamant on this point, the account of a dream is not the dream, already it is a construction, the result of a first transformation. Perhaps it is now clear why I consider “Kubla Khan” to be such a perfect model for the demonstration that between dream and literature there is no difference *from the point of view of structure*. For whether there was something intentionally (consciously?) written or not in the lines we have, the outcome is remarkably like the “manifest content” (Freud’s meaning) of a dream which Coleridge may well have experienced. (I cannot at this point use the poet’s 1816 presentation to support my argument for it remains too ambiguous, possibly to preserve the idea that images and words were dreamt. The passage deserves to be mentioned, all the same, because of the clear distinction it makes between images and words: “...all the images rose up before [me] as things, with the parallel production of the corresponding expressions...” What of course the presentation does not say is that the words followed the images in time, which would have been a way to speak of latent and manifest contents.) The automatic aspect of the enterprise, then – of part of it at least –, resulted in a piece of discourse which simply rendered manifest what had visited the poet in his dream. It is a “content,” let me repeat this, which is the result of the transformation of “latent” images and words, whatever their origin. This origin, we shall call *unconscious core*, and we shall only be able to make an hypothesis about it thanks to the traces left us by the poet in his narrative.

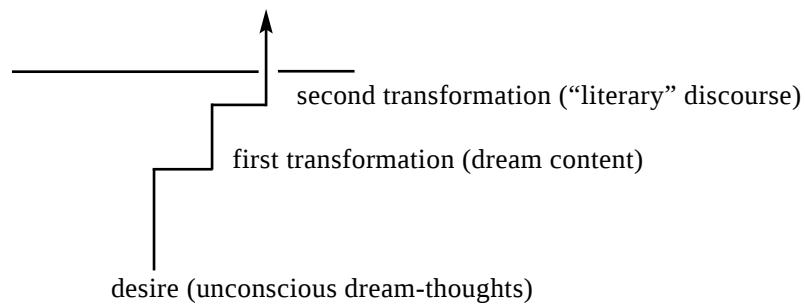
The model does apply to any text, of course, but the particular circumstances of the composition of “Kubla Khan,” that is to say its close relationship with a dream – irrespective of what that relationship was –, and perhaps the spontaneity with which it was put to paper, constitute a factor of great interest for the analyst. And at this point a clarification is needed: can indeed a piece of writing which did not proceed from a decision to compose (the poet didn’t seem to have known what he intended to “communicate”), a piece of writing which was as if directly dictated to the author by the dream he had just experienced, which arrived “all armed” with pleasure-dome, gardens, caverns, chasm and the Abyssinian maid be considered as a text like any other text?

What I have so far emphasized is the structural similarity between dream and literature but I must be more specific. Let us examine the structure of the dream again:



What is illustrated here is the relationship between unconscious desire and its representation, a representation which is the result of a *transformation* which followed the path from *a* to *b*: this is quite precisely the structure of the metaphor. Freud called this transformation “the dream-work,” *Traumarbeit*, insisting – and here lies the heart of one of his discoveries – that unconscious desire could not accede to consciousness without such a transformation, disguise in fact, screen or mask. Hence the apparently incomprehensible, strange aspect of our dreams; all this is well known. The formula I use to describe this movement of our psyche – which, it is important to note, is the fundamental structure of representation, and by this I mean language, the lacanian *parole* – insists on the fact that our dreams, and discourse generally, *at the same time* carry and disguise unconscious desire: *la parole porte et masque à la fois*; which is another way of repeating what I have just quoted from Freud: representation cannot come to our knowledge without a transformation. The Freudian *bar* naturally occupies the center of the structure with a “below” and an “above,” or an “inside” and an “outside,” a cause and an effect, and it is this which, by definition and quite naturally, we tend to forget, insisting on the autonomy of consciousness. At this point, obviously, Freud’s useful concept of “screen memory” comes to mind; but we are going to see that when it comes to literature there is a difference. The fundamental structure I am describing – an unconscious “core” and its transformation/representation –, we find in all texts, but between dream and literature

here ends the analogy and we must, when considering literature, add a factor to the general picture described above. In short, with “literary” texts a further transformation takes place. With “literature,” which we read and which we consider intelligible,⁸ the transformation – which can be represented as following a path of the same structural nature as in the dream, with a clear division between what is conscious and what is not – has another function to fulfill and can be said to amount to a second transformation. The function of this second moment in the transformation process consists in providing unconscious desire with a representation that can be accepted by consciousness: it thus acts as a screen – while still continuing to “carry” desire, to bear its mark “concealed” –, and its efficiency comes from the fact that it has received a second, specific, autonomous function which is enough in itself to justify its existence, a function of communication for instance, or of description or narration. Thus, one way or another, does literature become legible, more easily decipherable, we find, than our dreams: of a nature in the end that can be valued for itself. The place in the structure of this second transformation, which belongs to the domain of what I have called “communication,” can be illustrated as follows:



Following a first transformation – I use “first” and “second” for the sake of a theoretical presentation, for the path followed by our second transformation may well be parallel to that of the other –, which is the result of what Freud calls *Traumarbeit*, dream-work, and which occurs every time language is produced (the slip of the tongue *has* the structure of the dream and is for us a perfect example of this: it cannot be explained until it is decoded, the unconscious desire it expresses has already been submitted to the first transformation I am alluding to, *parole vraie* but nevertheless disguised), following a first transformation, then, comes a second one which results from what we might call *travail d’écriture*, writing-work, whose function it is to render legible what is being produced, to give unconscious desire an appearance that can be, “in other words,” accepted. That this “mask,” as I pointed out above, may well have an interest in itself, there is no doubt, but on no account should this make us forget the other function of discourse. For I must not oversimplify our model for the sake of clarity, and when I speak of the two functions of language it must be understood that these two functions cannot be separated and form part of a single movement, since discourse, as we saw, at once carries and conceals unconscious desire. The simple and plain act by which I name a person or a thing, that is to say represent, replace a referent by a sign – and here I use the terms and the model of the linguist –, at once carries in itself my desire that the word should be the thing *and* implicitly refuses to acknowledge the distance between the two since the illusion that the distance can be bridged is necessary to the success of the operation of language. Language as a denial of absence, this is what, in the end, we should be able to read in “Kubla Khan.” It is this double function, directly tied with unconscious desire, and at its service in fact, which must be acknowledged as the fundamental characteristic of discourse and of literature, desire being recognized as the prime cause, the actual architect of the whole edifice. For indeed, as the analysis of Coleridge’s poem will show, I

⁸ And one also comes across works which are not directly intelligible and which yet are not without an effect on us as readers. What does the critic do in this case?

hope, without unconscious desire – the expression being taken in its most general, structural, sense –, there would not be any language (while we couldn't, on the other hand, speak of unconscious desire if there were not language, no representation).⁹

One will have recognized in what precedes an allusion to the double nature of language: when we speak, or write, we *communicate*, but we also *symbolize*; in the words we pronounce or write there is more than meets the eye, or the ear. It is perhaps when looking at poetry – which never worried much about meaning or communication – that the model I am discussing can best be understood. In the case of poetry,¹⁰ the communication which can be valued in itself, and which I take to have *also* the function of a screen, is reduced to a minimum or does not exist, even. Which brings us back to “Kubla Khan.”

No mediation here, no screen between the dreamer and his product other than the first transformation to which all dreams are submitted, with the consequence that the reader will come to the conclusion that the poem is devoid of meaning in the ordinary sense of the word. No meaning, that is, other than what we have when confronted with the manifest content of a dream, pure poetry, it seems!

What “Kubla Khan” tells us, indirectly, is that one should be very careful – in the case of literature at least – when speaking of communication, and this not only because the notion points to an ideal never reached, but because in Coleridge's poem this dimension is lacking: such an absence should incite us to refrain from taking the said function of communication for the sole dimension of language, thus obliterating its symbolical dimension. In the model above, the Freudian model, things are quite clear: on one hand a function of communication and on the other the function of representation of unconscious desire. But the diagram is theoretical only, and words come to us in one piece. It is because the two functions mentioned are indiscernibly, indistinguishably fused into one that the analysis of the symbolical dimension of language and of literature remains so difficult. What psychoanalysis has taught us is that the natural attitude of the reader (dreamer) – only concerned with his or her hallucinatory pleasure – is antagonistic to that of the analyst (even though the latter will never attain any certainty and will have to accept to progress asymptotically only). This is to say that the analyst, or critic, cannot content himself or herself with remaining a reader only, however talented, and should be careful not to reduce our object to one of its parts only. To mistake what I have called the “mask,” Freud's “screen” – which in literature has its own importance, there is no doubt about this – for the whole of the work amounts to renouncing to a complete understanding of what was finally at stake when it was produced. For discourse is the product of desire: not only does it “carry” it, but is its cause. Meaning is desire. In the same way as in the dream, but with more complexity since a second transformation has taken place, literary discourse is produced by the individual subject for no other reason than to satisfy unconscious desire, that is to say represent – in hallucination – the satisfaction of such desire.

Does all this mean that I am not giving enough importance to the complexity mentioned above, and perhaps even overlooking it? Of course not. The double, ambiguous, nature of representation dispenses us from having to choose between one aspect of the literary object and the other, both should be taken into consideration. No one can deny that the *reception* of literature largely depends on what I have called the “second transformation,” that part of the writing process, *écriture*, whose function is to render legible works of literature. But this is not a reason to remain blind to what happens when discourse is produced. In other terms, I am not forgetting the nature of this transformation, the physical aspect of literature, its “quality,” its rhythms, sounds, musicality, and even the form and colors of its images, but we must also realize that it is precisely the other function of this literary quality to conceal the desire it carries.

This is no doubt why “meaning” is such a difficult notion to handle, and at this point T. S. Eliot's reply when answering a question about *The Waste Land* comes to mind: “It means what it says.” Indeed, we should rather ask what it *does* to us as readers, and what it *did* – probably – to its author,

⁹ Cf. Lacan's statement that language is the condition of the unconscious (and not the other way round!).

¹⁰ And we know that many novelists or playwrights are poets in that sense.

rather than: “What does it mean?” Put in this manner, the question then becomes a question on affect and on desire, it is a direct question about what was very likely implied in the production of a text, it amounts to a question on representation.

What remains, though, is that the whole process was started by a dream, and if “Kubla Khan” cannot be considered as a piece of automatic writing, or as the straight account of a dream, it still retains the traces of what brought about its production. What we are dealing with in this case is the articulation of the original (unconscious) dream-thought with secondary elaboration (and perhaps with what we can call a “literary” elaboration on secondary elaboration, since, to be specific, secondary elaboration is simply the immediate account of the dream).

“Kubla Khan” is made of words, and while their “meaning” in the poem may be difficult to decipher, what they represent – because they bear the traces of unconscious desire – may not be so impossible to discover.

That these words came from “somewhere,” that they were first received by the poet, cannot be questioned: this is a common-place, the words we use were once given us. And at this point, history comes into play – as does intertextuality –, which however still permits me to continue using the Freudian model we have been working with so far. That desire, in dreams as in literary works, cannot be made manifest without the assistance of recent memories or impressions that will be “woven into its texture” simply testifies of the strength of the “censorship imposed by the resistance.” (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 563.)

We know indeed that the material with which the dreamer constructs his or her dream is borrowed from waking life and most often comes from what took place during the day which preceded the occurrence of the dream. The term Freud uses is “day’s residues,” and he insists that whereas these recent impressions form a necessary ingredient in the formation of dreams they should in no way be considered as the motive force which caused the dream:

In my view [...] wishful impulses left over from conscious waking life must be relegated to a secondary position in respect to the formation of dreams. (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 554.)

Written over a hundred years ago, Freud’s monumental, groundbreaking study of dreams started a debate on the concept of “desire” – he mostly used *Wunsch* – that still goes on today. He himself went on and added notes and remarks to his original texts for several decades, sometimes completing previous comments. We may, now that the ground has been cleared and a fundamental structure set up, consider the incidence of unconscious desire on our lives with less hesitation and caution than he seemed to have done at first.¹¹ What I have called, I hope not imprudently, “Freud’s hesitation” can perhaps best be observed in a passage of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, pages 560-562, where a paragraph begins with: “I am now in a position to give a precise account of the part played in dreams by the unconscious wish. I am ready to admit that there is a whole class of dreams the *instigation* of which arises principally or even exclusively from the residues of day-time life [...] But the worry [over my friend’s health (which) had persisted from the previous day] alone could not have made the dream. The *motive force* which the dream required had to be provided by a wish; it was the business of the worry to get hold of a wish to act as the motive force for the dream.”

The whole long section in Chapter VII of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “Wish-Fulfilment,” which deals with the relationship between conscious waking life and the construction of dreams, remains the basis for any discussion on desire,¹² but the relationship between what is conscious and what is unconscious in us, the dynamics of “representation,” is essentially the one we find in his model. What has changed in our views today, in mine in any case, is that the motive force required for the production of a dream

¹¹ And for instance be less inclined than he was to give a decisive role in the production of dreams to conscious waking life wishes that had been left unfulfilled from the previous day.

¹² On the debate on desire, see: Robert Silhol, “On Desire”, *Literature and Psychology*, I.S.P.A., Lisbon 1992, 11-16.

is an unconscious wish and proceeds *from* it to residues of day-time life and not the contrary. What we must not forget is that both factors are needed in the end. The formula is quite simple: no representation without desire, but no desire – accessible to analysis, that is – without representation. Which brings us back to “Kubla Khan” and to the words which compose Coleridge’s poem. They were “received” by the poet, we noted – as all our words are –, but more specifically, here, they were prompted to him by what he had just been reading before falling asleep: Purchas’s *Pilgrimage*.

In 1927, in his impressive and exhaustive study of the books Coleridge had read, John Livingston Lowes set out on a quest to understand the imaginative and poetic processes:

[...] the images [which] rose before [the poet] as *things*, rose up from somewhere. But they had, in the first instance [...] ‘flashed’ from *words*. And it is only through those words that we, in our turn, can arrive at them. Our sole hope, accordingly, of reconstituting any portion of the sleeping imagery which at the moment of the dream was susceptible of movement towards the light, lies again in an examination of the books which Coleridge had been reading. (*The Road to Xanadu*, 357)

The Road to Xanadu provides us with an almost complete list of Coleridge’s readings and constitutes an indispensable source for any student of Coleridge’s poetry; Robert F. Flissner’s more recent *Sources, Meaning, and Influences of Coleridge’s Kubla Khan*, helpfully completes the list and is also a necessary tool.

Lowes’s approach could seem Freudian – from the words to the dream –, but in considering that the images of the dream “‘flashed’ from words” (which, therefore, Coleridge had found elsewhere in the first place), he confused the material of which the dream was made with the motive force which brought it into existence and organized this material into its final shape.¹³

Naturally, what started the dreaming process and, in the case of “Kubla Khan” the poetic process, can only be found in the words of which the poem is made – as in a dream, this is indeed our only material –, but we must then remember, as I have just pointed out, that these words have two sides and must not be taken at their *apparent* face value: the words of the poem, yes, but with the knowledge that there is more in them than meets the eye or ear in as much as they carry what with Freud we can call unconscious desire. Here is our architect. Admittedly, we could not speak of this “force” if it had not left traces of its existence in our dreams, and in discourse more generally, but we shall not mistake the material it chose to organize into a dream or poem with the “primary” cause at the origin of such a choice. True, Coleridge “tells us what was before his eyes at the instant he fell asleep, and the poem begins with the actual words on which his eyes had closed” (Lowes, 358), but this leaves open the question of the reason why the poet was so impressed by the words he had just read. What must have happened – as in the case of all dreams in fact – was that a given sign, image(s) or word(s), signified or signifier, was “chosen” to give expression to a particular desire. For indeed, and this perfectly applies to literature, *what characterizes language is that the reason for its production can be read in it*. We have already met with the “formula:” the mask, though acting as a screen, also carries unconscious desire: *porte/masque*.

I realize that such an affirmation may seem to modify Freud’s presentation of the dynamics involved in the formation of a dream – since for him day’s residues can now and then be considered as having an active role to play at the outset –, but, as I have already tried to explain, the above formula does remain faithful to what is fundamental in the model he left us: the basic structure is the same, and this has a bearing on the way we can look at Lowes’s enterprise today. It may be that Freud, although he always

¹³ What is more interesting for us in Lowes’s statement, and quite valid this time, is the “movement towards the light” to which he refers: this does correspond to the movement of the metaphor, to the path followed by desire to get (masked) expression, it is the second transformation I mentioned above, the final text being a result of this “writing-work,” *travail d’écriture*. (Obviously, Lowes’s statement about images and words would benefit from a debate on Saussure’s *signified* and *signifier*.)

insisted that the role played by day's residues was secondary, gave them too much importance in spite of all, but his complete description of the forces at work in the construction of a dream amounts in the end to illustrating the encounter of an unconscious desire and of a sign. Several passages in *The Interpretation of Dreams* leave no doubt about this:

It will be seen, then, that the day's residues, among which we may now class the indifferent impressions, not only *borrow* something from the *Ucs.* when they succeed in taking a share of the formation of a dream – namely the instinctual force which is at the disposal of the repressed wish – but that they also *offer* the unconscious something indispensable – namely the necessary point of attachment for a transference [*Übertragung*]. (562)¹⁴

Another illustration by Freud of the relationship between desire and representation is the well known “analogy” which describes the relationship between the *entrepreneur* and the *capitalist* in the same section of *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

A daytime thought may very well play the part of entrepreneur for a dream; but the *entrepreneur*, who, as people say, has the idea and the initiative to carry it out, can do nothing without capital; he needs a *capitalist* who can afford the outlay, and the capitalist who provides the psychical outlay for the dreams is invariably and indisputably, whatever may be the thoughts of the previous day, a wish from the unconscious. (561)

In my own formulation, Freud's capitalist becomes the “architect,” and I wouldn't even say that his entrepreneur, from the point of view of psychoanalysis, has any initiative at all. “From the point of view of psychoanalysis” is a necessary restriction, for the simple reason that the sociological dimension of literature cannot be overlooked. In this perspective, day's residues come to be valued for themselves and can be considered as the representatives of history. A research on the historical significance of “Kubla Khan” is not our debate here, but there is no doubt that such an undertaking would have to start with Lowes's colossal enterprise. All that belongs to the romantic tradition in “Kubla Khan” is well known: this is where history played its part. Indeed, while carrying/concealing the desire of an individual subject, literature also bears witness of the time which has produced it: straight and easily legible or complex and metaphoric,¹⁵ it has its own sociological and historical meaning, a testimony which should not be confused with what discourse can tell us about the individual producer.

And what we can learn about the poet as the individual producer of a text, but also about the imaginative process, is to be found in the very words the author “chose” to construct his work with. As I have tried to show throughout, it does not make much difference whether Coleridge consciously chose the words of his poem or simply wrote what the dream dictated to him, what he remembered from it, because in both cases these words had already been submitted to a transformation, a transformation which had taken place within him, the dreamer-poet. It is such a transformation – necessary to the construction of a dream – that Freud managed to analyze, to untie and translate, revealing what must have preceded not only the account of the dream but the dream itself and beyond this the motive force at the source of the whole process of representation.

The psychoanalytic hypothesis – so often verified in each of us – is well known; I only mention it here to emphasize what relationship there exists between dream and language: just as our dreams, our

¹⁴ See also: “We learn from [the psychology of the neuroses] that an unconscious idea is as such quite incapable of entering the preconscious and that it can only exercise any effect there by establishing a connection with an idea which already belongs to the preconscious, by transferring its intensity on to it and by getting itself ‘covered’ by it.” (562)

¹⁵ Along the lines of a structure which is quite similar to the one used to illustrate the way the unconscious individual subject manifests desire – similar but not of the same nature, the remark is important, for the concept of unconscious only applies to the individual.

discourse, in its ambiguity, retains the traces of the desire which caused it to appear. This leads to the question we can now put to “Kubla Khan” at last: “behind” the words, what desire? Can a hidden core of feelings and affects be unveiled which will give the poem the coherence it seems to lack?

II

The words,¹⁶ then, and to begin with, those which recur most often in Coleridge’s poetic narrative. And instead of wondering where they seem to come from, as reminiscences of what the poet had no doubt read, let us try to understand *why* they were selected among many others. I have in the preceding pages given enough reasons – convincing arguments, I hope – not to have to justify the psychoanalytic interpretation on which we are now more specifically about to embark. Should some extra reassurance be needed, however, none other than John Livingston Lowes would provide it:

Attempt at symbolic interpretations of ‘Kubla Khan’ with no relation to dream psychology are common enough. They are for the most part (except to their only begetters) wildly improbable, and it does not fall within my purpose to discuss them. (596)

As is well known by now, in “dream psychology” the theory is that the analyst listens to the words of the patient with what Freud called “suspended, or evenly poised, attention” (*gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit*),¹⁷ and then waits for whatever associations these signs may give rise to in the patient’s mind or memory. In the case of a text written several centuries ago, however, there is no patient on the couch, and the psychoanalytical critic is left with a piece of discourse which, as we saw, “means what it says” but no more. Unless, of course, some logic can be found, some pattern which will give a new coherence to the text or, as in the case of “Kubla Khan,” replace an apparent lack of coherence, and help to account for the specific construction of the discourse under analysis.

Hence, the words: from the words of the poem to their likely origin in the (opium) dream. The analyst, this time, shall endeavor to discover what “links” may have drawn “together a chaos of elements into” what became “Kubla Khan,” (Lowes, 351)¹⁸ and try to establish what the poet’s dream could have been.

A rapid word-count gives the following results:

- WATER as element appears *nine times*: sacred river (3), sea, rills, fountain (2), ocean, waves,
- CAVE or CAVERN, *five times*, and I shall suggest we might want to add Abyssinian to the list,
- the suffix – LESS, *five times*: measureless (2), sunless, ceaseless, lifeless,
- DOME, of pleasure, in air, *five times*,
- the notion of ENCLOSING, girdled round, enfolding, and perhaps circle, *three times*,
- CHASM, so prominent (“that deep romantic chasm”) at the opening of the second *movement*, is repeated *twice*, while MILK, HONEY-DEW and PARADISE, although they only appear *once*, should also be mentioned, I think.

If we now consider the narrative proper and try to listen to it as a “dream psychologist” should, we might get a hint as to what to do with the recurrences in the vocabulary just pointed out above, parti-

¹⁶ Twice, the authenticity of these “words” have been the object of a discussion by Lowes. In the first edition of his *Road to Xanadu* (1927) he convincingly concludes the debate with: “[...] in point of fact there are no variants whatever” (354); the 1930 revised edition of his study repeats the affirmation in the “Addenda and Corrigenda” (See pages 604g-604h).

¹⁷ The notion may seem a vague one, of course, and it is true it describes an ideal attitude; we must however remember that psychoanalysis, as “conjectural science,” has a relationship to knowledge which is relative and paradoxical.

¹⁸ Lowes’s exact sentence is: “And so before threading the labyrinth ahead of us, I mean to recall, for light on our way later, the links which drew together a chaos of elements into shapes of sheer beauty” (351). As for “beauty,” it does not fall within the analyst’s purpose to discuss it.

cularly as they occur at different times in the narration (dome and gardens, chasm, dome and shadow). This narration, which develops in time, can be said to have a dramatic structure, and this causes us to begin with a discussion of the way the poem is divided into parts or stanzas. For when we look at the presentation of the text on the printed or written page, we find out there are several versions of the poem, at least as far as the number of parts are concerned. The 1816 version, which is the one which first appeared in print, has three, whereas the Crewe manuscript, supposedly of 1797, has two, and we know there have been editors who divided the poem into four stanzas.

The interest of the division into two parts, as in the Crewe manuscript, resides in the fact that it introduces a difference of status between the two parts, the first looking more like what “visited” the poet during his dream, while the rest, slightly shorter, could be taken for a conscious addition, though not really an interpretation. This indeed might well be the significance of such a division. But we could also have a “dream” in two parts, or two Acts, and *then* the more or less conscious addition. In fact, there is no way to tell and we must be content with a first long part – which I shall divide into two dramatic “moments” – and a sequel of twenty four lines which either formed part of the dream proper or were the result of an association to it, an afterthought directly related to the dream and therefore made of the same unconscious material. As for the degree of consciousness involved in the composition, the psychoanalytic critic needn’t take part in the quarrel since he is mainly concerned with the words of the poems and its general movement. The only thing we can be certain of is that there is an obvious difference between the first two “moments” of the narration and the last twenty four lines, if only because the subject of the narration appears in that third part active, at least in his wishes or regrets, and no longer an observer only.

If we examine the temporal structure, then, I take it we can distinguish three moments in the dream-poem, three tableaux representing the memory of what was dreamt or the associations it brought about, roughly: the palace and its gardens; the romantic chasm and the mighty fountain; the reconstruction, reproduction from another angle, of the dome of pleasure with the damsel and her dulcimer and “he” who has “drunk the milk of Paradise.”

Between these three main movements, themselves susceptible to be sub-divided, what relationship? If one accepts the hypothesis that a secret, invisible, thread runs through the various parts of which “Kubla Khan” is made, it can be the task of the analyst to discover what coherence unites these apparently disconnected images or tableaux, thus getting nearer to an understanding of the fantasy that was at the source of the actual dream, or even reverie, which in the end resulted in the written poem.

It is not too difficult to identify the first eleven lines of “Kubla Khan” as a representation of paradise: a *palace of pleasure* is being *built* and magnificent *gardens* complete the picture; on this all critics agree, if only because the poem ends with the word “Paradise,” a more than probable testimony of the influence of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* on Coleridge’s poem.¹⁹

With the hope that the exotic figure of the oriental ruler can later find a suitable place in the overall structure of the poem, I shall for the moment leave the interpretation of the opening line, and start with a feature I find easy to analyze. Kubla Khan’s palace, then, but Coleridge wrote “*dome*,” which is not so frequent to describe a palace or mansion, and then he added “*pleasure*” to it, which resulted in “pleasure dome.” My own spontaneous reading, focussing on “dome” or taking “dome” and “pleasure” as if it constituted a single unit, a single sign, saw a woman’s breast in the image and it is true that the idea of curved lines conveyed here may lead to such an interpretation: a dome susceptible to give me pleasure. Such a reading is an obvious one and has been made by some critics (House, 118; Flissner, 10), although others have deplored the simplicity of the interpretation (Schneider, 1975, 9-10; Fruman, 396):

¹⁹ This has been noted by most commentators; see for instance: “*Paradise Lost* [is] a poem that dominated his imagination for most of his life. The Abyssinian Kings and mount Amara appear in the fourth book of Milton’s epic, and this book was particularly well known to Coleridge [...]” (Norman Fruman, *Coleridge: The Damaged Angel*, 344.)

[...] the dome is breast-shaped, the caves are the womb and the river a fertility symbol [...] The attraction of this kind of criticism is that it becomes so easy once you get the knack of it. (Patricia M. Adair, 3)²⁰

Easy or not, too obvious, an interpretation is not to be judged by such yardsticks, but by the way it contributes to the construction of a coherent, plausible pattern. If the “pleasure-dome” were a breast – or simply a breast – what place would the Khan occupy in the picture? For it is he who had the “pleasure-dome” built, and then what are we to do with the “sacred river” and the “caverns” which follow close by? Many convincing interpretations have been offered of “caves” and of “caverns,” and they are often similar, but the place of this particular symbol within the general structure has not been really specified. However, to speak of an image of convexity (“dome”) followed by an image of concavity (“caverns”) may help us to arrive at a more satisfactory explanation (Shelton, 39; Flissner, 11). Indeed, if I study the six lines of the second part of the stanza, where fertility is mentioned and where grounds are “girdled” round, my own association is no longer with breasts but with the body of a pregnant woman. This is reinforced by the way the gardens on the seventh line are surrounded “with walls and towers,” although the specific words are “girdled round.” A fairly rare English word coming from the French may be of help at this point; I am referring to the word *enceinte*, whose definition is: “The space within the ramparts of a fortification.” This definition quite corresponds to “girdled round,” and we also know how a girdle is worn: it is “something that encircles as belt or zone” the dictionary says. “Walls and towers” may have to be interpreted, of course, but the general idea conveyed here does seem to be that of a mother to be – *une femme enceinte*. This would indeed account for the production of “dome,” and also of “fertile ground,” and perhaps of “blossomed” and “incense bearing-tree,” which are references to life. “Enfolding,” in any case, at the end of the stanza, somewhat resumes the idea conveyed by “girdled” and is one more argument in favor of the above interpretation. All this if we are to go by the 1816 published version of the poem, since we know that the Crewe manuscript has “compass’d” instead of “girdled,” and that “compass’d” can be considered as coming directly from Purchas’s “encompassing sixteene miles of plaine ground with a wall.”²¹ I think it can safely be argued that the change from “compass’d” to “girdled” is significant and tells of an insistent unconscious desire.

Thus does the representation of Paradise assume a concrete dimension, from convexity to concavity: the pleasure-dome and its gardens can be considered as an image of life before birth.

Central to the unconscious fantasy, the secret presence of a pregnant woman suggests the imagined or reminisced happiness of “life” in the maternal womb, and perfect union. This might explain the luxuriance of the scenery – we are in a closed “space” where things grow –, and also the prevalence of water (river, sea, rills) in this first stanza, which can be interpreted as allusions to the prime source of life. No doubt over-determined, “Alph, the sacred river,”²² naturally finds its place in the tableau, evoking as it does the alpha, the beginning of all things, as of all the letters in the alphabet. As for “caverns,” in this context, exactly in the same way as the gardens are surrounded – and thus protected – with walls and towers, it can be said to be a place offering protection, a place inside which one feels safe, and indeed “girdled” and “enfolding” are not far from *containing*.

²⁰ See also, among others: “If rounded mountains always in human experience must mean breasts and caverns always wombs [...]” (Elizabeth Schneider, *Coleridge, Opium and Kubla Khan*, 9-10.)

²¹ On the Crewe manuscript, see: T. Shelton and T. C. Skeat.

Here is Purchas’s text: “In Xaindu [or Xamdu] did Cublai Can build a stately Pallace, encompassing sixteene miles of plaine ground with a wall; wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant Springs, delightful streames and allsorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the midst thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure [...]” Coleridge did not keep “beasts of chase and game”: could this be a sign that no one else but subject and mother were needed in the dream?

²² It may come from Milton and/or represent at once the Ganges and the Nile – which can be said to be “rivers of life” in fact –, but its presence in the poem can also be explained by its symbolic value, a general reference to origins. See Lowes (372), and also Flissner: “[...] the sacred river has also associations with the river Alpheus [...]” (11). (The latter mentions “J. B. Beer’s awareness that the term Alph has its affinities with the Hebrew *Aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet again [...]”)

The “musical” nature of this stanza, with such a play on repetition:

W a n a d u	K u b l a K h a n
d o m e	d e c r e e
r i v e r	r a n
s u n l e s s	s e a,

that is to say on a binary play on sounds, may well have its origin in this dream where infant and mother are one (one sound, two persons). But there is no certainty in this; I simply mention duality as a possible addition to the already existing stylistic commentaries of Coleridge’s poem.

Can we go as far as saying that the two phrases “measureless to man” and “sunless sea” allude to the absence of a third person – one thinks of the father, naturally –, making of this first part of the poem a “*scène à deux*” where infant and mother enjoy a moment of complete and ideal fusion? I take the insistence on *-less* as a sign that the presence of a third person is not desired. Psychoanalysis often sees in *sun* a reference to the father figure, whereas sea can be read as a symbol of what is maternal; in the phrase we are analyzing everything points to an unconscious wish to keep the father away. I realize such an interpretation may be considered as an over-simplification by many, but I have not found any other way to explain the meaning of this obvious presentation of a sea devoid of sun, a sea *without* the sun. This interpretation, besides, might help to explain the sacredness of the river “Alph.”

Still in the same line of interpretation, the insistence of the diphthong /ai/, repeated four times in the phrase “So twice five miles of fertile ground,” can be taken for a sign of the same desire to be alone with the mother, and marks the triumph of the infant, I, whom we can then consider as the unconscious subject of the fantasy on which the poem rests. We know that those “twice fives miles” are the result of a correction, since the Crewe manuscript has “Twice six miles” (which is nearer to the “sixteene miles” in Purchas’s *Pilgrimage*), and though euphony has undoubtedly gained by the modification there is no reason not to see an effect of desire in it, particularly as “twice” recalls the duality we have already noted.

The amorous face-to-face of mother and infant might now help us to interpret the first five lines of “Kubla Khan.” Should this interpretation be accepted, the symmetry noted above could then be taken as a representation of the “mirror stage.” Conjectural as it may be, such an analysis, I think, deserves to be mentioned; I shall simply insist on the fact that it is an hypothesis and as such does not imply any certainty.

Precisely because of this fusion between mother and child, however, the two opening lines of the poem now lend themselves to another interpretation, an interpretation which completes the one above in fact and is in no way contradictory to it.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree

If we accept the view that a fantasy of fusion constitutes the core of the first part of the dream-poem, we shall not be surprised to find out that the actual unfolding of the fantasy is quite simply preceded by a representation of conception: it is indeed the necessary condition of what is to follow and it was the *Khan*, after all, who erected the pleasure-dome!

a a u did u a a
decree

Coleridge's talent, no doubt, is responsible for such enchanting symmetry, but there is really no contradiction in reading it as an unconscious representation of the parental couple. And because of "did" and of "decree," in this couple where *Xa* stands opposite the repeated cutting sound of *K*, the powerful Khan may be seen as the active parent. Some critics, after all, in their attempt to make of "Kubla Khan" an unfinished work, have stressed the power of the oriental ruler: he is the one who "can," and stands thus in opposition to the son who proves incapable of finishing his poem (Adair, 137; Flissner, 8). Whether we are dealing with a fragment or on the contrary with a complete poem – which is the view I take –, this is in any case a convenient way to acknowledge the oedipal nature of the fantasy at work in "Kubla Khan."

In the end, what mainly matters is the thematic unity of this first "stanza." Palace and gardens form the two aspects – two again – of a single idea: life before birth as paradise. In this fantasy of fusion, the happy state when one is safely "held," "contained," does seem to have been the unconscious desire at the origin of this first moment of the dream-poem.²³

With the next "stanza," however, it seems such harmony is destroyed. The exclamation with which it opens dramatically heralds a change of mood and marks an interruption – "But oh!" The obvious "break" has been witnessed by all, although, it is true, there is no gap after the eleventh line in the handwritten Crewe manuscript.

In the first five lines of this second "movement," I feel the ambiguity gradually disappears: we have moved from Fusion, from the One, to the Two, as can be seen in the "*woman* wailing for her demon lover!" The "chasm" is "deep" but also "romantic," the "place" is "savage" but also "holy and enchanted," and the "waning moon" is "haunted." The One of the fusion of mother and child – they were two, but *in One* – has been replaced by the couple of lovers. The two principal actors, this time, play another part, and in this new scene the infant-to-be-born is only present as a witness.

I have analyzed a similar example of "primal scene" when interpreting the first line of "Kubla Khan," but this time there is a difference: whereas the first instance seemed to correspond to the unconscious meaning Coleridge gave to the phonetic opposition he read in the "Xaindu [or Xamdu]" / "Cublai Can" of Purchas's text, transforming it into a representation of conception, in the second instance, the love scene he describes is much more explicit, and sensuality is not absent from it ("savage," "demon-lover"). The infant, as I claim, is still the *subject* of the narrative we are studying, but it has no part in the amorous embrace it describes²⁴, and from the One to the Two it has suffered a loss of status. "Now there are three of us," the paternal voice says. This may be enough to explain the break we have felt – which I have felt at any rate – between what we can call the first and second stanzas of "Kubla Khan." And there is probably more in "chasm" than this.

Once again, the dictionary is very helpful: "**Chasm:** a cleft, a fissure, a rent, a yawning gulf," and also "a break in continuity." From cleft to yawning gulf: we have here the two sides of the signifier *chasm*. "Cleft," I read as a reference to the feminine body,²⁵ while "yawning gulf" makes me think of

²³ I have no serious explanation for "gardens *bright* with *sinuous* rills" (a phallic snake?) or for "*sunny* spots of *greenery*" (could this mark the presence of the son?). As for "forests *ancient* as the hills," could it be a reference to elders? "*Incense-bearing*" will be tentatively interpreted later as a preparation for a manifestation of anger.

²⁴ Naturally, the "child" who witnessed, and here reports, the "scene" may well have identified with one of the active participants, but if this may help to explain the ambiguity still somewhat present in the passage, it is nevertheless a secondary aspect of the situation, the essential pleasure being in seeing, or hearing, rather than in doing.

²⁵ Which means that "[...] which slanted / Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover," because of "slant" and of "cover," can perhaps be accepted as a representation of the *mons veneris*. Commenting, page 26, Suther's identification of "a cedarn cover" with pubic hair, Flissner finds the interpretation to be a "far-fetched association to most readers," but has nevertheless the merit of mentioning it. Reuven Tsur in his *The Road to Kubla Khan: A Cognitive Approach*, discusses this issue page 31. About the first part of the poem, Fruman writes: "[...] a pleasure-dome in the vicinity of 'caverns measureless to man' suggests far more the *mons veneris*, especially as we hear at once of 'fertile' grounds and 'forests,' almost classic symbols for primary sexual terrain." (396).

destruction, of loss of course, of castration, but also, more philosophically, brings about the idea dear to phenomenology, and central to modern psychoanalysis, of the utter estrangement of the subject, ~~S~~, that is to say the idea of an incommensurable distance between world and subject, Lacan's *real* in fact. The relationship between psychoanalysis and philosophy here becomes evident:

The schism which science had made between subject and object, man's consciousness and the surrounding world, Coleridge struggled all his life to close, both in poetry and in philosophy. (Adair, 7)

Such a structure – the two “sides” of the Freudian “bar” – is quite compatible with the idea that “sacred river” represents those forgotten memories which later reappear on the surface of our lives.

The “deep romantic chasm,” in the first line of this second stanza, may have retained some ambiguity – the object observed can also be desired by the subject –, but not so the second occurrence of the term. The word opens a scene of disruption – a rushing waterfall – not unlike an earthquake or a volcanic eruption: “ceaseless turmoil,” “half-intermittent burst,” “huge fragments” which vault “like rebounding hail,” “rocks” which are “dancing,” all this violently projected. In this second scene, the liquid element is still present, but I do not think it stands for the same object, at least for a while, as the one which ran sinuously and so peacefully through the bright gardens of the first stanza and which I identified as related to fertility and to the mother.

For the psychoanalyst, the details of such a scene of violence are not difficult to decipher, especially as they were preceded by an allusion to a “woman wailing for her demon lover” where we saw a representation of the primal scene. The various references to a liquid (“seething”), to respiration (“this earth in fast thick pants [...] breathing”), and the explicit “swift half-intermittent burst” form a vivid representation of the culminating excitement in the sexual act.²⁶ Is also present in the scene the violence imagined by the child who has reconstructed it or been a witness to it, for the “mighty fountain” is “forced.” But there is more, and the infant-yet-to-be, who can nevertheless have been a witness also, reconstructs the aggression he himself has suffered, the “primal scene” being this time experienced from the inside as it were.²⁷ This is in any case the only explanation I have for the apparition in the dream-poem of words such as “fragments” which vault “like rebounding hail,” and “chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail.” The forcibleness which is at the heart of these two lines – and “*thresher*” and “*flail*” are not without implying some violence – even acquires a quasi ontological dimension if one cares to look at the details of the scene: not only can “grain” be interpreted as a possible reference to conception, but the operation of threshing, by which the grain is separated from the original wheat, can be read as an unconscious allusion to the loss of fusion. Thus is Paradise lost, the child disturbed, and about to be thrown into the cold world: we are not too far from those readings which see a representation of birth, or of the Fall in the passage (Gerber, 327; Flissner, 20).

Was the violence witnessed, or suffered, so unbearable that it had to be followed by a moment of calm?

*Fives miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran.*

Can we interpret these repetitions, of sounds (/ai/, /m/, /r/) and images (meandering, mazy motion, wood and dale, sacred river), as signs of a yearning for a lost happiness, signs of a desire to *return to*

²⁶ I doubt whether such a representation was consciously devised and it is not possible to decide whether it was or not – these may well be images in a dream –, but what matters in the end is that the terms used in the description of a natural upheaval so perfectly correspond to the description of an orgasm.

²⁷ Although the issue he discusses is quite different, Freud, in “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis,” *Standard Edition XVII*, describes such a fantasy and also speaks of “a wish to be inside the mother's womb.” (582)

the peaceful atmosphere of the beginning? Or perhaps simply an attempt to deny the “scene”? The correspondence deserves notice. Could the play between /ai/ and /m/ be a reminder of the happy fusion of child and mother with which the poem started? Or should we simply speak of resignation, of submission to the Law? It is not possible to say. (And of course identification with one of the actors of the “scene” is always possible; in which case a lull after the sexual storm would be an acceptable reading; this is for each reader to decide.)

What is certain is that the passage conveniently introduces the last four lines of the “stanza.” So far, with the exception of “sacred river,” the images have been repeated but not the words, and I find significant that “caverns measureless to man” should be reproduced word for word, as opposed to the rest. And then “-less,” (“*devoid of, free from*”) is quite explicit. There seems to be some insistence, here, a strong desire, I think, to exclude the father from the scene: one wishes the maternal “caverns” to be out of reach for him, and this might explain “man.” Was *incense* in “incense-bearing tree” a preparation for this? Quite naturally, after the dual relationship with the mother comes the entry into the oedipal triangle.

I cannot tell why the “sacred river” is made to *sink* “in tumult to a lifeless ocean,”²⁸ but “this tumult” is also what Kubla hears:

And ‘mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

and I feel very much tempted to interpret the prophecy of “war” as expressing an aggressive oedipal wish (together with the anxiety that may result in the child: the menace aimed at Kubla producing “Ancestral voices” afterwards). This might explain why “fear,” which had first been written on the Crewe manuscript, was crossed by Coleridge’s hand and replaced by “far,” more innocuous and more difficult to interpret.

With the third stanza, the mood changes and the interruption, this time, seems indisputable. What is left of the dome of pleasure is now only a “shadow,” floating “midway on the waves,” and this first word curiously describes the scene as less real, more insubstantial even, than the actual dream that preceded it. The “fountain and the caves” are still here, perhaps also floating “midway on the waves,” but this “sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice” is a “miracle,” and the word “vision” in a moment will appear. It is as if the dreamer, remembering he had a dream, were trying to recapture it, perhaps vaguely realizing that this could not be achieved. The conditional now becomes the prevailing mode: “Could I revive,” “I would build,” “And all [...] should see” or “cry.” True, now, the voice of the “subject” can be heard: suddenly it seems we are no longer in the dream itself, although, as a consequence, curiously, we may have lost some of the certainty, of the reality, of the previous lines. I imagine the poet abandoning himself to what has now become his *day-dream*, and hallucinating the images which had just visited him, trying in vain to reconstruct his experience with words (notice how he still uses the past tense). One can, of course, speak of a greater distance, now, between the poet and his dream, and even interpret this last part of “Kubla Khan” as a piece of conscious writing. Apparently acknowledging the nature of the first thirty lines of “Kubla Khan,” Coleridge repeats with some new words and images what he said was first dictated to him. A repetition – for it is not an interpretation –, it has nevertheless recourse to some additions in the vocabulary: *shadow, floating and midway, mingled, a miracle, a rare device*, and they could possibly – among other things – be taken as signs of a greater consciousness. No doubt, in this last part, *secondary elaboration* was even more active than in the rest of the poem – and I should perhaps speak of something like a *literary elaboration*, an attempt at remembering and translating, which

²⁸ Can we see in the sentence the mark of a desire of aggression towards the mother? Would she be considered as having betrayed the infant? After the “scene,” or after the child’s birth, is she deemed no longer worthy of interest? Or can we say that “lifeless ocean” refers to the mother after she has given birth? These are questions.

could be considered as the elaboration of the previous unconscious elaboration. For psychoanalysis, however, the difference is slight and we still have an elaboration where unconscious desire has been at work, with the “architect” we have already met still in control. In the end, this is another oneiric re-creation of Paradise.

The earthly paradise with its realistic fullness and matter-of-fact details becomes a fleeting vision, very much like a prenatal or otherworldly experience that the speaker is attempting in vain to recapture. (Tsur, 1987, 74)

What has changed, though, is that it is *another* representation, and this new representation does not claim to be other than it is. The dream, very likely, has left some traces in the vocabulary; we have recognized “fountain” and “caves,” and “float[ing] midway on the waves” may express a nostalgia for the maternal waters, while “mingled” may recall fusion, but these are only images of a past happiness, words, words... If dreams are under no other rule than that of the “Pleasure Principle,” it is the “Reality Principle” – after the “Fall” – that now dictates its law. Hence what we can read as the poet’s (perhaps not-so-conscious) acknowledgement that... it was only a dream... and that the dome will not be rebuilt.

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight ‘twould win me
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! Those caves of ice!

There are other signs, for language has not lost its privilege and still *represents*. Such is the symbolical dimension of human discourse. “In the 1816 version, notes Norman Fruman, the line ending with ‘dulcimer’ is the only unrimed line in the poem,” and he sees ‘Amora’ “as a disguise for ‘Amara’,” concluding that “from ‘Amora’ to ‘Abora’ was a single brilliant step [...]” (343) Was this “brilliant step” meant to provide a rhyme for “dulcimer”? What is certain is that the latter had to stay and I take this as proof of its importance. Although a “dulcimer” is a real instrument, I also read *sweet* and *mother* in it, and “sunny,” which we have already met, may come from *son*, while “Abyssinian,” because of *abyss*, could be a reminder of the “caverns” of the first part of the poem. Much has been written about “Mount Abora”, which was first “Amara” as in Milton, then “Amora,” to finally become “Abora” which is not without connoting the idea of origin (*-ab*), a reference to our beginnings. Thus are being repeated, with some slight modifications, the terms of the first two parts; the poet’s “vision” is now a reconstruction of what has been lost, and this is not simply the dream itself.

Could we say that because of this loss, precisely, what was once the object of the poet’s desire is now presented under quite a different light? I mentioned slight modifications – as if the poet were saying: “This is no longer a dream.” – , but there is a last addition that I have not yet mentioned and which could be of greater significance. Indeed, how can we explain “caves of *ice*” which all of a sudden appears in this last stanza? Was “hail,” in a context of violence, further up, a preparation for this? Coleridge wrote the word twice, each time accompanied by “sunny (pleasure-) dome.” Is this a way for the child, the son, to speak of what he has lived as an abandonment? Only the author as “patient” could tell, but the interpretation is tempting.

Such an interpretation would help to explain the production of the last seven lines of the poem, which to me, as a reader, constitute at first sight a very strange addition. And yet we must suppose – psychoanalysis insists – that there is a link somehow.

And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!

Is there something of an elementary nature in *hearing*, in *seeing*, and in *crying*? Could the “caves of ice” be a symbolical portrait of the refusing mother?

The repeated exclamation still remains mysterious. What danger is here pointed out? One cannot

help, of course, remembering the words of the Wedding-Guest: "I fear thee, ancient Mariner!" and there may be an echo of this in "holy dread." At the close of this poem on fusion and loss, could this ghost-like apparition be an image of Death?²⁹ And it is true that the ancient Mariner was a witness to so many deaths and even encountered "The Night-mare Life-in-Death." We can only guess and what is to be feared will have to remain mysterious. I see in the passage a general reminder of our human condition and read the "flashing eyes" and the "floating hair" as allusions to lunacy. But the strange portrait can also simply express the despair of the forlorn infant, and it is just as tragic.

His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

An obvious echo of Milton's great poem, the word which closes "Kubla Khan" also reveals the reason for such a choice. As do the last two lines: "honey-dew," "the milk of Paradise," this is what has been lost and shall not be recovered. "Kubla Khan" is a poem about separation and loss.

But we must go beyond a consideration on contents – not so difficult to analyze, after all, if the various images are taken one by one –, and try to find out if we can give a satisfactory answer to the question of the coherence of the whole narrative. This brings about the idea that, like a tale or story, "Kubla Khan" develops in time. If we look at the dramatic structure of the poem we can see that its different parts, three, I think, are organized in a temporal sequence. The sequence is easy to follow: after *fusion* with the mother and after the *loss of the One*, comes this *poetic re-creation* of what has been lost, this hope that the palace can be built again and the Abyssinian maid revived. With words. *Represent*, that is what language does, along with dream and hallucination. The first two parts were also made of words, of course, but those had been a translation of the images in the dream, a reminiscence, and possibly something like the faithful rendering of an experience. And now, when the subject expresses himself more audibly, "with music loud and long," and says "I," he recreates "in air" Kubla's "sunny" pleasure dome. "'Kubla Khan' is a poem about poetry." (Beer, 118)³⁰

This should make us realize what a strange "object" Coleridge's poem is, how literary in its nature, and how unique, how archetypal. "Kubla Khan" is a poem *about the poetic function* without any doubt, "a poem embodying some ideas about the power of art," (Fruman, 395)³¹ particularly if we understand this function as representation, discourse, *parole*. It is a poem about language, that is to say about man's ability to replace "things" with words, and it is not indifferent that the whole process of its production, of its writing, should have been set in motion by a dream.

Above and beyond the images and details of the narration, "Kubla Khan" expresses in its dramatic structure the very essence of the psychoanalytical discovery, even to its latest developments some two hundred years after the poem was written (or dictated by a dream): it is Freudian, Kleinian, and Lacanian. Fusion, loss, and recovery through hallucination, its three "Acts" constitute a superb metaphor of what modern psychoanalysis says of language. An *Urpoem* indeed, an archetype which tells us that the spoken word has the structure of the dream.

²⁹ Which incites me to venture the hypothesis that the "Abyssinian maid" could also be read as an image of death, an image of return to the mother's body. One cannot tell, of course.

³⁰ Here is John Beer's complete sentence: "Kubla's enterprise can itself be seen as an analogue of the poetic. In such terms, 'Kubla Khan' is a poem about poetry."

³¹ "[...] the poem's main subject is poetry." (J. Shelton, 41.) For Humphry House, in his *Coleridge*, (1953) "Kubla Khan" constitutes "a description, rounded and complete of 'the act of poetic creation'."

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Healing from trauma in Louise Gluck's poems

MARY KATE AZCUY (*)

Louise Gluck's contemporary, American poetry includes the mythic, nature, and her personal struggles that she openly shares with her readers. Due to the loss of a sibling, mother alienation, survivor guilt, and subsequent anorexia, she attended psychoanalysis for many years. Gluck turned to writing as therapy to come to terms with the truth. She has warned readers not to find her speakers purely autobiographical, yet looking at her essays, *Proofs and Theories: Essays on Poetry*, one cannot help but find her life's story reflected in her poems.

These stories include the traumas that Louise Gluck suffers that stem from the initial trauma to her mother, whose child died; Gluck refers to herself as the "replacement child," a role where she suffers as the survivor, her mother's next child. There exists generational trauma and subsequent generational family drama caused by this initial stressor. With the mother's disassociation from Gluck, arrives Gluck's own disassociation in body dysmorphic disorder, anorexia nervosa, and struggles with intimacy. Gluck's work reflects these lifelong struggles: from her first collection in 1968 to the present, where her latest book *Averno* finds her in solitude and quiet contemplation after being re-traumatized by the events of September 11, 2001.

Gluck's childhood traumas and loss tie into Jennifer J. Freyd's idea of betrayal trauma. According to Freyd, betrayal trauma involves "betrayal by someone on whom you depend for survival (as a child to a parent) [which] may produce consequences similar to those from more obviously life-threatening traumas" (qtd. in Baldwin). The survivor of betrayal trauma, here a child, needs to find ways to survive under such circumstances since a complete break might produce less care and threaten the child's survival, therefore, creating disassociation but not amnesia to survive the oxymoronic neglectful care. Freyd's research student Anne Pujol Prince detects and predicts the significance of Post-Traumatic-Stress Disorder within this range of betrayal trauma. Her research *Trauma and Post-traumatic Response* discusses coping after such trauma, the outcomes, and subsequent responses. For Gluck, anorexia, self-starvation, becomes a way to control suffering as well as to gain mother's attention as the next dying child. Gluck's solution to trauma comes via writing poetry and sharing her struggles with the reader to heal in observations of nature and mechanisms of the mythic.

By creating parallels between landscape and self, Gluck finds a safe forum for self-exploration. Self-discovery occurs in precise observation and honest writing. Although scholars agree that Gluck defines a post-confessional poetry, her work evolves from the infamous Confessionals Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath. Gluck credits confessional poets' scientific inquiry and details in understanding traumatic events and self (*Proofs* 35). Confessional exploration aids Gluck's inner-dialogues and supports her

willingness in disclosing her life-story and traumas via images in nature, sharing these traumas with the reader, and healing in the process, aided by the cyclical union with her reader.

Landscape connects the writer and the reader in the poetic-organism's cyclical nature: in summary of Harold Bloom, the poet reads; the poet writes; the poem is written; the reader reads, and the poet finds satisfaction and recreation in poetic re-experience and unification (Bloom 25). Gluck discusses poetry in terms of readership, bridging poet, poem, and reader, and in creating an organic whole, where the poet makes a cyclical and symbiotic relationship live and starts the unification of self (*Proofs* 92). The poet does not want to enter the reader, but rather just share the experience in vision (92). Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, finds that the reader and writer develop a novice-mentor relationship, and the reader vicariously acts as poet in recreating a new vision in re-experience (xxvi, xxx).

Sections of three poems represent struggles that Gluck survives: sibling loss, mother-loss, difficulties with intimacy, and anorexia. In her poetry these issues are reflected onto landscape to aid in protective distance without disassociation, where it feels safer for the writer to access and to re-experience the traumatic situations while recovering and healing via the relationship with the reader, nature, and oftentimes myth.

Sibling loss becomes the locus in Gluck's collection *Descending Figure* that continues reflecting Gluck's life-long struggle with loss. The title poem "Descending Figure" contains questions regarding mortality, specifically death of children, which generates an endless flow of questions that the reader must answer. This poem addresses the initiating stressor upon her family, mother, and self.

From her personal essay "Death and Absence" from her collection *Proofs & Theories*, Gluck discusses the tragic effects of her sibling's death, the initial traumatic event:

I have always been, in one way or another, obsessed with sisters, the dead and the living both. The dead sister died before I was born. Her death was not my experience, but her absence was. Her death let me be born. I saw myself as her substitute, which produced in me a profound obligation toward my mother, and a frantic desire to remedy her every distress. I took it all personally: every shadow that crossed her face proved my insufficiency; the birth of my younger sister proved this yet more concretely. At the same time, I took on the guilty responsibility of the survivor. (127)

Part I of "Descending Figure," "The Wanderer," finds Gluck the child playing in the street, understanding mother's alienation to her children and her own role, as the replacement for the dead sibling: "I was playing in the dark street with my other sister, / whom death had made so lonely" (*First Four* 113).

In this survivorship and inheritance of a lost life comes the burden of living a life for the dead and as cure for the living. Her mother's lack of healing moves onto Gluck, which in turn creates and agitates Gluck's own obsessive-compulsive disorder, primarily surrounding her mother.

Part II "The Sick Child" shows Gluck's PTSD and subsequent hypervigilance regarding her own child. A mother watches her child sleep, unable to rest, waiting for the healthy child to die: "And the child / Relaxes in her mother's arms. / The mother does not sleep; / She stares" (114). Gluck does not understand how to deal with the possible loss of a child, considering the repercussions to herself and her mother from a similar loss. Here the mother watches the child and questions the logic of attachment, the same attachment disorder her mother suffered.

By spring the child will die.
Then it is wrong, wrong
To hold her –
Let her be alone,
Without memory, as the others wake. (114)

Gluck explains the conflict and trauma of loss that was agitated and remembered after Gluck gave birth:

... at thirty, I had a child myself. The wild, protective, terrified love I felt for my son – that

maternal love which, in being obsessed with protection, is obsessed with harm – transformed itself, over three years, into an analogous act of mourning... [the poem] means, also, to study maternal love, which continued to seem to me appalling, though I felt it. (*Proofs* 127)

In Part III, “For My Sister,” the narrative discloses Gluck’s sister’s death as a haunting reality for the living. The child’s death-image retrieves Gluck’s shadow self, in Jungian terms, and parallels inner compassion for the dead:

Far away my sister is moving in her crib.
The dead ones are like that,
always the last to quiet.
Because, however long they lie in the earth,
they will not learn to speak
but remain uncertainly pressing against the wooden bars,
so small the leaves hold them down.
Now, if she had a voice,
the cries of thunder would be beginning.
I should go to her;
perhaps if I sang very softly,
her skin so white,
her head covered with black feather (*First Four* 115)

The dead child is eternally trapped, imprisoned, and safe as earth’s infant within a mythic mother – voiceless – undeveloped, not Zeus’ powerful hidden cries, instead the muted. Gluck, a feminist, often portrays the voiceless female trapped in a patriarchal earth-image that kills instead of nurtures. Here, the infant Gluck will become Gluck’s adult Persephone who she continues to write about, now half with mother, and half in Hell, still embraced by PTSD, half in light and half, dormant in darkness.

Here, Gluck perceives the dead child as restless, disobedient, and tossing. This fight to free oneself from mother earth parallels Gluck’s conflicting struggle in attachment disorder to free herself from mother, who she wants, and to free herself from her sister’s death to find self-identity. This also depicts Gluck’s mother’s struggle to attach to the living-child Louise. The dead baby’s useless struggle in death and Gluck’s own inability for survival in life show her inability to free herself from literal survivorship, guilt for surviving, as caretaker of her mother, and suffering in her own worry as a mother looking back on someone’s lost child.

Acceptance and understanding ease the journey. Writing and having the words “to speak” become the tools that save and free Gluck: “Now, if she had a voice, / the cries of hunger would be beginning” (115). If the dead sister developed beyond infancy, words would give her freedom, as life would have freed the mother and Gluck from trauma, alienation, and suffering. Gluck yearns for freedom from death, depth, and shadow. The disturbing images of lost innocence, the downy-haired infant held down by leaves, haunting the poet’s inner being, a dark place she obsesses about. She sees this inner and outer haunting in landscape and the life cycle. Gluck says the poem “is saturated with a mother’s grief and fearfulness and a haunted child’s compulsive compensation” (*Proofs* 127).

This initial stressor ties to suffering, betrayal trauma, and survivor guilt that Gluck felt regarding her sibling’s early death and her guilt and subsequent attachment disorder to her mother. Mother-loss haunts images in Gluck’s poetry.

Gluck’s very powerful mother-daughter poem “My Life Before Dawn” gives graphic, physical images of birth and explains how mother-love creates her suffering: “Sometimes at night I think of how we did / It, me nailed in her like steel...” (*First Four* 28). The enwombed child becomes a threatening, aggressive invasion. Gluck acknowledges her mother’s pain and trauma in life from losing the child before Gluck, so this reactionary child seems shamed and enraged, failing to resurrect the dead, erase loss, or satisfy. Gluck quickly understands self in that recovery: “... I told her Sorry baby you have had / Your share. (I found her stain had dried into my hair.)” (28).

Physical connection to mother and womb relieves Gluck's shame in remembering a safety she now fears:

She cried. Which still does not explain my nightmares:
How she surges like her yeast dough through the door –
way shrieking It is I, love, back in living color
After all these years. (28)

The return to the painful longing for mother seems a nightmare to the maturing Gluck. Elizabeth Dodd's analysis, *The Veiled Mirror and the Woman Poet*, understands the poem as an aggressive sexual encounter (157-158) and many of Gluck's poems disclose her difficulties with intimacy and sometimes offensive sexual interactions with male lovers that replicate this mother/daughter struggle in alienation, shame, and disconnection. Following Dodd's thesis, the male narrator cites the "jilted lover," (157), even with this alternate interpretation, I see that the mother returns like a "jilted lover," (157) demanding more from a stranger with whom she has spent the night, the stranger child. Or, lover and mother enveloped onto each other, both equal of betrayal to Gluck. Whichever situation, she sees the need to separate from mother, forgive, and heal in order to move forward.

Her healing journey, self-explanation, and analysis discovered honest writing as her cure. Gluck feared the cure would kill the artist, a fear shared by the great poet Anne Sexton who worried that thorezin, used to treat her borderline personality disorder, modified her creativity. Gluck claims that searching for self in "the world mirrors the self" and is courageous and painful, when personal experience becomes confessional, poetic fodder (*Proofs* 23). She warns that "The poet, writing, is simultaneously so caked in his materials and unconstrained by them: personal circumstance may prompt art, but the actual making of art is a revenge on circumstance" (25), and writing "past" poetry, encourages a sense of accomplishment, "the victory of courage over dark matter" (25).

Gluck's multiple years of analysis were not isolated to breaking from mother, mother's betrayal, and her own survivor guilt, but from the detachment she created to mimic death, the dying-child, searching for mother's attention, causing her to detach from self via anorexia nervosa. Gluck left high school to recover from anorexia. For seven years she uncovered and learned about her real desire, separation: "... dying seemed a pathetic metaphor for establishing a separation between myself and my mother" (11).

In "Cottonmouth Country" (1963) the landscape brings forth questions about suffering and death. Gluck says that she received praise for her brave disclosure "as though... writing put an end to years of evasion... Bravery was never an issue; I tried regularly to make poems out of these situations since I recognize the possibilities" (126). Possibilities include recovery.

In this poem the cottonmouth, Satan, is evil in the garden, which shares the mythic landscape and parallels insight the poet finds. I am interested in the subject of death that remains a constant topic and early solution to suffering, PTSD, an escape from the trauma Gluck suffers to detach from:

Fish bones walked the waves off Hatteras.
And there were other signs
That Death wooed us, by water, wooed us
By land: among the pines
An uncurled cottonmouth that rolled on moss
reared in the polluted air.
Birth, not death, is the hard loss.
I know. I also left a skin there. (*First Four* 43)

Gluck's reflection onto landscape parallels the suffering she experiences in life. Her peeling, loosening of skin, parallels her literal anorexic body, the mother and life she wants to be free of, the dead child (self and sibling) that she finds, and the writing process in self-examination and topics, specifically death. Gluck sheds shame like the old skin of the surviving snake and understands dying's ease and life's difficulties.

In this long quote from her essay “Education of the Poet” from *Proofs & Theories*, she discloses the difficulty of her trauma and illness:

the way I saw to separate myself, to establish a self with clear boundaries, was to oppose myself to the declared desire of others, utilizing their wills to give shape to my own. The conflict played itself out most fiercely with my mother. Insofar as I could tell, my mother only wavered when I began to refuse food, when I claimed, through implicit threat, ownership of my body, which was her great accomplishment. The tragedy of anorexia... is not self-destructive; though its outcome often is. Its intent is to construct... a plausible self... a disdain for need, for hunger, designed to appear entirely free of all forms of dependency, to appear complete, self-contained. (11)

In the difficult dilemma of betrayal trauma, even the adult, reflective Gluck grapples to understand the conflict of needing to attach and detach for survival. She claims to “survive her life” (22) but does not claim she will live it.

The survivor Gluck acknowledges using confession as a guide to healing from this betrayal trauma and subsequent anorexia. Her disease metaphorically and literally means self-starvation. As an anorexic, she literally starved her body and created vast suffering. Life has given her suffering, yet she heals in art.

Gluck theorizes that in poetry she heals from trauma; the basis for much of her writing is to overcome shame due to trauma. In poetry the poet can find healing without shame because the confrontation with difficult material does not cause the poet to re-experience trauma “for the artist no contact occurs” (*Proofs* 26). Yet, the reader re-experiences it from a safe distance, and the writer re-discovers and reforms the experience. Poetry represents, presents traumatic material to self in safety mode (58). The writing process helps the writer to mend.

2006 does not find Gluck free from PTSD. She has found detachment and not disassociation, yet she was re-traumatized by: divorce, a fire that destroyed her home, her father’s death, and the events of 9/11 to her native New York. Gluck has moved into a place of quiet, solitude, and seclusion, Persephone. In her latest collection she says she refuses the medication her family whispers she should take not to suffer, yet she reacts that she wants to feel what is happening to the world and self. She does not use silence as a passive disassociation like the betrayed child she was but as a place to continue to heal, writing about her life, nature, and a spiritual place she found beyond trauma.

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Barbra Streisand's *The Prince of Tides* and trauma theory

CLAUDIA LIEBRAND (*)

My paper will take a look at Barbra Streisand's second directorial work, *The Prince of Tides* (USA 1991).¹ I will read Streisand's film, which is decidedly not an artifact of high culture, as a complex negotiation of the aporias of psychoanalytical trauma theory. Streisand's movie, as I will argue throughout my paper, deals with the aporias of the theorization of trauma in quite a sophisticated way and can be understood as a meta-commentary on the current psychoanalytical state of affairs.

My reading of *The Prince of Tides* is not trying to determine whether, say, post-traumatic stress syndromes are depicted in a medical-psychiatrically correct way or whether the film takes liberties here; I read the film – as already mentioned – as a discursive negotiation of the problems and aporias of current conceptualizations of trauma. I take as my starting point that the popular medium of film, especially Hollywood film, takes up academically and socially relevant discourses and – to say it with Stephen Greenblatt²: *negotiates* these discourses – as opposed to just reflecting them. My approach to mainstream films of the *Kulturindustrie* follows the doctrine of Cultural Studies which holds that students of popular culture are not necessarily ennobled by the choice of their objects. Proponents of Cultural Studies treat those cultural objects not regarded as part of the established culture – such as

(*) Universität zu Köln, Institut für Deutsche Sprache und Literatur, Albertus-Magnus-Platz, D-50923 Köln, Deutschland.

¹ *The Prince of Tides*, USA 1991; director: Barbra Streisand; screenplay: Pat Conroy, Becky Johnston, based on the novel by Pat Conroy; cast: Barbra Streisand, Nick Nolte, Blythe Danner, Kate Nelligan, Melinda Dillon, George Carlin, Jason Gould; cinematography: Stephen Goldblatt; editing: Don Zimmerman; music: James Newton Howard; production design: Paul Sylbert; costume: Ruth Morley; Barwood Films, Columbia Pictures Corporation, Longfellow Pictures.

² Stephen Greenblatt, the leading figure of New Historicism (which could be called the most profiled variety of Cultural Studies), asks in his most important book *Shakespearean Negotiations*, «how cultural objects, expressions, and practises – here, principally, plays by Shakespeare and the stage on which they first appeared – acquired compelling force» (Stephen Greenblatt: *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, p. 5). Greenblatt argues that this appropriation is not «part of a single coherent, totalizing system. Rather it was partial, fragmentary, conflictual; elements were crossed, torn apart, recombined, set against each other; particular social practises were magnified by the stage, others diminished, exalted, evacuated» (p. 19). Greenblatt is thus interested not in creating an all-embracing whole, but in recounting the negotiations of circulation and exchange between texts and cultural practices.

mainstream movies – with the same meticulousness and scrupulousness that is taken for granted when dealing with canonized, so-called high culture, with manifests of high art. When dealing with products of the culture industry – in this case: with movies – the objective is not to subject them to the plain reading that – as Hollywood-mainstream productions – they seem to imply and, indeed, seem to call for. Instead, I would like to suggest a complex reading, a *lectio difficilior* which reconstructs the diversity and multiplicity of these cultural negotiations.

What kind of story does *The Prince of Tides*³ tell us? If we believe the movie's tagline, it is «a story about the memories that haunt us, and the truth that sets us free». Tom Wingo (played by an excellent Nick Nolte⁴) is an unemployed football coach with marital problems who lives in South Carolina with his family. In the beginning of the movie, Tom moves to New York for a few weeks because his twin sister Savannah Wingo (Melinda Dillon), a talented writer who lives there, has once again tried to kill herself. Savannah's psychiatrist, Dr Susan Lowenstein (Barbra Streisand), has asked Tom to reconstruct the family history for her to enable her to help his suicidal sister, who has been her patient for some time. After several sessions Tom finally confides in Lowenstein and tells her a terrible family secret: his mother, his thirteen-year old sister and Tom himself were brutally raped by three convicts who had escaped from the nearby Callanwolde prison. Their older brother, who came home just in time, managed to shoot two of the three attackers, the mother stabbed the third one. After burying the three corpses and cleaning up the blood, the family dinner with the father takes place as if nothing had happened. Because of a motherly command of silence, the children never tell anyone, not even their father, about the violent events. Tom's «confession», after which he breaks down in tears, provides Lowenstein with the much needed information: she can now successfully treat Savannah. The strategic alliance between Savannah's psychiatrist and her twin brother could come to an end at this point, had Susan Lowenstein not by now hired Tom as a football coach for her son⁵, and had Tom and Susan, an unhappily married woman, not by now fallen for each other. After a bitter-sweet romance, Tom leaves Susan to return to his family, to his wife and his three daughters.

In the following, I will be interested in analyzing the discourses and fantasies about psychoanalysis dealt with in the movie, especially the attempt at solving the conflict between mimetic and antimimetic trauma theory. In her important book *Trauma. A Genealogy*, published in 2000, almost a decade after Streisand's *Prince of Tides*, Ruth Leys has pointed out the hiatus between mimetic and antimimetic theorizations of trauma inherent in any trauma theory (not just) since Freud.

In the context of this paper, I am not entering into the question whether Leys's categorization does justice to trauma theory as a whole.⁶ I employ her distinction of mimetic and antimimetic trauma theory because this differentiation addresses reoccurring problems in the clinical treatment of trauma patients. Leys explains: «The first or *mimetic* theory holds that trauma, or the experience of the traumatized subject, can be understood as involving a kind of hypnotic imitation or identification in which, precisely because the victim cannot recall the original traumatogenic event, she is fated to act it out or in other ways imitate it. The idea is that the traumatic experience in its sheer extremity, its affront to common norms and expectations, shatters or disables the victim's cognitive and perceptual capacities so that the experience never becomes part of the ordinary memory system. [...] [This] mimetic theory cannot escape worrying about the question of hypnotic suggestion and the «fabrication» of more or less

³ My reading of *The Prince of Tides* will not look at the film, which is based on Pat Conroy's novel by the same name, as a literary adaptation, I will not refer to the novel as a pre-text to the movie.

⁴ Nolte was nominated for an Oscar as «Best Actor in a Leading Role» in 1991 and he won the Golden Globe for «Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture-Drama».

⁵ Lowenstein's son – as basically all of the movies protagonists – seems affected, if not traumatized by his family history.

⁶ Cf. Murray Schwartz's article «Locating Trauma: A Critique of Ruth Leys's *Trauma: A Genealogy*», in: *PsyArt. An Online Journal for the Psychological Study of the Arts* (2004), http://www.clas.ufl.edu/ipa/journal/2004_schwartz01.shtml; July, 10, 2006.

false memories.»⁷ This conception of trauma can be contrasted with a second, antimimetic theory: «The second, or *antimimetic*, theory also tends to make imitation basic to the traumatic experience, but it understands imitation differently. The mimetic notion that the victim is hypnotically immersed in the scene of trauma is repudiated in favor of the antithetical idea that in hypnotic imitation the subject is essentially aloof from the traumatic experience, in the sense that she remains a spectator of the traumatic scene, which she can therefore see and represent to herself and others. The antimimetic theory is compatible with, and often gives way to, the idea that trauma is a purely external event that befalls a fully constituted subject; whatever the damage to the latter's psychical autonomy and integrity, there is in principle no problem of eventually remembering or otherwise recovering the event, though in practice the process of bringing this about may be long and tortuous.»⁸

As you will remember, my argument was that *The Prince of Tides* tries to resolve the tension between the mimetic and antimimetic models inherent in psychoanalytic trauma theory. The film's strategy in doing this is of brilliant simplicity: it provides *two* persons, twins [!] with the «same» trauma. Tom and Savannah are *both* brutally raped – with the escaped convicts sheer horror enters the family home. Savannah reacts in the way anticipated by mimetic trauma theory. The incident marks a gap which cannot be closed up; she cannot *remember* the events, they are only present as a literal trace: when she wakes up after her suicide attempt, Savannah murmurs – without knowing what the signifying chain means, without being able to make sense of it – «Callanwolde. Callanwolde». The traumatic experience, which cannot be integrated into memory, however, turns out to be a motor force for creative production (the movie thus brings in the topic of psychological agitation promoting artistic production). By iteration and imitation, Savannah, the talented writer, translates what has happened to her into literature. Using her own name as well as a pseudonym, Savannah writes texts that time and again repeat, re-enact distorted versions of the events she cannot integrate into her psyche. To her Jewish psychiatrist Lowenstein, Savannah has introduced herself as Jewish, the daughter of Holocaust survivors; this performance, too, the recourse to the collective Jewish trauma of genocide,⁹ serves as a re-enactment, an allegory, an imitation of her own trauma – it can be read as a screen fiction of her own traumatization. Because Savannah can only perform her trauma in a mimetic way, because she can only iterate and postfigure it, she is unable to «process» it, to integrate it; time and again she tries to kill herself.

Tom, on the other hand, can be seen as a representative of antimimetic trauma theory: with respect to the rape, he is able to assume the position of an observer, which eventually enables him to talk about and describe the events to a therapist. And while Tom has «decided» early on not to have a memory, he is well able to remember the past – he just chooses *not* to for a long time («I've spent my life trying to forget these missing details», he tells Lowenstein). His psychic apparatus has been affected by the traumatic experience, his troubled relationships (for instance his marital problems) can be traced back to it. The trauma, however, is more external to his psyche than in his sister's case. He is not compelled to constantly imitate and iterate the experience. The psychiatrist Lowenstein now cleverly solves the problem of treating the «untreatable» patient Savannah, who, like many other trauma victims, poses a challenge to psychoanalysis. How is one to treat a patient who is unable to provide what psychoanalysis aims to accomplish during successful therapy: the reconstruction of a coherent, narratively organized life story? With Tom Lowenstein has a trump card up her sleeve which helps her to resolve the dilemma Savannah and psychoanalysis pose for her. Tom, who – somewhat mysteriously – acts as an extension of his sister (in a way, the twin duplicates her soul) produces the very memories she is

⁷ Ruth Leys: *Trauma. A Genealogy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 298f.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 299.

⁹ The Holocaust is the central subject of historically oriented trauma studies, e.g. Cathy Caruth: *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; Dominick LaCapra: *Representing the Holocaust. History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca/NY: Cornell University Press, 1994; Dominick LaCapra: *History and Memory After Auschwitz*, Ithaca/NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.

unable to supply: Lowenstein substitutes his memory for hers. The third-party contract all this is based on, however, seems to be an equation with too many unknowns. Is Lowenstein trying to undertake family therapy? Or is Tom's function just that of an informant, helping Lowenstein with the anamnesis? Is this a movie about double therapy – the treatment of not only Savannah, but Tom, too? If one reads *The Prince of Tides* from its ending, one could say that both, Savannah and Tom are cured of their trauma. Lowenstein manages to melt, to thaw Tom's frozen, petrified emotions, she enables him – strictly in accordance with Freud's well-known dictum of successful therapy – to love and to work. And Savannah, too, seems on the road to recovery at the end of the movie; she is able to leave the hospital, and she, too, seems to have dealt with the events of her childhood and to have «defused» the destructive traumatic potential – that, at least, is what the movie suggests, we haven't actually seen any of her therapeutic sessions. The film thus establishes a configuration that allows the very trauma patient who had initially been *unable* to remember the trauma-generating incident, who had been forced to re-enact it over and over again, to reconstruct her biography. The movie's sleight of hand (among other things, the twin configuration employed by the film serves to conceal this precarious trickery) lies in suggesting that Tom's and Savannah's trauma are one and the same. The twins' different patterns of posttraumatic behavior suggest, of course, that this is in fact not the case. And since memories are subjective reconstructions, the memories Savannah is supplied with are not actually her own, but someone else's. However, by suspending the difference between someone else's and one's own therapeutic memory work, *The Prince of Tides* manages to solve the Gordic knot of mimetic and antimimetic trauma theories: the patient who cannot remember is provided with a memory. At the very least, she is offered a plausible explanation for her psychological problems – a story about horrible rapes, committed by escaped criminals. If we question the film's plausibility with respect to the possibility of taking someone else's memory for one's own, we should also ask whether the memories Tom presents Lowenstein with are, in fact, *true memories* and not false ones. If they were indeed false memories, then the harmonization of mimetic and antimimetic trauma theory, which *The Prince of Tides* purportedly achieves, would have to be categorized as a screen fiction. With regard to Tom, we would also be dealing with a protagonist who does not *remember* his traumatic experience, but – like Savannah – makes up stories, a story which imitates and iterates the trauma. While we cannot know for sure that Tom employs his Callanwolde story as a screen memory for other traumatic events (and while the other family members, except the father, seem to share the knowledge of an actual prison escape), this notion nevertheless bears some logic. The story of the three escaped convicts roaming the countryside, raping people and inflicting severe emotional and physical pain, translates disempowerment and abuse into forceful images. Violence and diverse forms of emotional and physical abuse, however, are already part of the very family system the criminals allegedly invade. The children perceive themselves as prisoners and victims of their parents' war. As Tom says in a voice-over: «I don't know when my parents began their war against each other. But I do know the only prisoners they took were their children.» The mother manipulates her children, the father resorts to violence (about his father, Tom remarks: «I suppose Henry Wingo would have made a pretty good father – if he hadn't been such a violent man»). At the end of the movie, after his therapeutic talks with Lowenstein, Tom sums up, again in a voice-over: «In New York I learned that I needed to love my mother and father in all their flawed, outrageous humanity – and in families there are no crimes beyond forgiveness.» Tom's Callanwolde story employs the image of a home threatened and invaded by violence and abuse. However, Tom's and Savannah's home, their family, is – in Freud's words – a decidedly *unheimliches Heim*, not a place of safety, but of danger – a home inhabited not by love and care, but by violence, in which manipulations and abuse (maybe even rape by the father) are the order of the day. Tom's story, possibly a protective fiction, relocates – and thereby covers up the family disaster – the terror outside the family; re-imagines it and replaces it with a story that exculpates the original family. Tom's trauma narrative (and this could be read as a sign of its precarious status) provides an explanation for something that – after looking at the family's constitution – no longer needs an explanation.

If one reads Tom's «confession» not as a presentation of facts, but as a narration, as a phantasmagorical reaction to the domestic situation that the child Tom was faced with, then the story can be

understood as a revenge fantasy, in which the invaders (possibly representing the father) are killed by the mother and the older brother (serving as a stand-in for Tom). In this reading the rapes committed by the escaped convicts overwrite the father's violent (and possibly sexual) abuses of the mother, the sister and Tom. Moreover, if one maintains the perspective of a phantasmagorical reaction to traumatizing family circumstances, Tom's trauma narrative negotiates a fantasy of escape. The intruders are introduced as escaped convicts, as men who have been able to escape their prison, something that the children, who have also been described as prisoners, prisoners of their family, have not been able to do.¹⁰ In this reading of Tom's story, Savannah adopts the trauma narrative provided by her brother (as a protective fiction) because it spares her from dealing with her catastrophic family history, because it enables her to perceive «evil» as something threatening the family from the outside.

A view as critical as the one prompted by Tom's trauma narrative (which *The Prince of Tides* shows in flashbacks – in a way the film stages the psycho-traumatological concepts of trauma film and flashback) can also be taken in respect to Tom's being cured by Dr Lowenstein's sessions. It is true that Tom returns to his family as a loving father and husband. The film ends with another voice-over: «At the end of every day I drive through the city of Charleston. And as I cross the bridge that'll take me home, I feel the words building inside me. I can't stop them or tell you why I say them. But as I reach the top of the bridge, these words come to me in a whisper. I say them as prayer, as regret, as praise, I say: «Lowenstein, Lowenstein».» This is probably supposed to pay tribute to the psychoanalyst who helped him overcome his trauma. However, Tom's ritual is problematic. Apart from the embarrassing fact that the movie's director Streisand – using her protagonist's name – has her own praises sung in this scene,¹¹ Tom's daily ritual is problematic for the following reason: it conveys the impression that Tom has not actually worked through and overcome his trauma at all. You will remember: when Tom's traumatized sister woke from the coma after her suicide attempt, all she was able to utter was the chain of signifiers: «Callanwolde, Callanwolde» – a literal trauma trace, if you will. At the end of the movie, it appears that Tom has been traumatized, re-traumatized in a way, by the love affair with Lowenstein: it is he now who seems compelled to follow the patterns of imitation and iteration which make it impossible to deal with the past in a constructive way. Savannah's «Callanwolde, Callanwolde» is now Tom's «Lowenstein, Lowenstein».

Let me sum this up: just as it did by introducing Savannah's and Tom's trauma as a twin trauma, the movie employs a clever strategy with respect to Tom's and Lowenstein's love story. We are faced with a constellation typical of Hollywood movies involving a patient-doctor relation (for instance, Hitchcock's *Spellbound* [USA 1945], to mention just one classic example of this configuration). A psychoanalyst violates the rule of abstinence and begins a love affair with a patient. Just as in *Spellbound* the affair works as therapy for the analyst as much as the patient (the affair helps Lowenstein to cope with her marital dramas and traumas). Different than Hitchcock's film, *The Prince of Tides* conveys the impression that the patient, Tom, is not really a patient, but the patient's twin brother. Whether Dr Lowenstein breaks the rules of her trade by letting Tom comfort her, is thus subject to interpretation. Be that as it may: the melodrama *The Prince of Tides* opts not for a happy ending, but for a bittersweet ending; *boy meets girl* is transferred into the melancholic *boy has to leave girl*. Melodrama theory holds that the emotional energies suppressed in scenes such as these are not lost,

¹⁰ Apart from fantasies of revenge and escape, Tom's trauma narrative, in which escaped convicts are killed, includes fantasies of deadly punishment of people who take revenge or escape.

¹¹ The movie's casting, too, promotes a blending of film and extra-diegetic reality: Streisand cast her own son Jason Gould in the role of Lowenstein's son. Apart from the gossip factor, this casting is of interest in the context discussed because the speculations as to whether – and if: in which way – the disturbed mother-son relationship in *The Prince of Tides* refers to the «real» relationship between Streisand and her son, invoke the *Berührungstheorem* (theory of contact) between the Real and the Symbolic: the «real» seems to «infiltrate» what is depicted in the movie. Streisand's casting choice thus calls up and negotiates this aspect of the trauma subject.

but are exhibited as symptoms in the filmic text – in its *mise en scène* and, above all, in its music, which expresses the repressed emotional energies.¹² The score accompanying Susan's and Tom's impossible romance assures the audience of the intensity of this love story, a love story, which, toward the end of *The Prince of Tides*, tries to overwrite the trauma story and – if we remember Tom's «Lowenstein, Lowenstein» – clearly fails to do so.

(Translated by **KATRIN OLTMANN**)

¹² Michael Palm: «Was das Melos mit dem Drama macht: Ein musikalisches Kino», in: Christian Cargnelli & Michael Palm (Ed.): *Und immer wieder geht die Sonne auf: Texte zum Melodramatischen im Film*, Wien: PVS, 1994, pp. 211-234, here p. 212.

Transformations of the storied unconscious

JUHANI IHANUS (*)

EARLY VERSIONS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

The discovery and elucidation of the unconscious is an ambivalent tale of different ways of storying the unknown, the invisible, the chaotic, the hidden (irrational/rational) order, of interpolating the “psychic Real.” (On the histories of the unconscious, see Whyte, 1960; Ellenberger, 1970; Tallis, 2002; Claxton, 2005.) You can make this journey through different paths or storylines. I have chosen here one path, stopping at certain junctures, where the emblematic conceptualizations and conceptions of the unconscious can be discerned. Somebody else would make this journey by following other paths. The process of fictionalizing and narrativizing the unconscious (that nobody has directly seen) is here related to some parallel changes in the rhetoric and orientations of the scientific (psychological) endeavor.

The history of pre-autonomous (and pre-experimental academic) psychology is mostly a history of the development of psychology in the domains of philosophy and literature (Bell, 2005, p. 225). Later on, the modern literary unconscious from Dostoevsky to O’Neill did not adopt the scientific mappings as such, but is highly idiosyncratic and would deserve its own case stories (see a suggestion of that in de Grazia, 1984, pp. 205-211: for example, how Kafka reified the unconscious, how Joyce in his *Ulysses* “caught in its bright net the live tangle of subconscious life,” and in his *Finnegan’s Wake* mined “the bastion of sleep” [Steiner, 1967, p. 31], how O’Neill explored in his dramas the deranged Oedipal unconscious, etc.).

The first story of the unconscious saw it embedded in nature. It can be called the *animistic unconscious*, populated and sustained by folkloric imagination. Something from outside (a spirit, a god, a force, a fairy or a pixy) was influencing and intruding into “me.” Prior to the 18th century, researchers of the nervous system clung to the Animal Spirits hypothesis. In its classical form, inherited from Galen, the hypothesis stated that first the Natural Spirit is created in the liver, then converted to the Vital Spirit through the heart, and finally to the Animal Spirits within the brain, through the action of the proposed structure called the rete mirabile, or “wonderful net.” The Animal Spirits transported in the hollow nerves of the body were supposed to produce sensation and movement (Clower, 1998). So, there they already had the marvelous Net! Moreover, as the basis for the control of physiological functions the Animal Spirits paradigm held its place until the latter half of the 18th century.

Researchers abandoned this paradigm by the end of the 18th century in favor of the Animal Electricity

(*) University of Helsinki, Department of Psychology, P. O. Box 9, FI-00014 Helsinki, Finland.

Hypothesis. By the adjective “animal” some researchers referred to animals, some to “anima”/“animus” (life force/soul, spirit). Electricity became the miraculous phenomenon that was used also for therapeutic purposes. Various kinds of electric treatment were applied. For example, even Freud used electric stimulations in his therapies before inventing the method of free associations.

There had been exceptions before and during the Age of Enlightenment, such as Pardies, Leibniz and Lichtenberg who doubted reason and rational mastery and suggested that unconscious processes might be working and affecting our thinking. On the basis of Pardies’s suggestions, Leibniz forwarded ideas of unconscious perception, of a continuum of consciousness, and of a threshold between conscious and unconscious (see Claxton, 2005, pp. 200-205). “It thinks,” (“*es denkt*”) was the expression Lichtenberg (1778; quoted by Whyte, 1960, p. 114) used, meaning that thinking was not the operation of the I, but of something unknown (“*es*” was also used by Moritz, then by Nietzsche; “*das Es*” was later used by von Hartmann, Groddeck and Freud).

Nineteenth-century *Naturphilosophie* (Schelling et al.) as well as Romantic literature and criticism (both the Romanticism of Novalis and the Schlegels and the second wave Romanticism of Schelling) stressed the unity of man and nature and had already stronger intimations of the unconscious, and of the interplay between the personal and the collective, in dealing with fantasies, wishes and dreams. (The unconscious of natural philosophy is compiled in von Hartmann, 1869; see also Bell, 2005.)

Schelling viewed nature as the unconscious absolute. The first explicit theorist of the *Naturphilosophie unconscious* was, however, Carl Gustav Carus, who was active in the arts and sciences. In his major work *Psyche*, concerning the developmental history of the soul, Carus (1846, p. 1) proclaimed: “The key to the understanding of the conscious life of the soul lies in the realm of the unconscious.” Carus’s unconscious is nature, the “not yet conscious I” (Felber & Bach, 1990, p. 120; cf. Bell, 2005, p. 213), but it has three different levels, from the “absolute” level (god-like) to the “general” and “partial” levels. Carus mentioned also the “relative unconscious” that contained materials already earlier present in consciousness. He listed the defining features of the unconscious: it is flowing, indefatigable, having its own governing laws different from those of consciousness, and being a repository of ancient human wisdom (Tallis, 2002, p. 14).

It was the task of individual writers, such as Goethe and Schiller (whom Freud could cite for hours by heart), Coleridge and De Quincey, von Kleist and E. T. A. Hoffmann, Turgenev and Dickens, Thackeray and Flaubert to stage, organize and embellish the hidden desires and fantasies into fictions (both poetry and prose), long before Freud brought forth his “discovery.” For example, Goethe said that he had written *The sorrows of the young Werther* (1774) while “practically unconscious,” and Schiller saw his poetry originating from the unconscious (see Tallis, 2002, p. 5). Coleridge wrote of “the twilight realms of consciousness,” and even mentioned “exact psycho-analytical understanding” (15 September, 1805; Coleridge, 1961, §2670) and “psychological meticulousness of the inner Soul-Biography” (8 September, 1805; Coleridge, 1961, §2667) in his notebook (see also Eng, 1984).

Thus, some writers practiced at least implicit psychological theorizing. On the other hand, the scientific Freud had suppressed ambitions as a creative writer, although bits of such ambitions were reflected in his case histories. He did not, however, venture very far into analyzing literature. In no case can Freud be justifiably labelled as a novel writer in the disguise of a physician (see Cohn, 1999). His interest was in the direction of the fantasy reality, the “psychic reality,” co-constructed in the analytic setting by the analysand and the analyst.

TOWARD MORE “EXACT” STORIES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

Freud gained a lot from German physiology, especially from his teacher Ernst Brücke who maintained that all natural phenomena are movement phenomena. Freud was also well aware of the writings of Du Bois-Reymond, Helmholtz and Virchow. Between 1820 and 1850, a physiological psychology of the unconscious became prominent. Its model of the unconscious is a continuation of the tradition that has been traced by Bell (2005, p. 208) as follows: “the theory of dark [Platonic and Neoplatonic] ideas

[including Plato's theory of the soul's *anamnesis*, recollection or reminiscence], the plastic imagination [of Romanticism], the vitalistic physiology of Herder and Goethe, the Idealist and Romantic distinction between conscious and unconscious realms, the physiology of the *Naturphilosophen*."

The discovery of the unconscious is, as Whyte (1960, p. 71) proposed, "the recognition of a Goethean order, as much as of a Freudian disorder, in the depths of the mind." The depth model of the unconscious is a rational construction, focused on rationality's enemy. The postulated unknown preserves the wholeness of the known felt to be threatened, from Leibniz via Kant to Schopenhauer (Bell, 2005, p. 225).

The "exact" and "logical" story of the unconscious began to have new supporters among natural scientists, experimental psychologists and even traditional associationists. Such an eminent figure as J. S. Mill was in favor of the *logical unconscious*. Paradoxically, introspectionist associationism helped develop the concept of the unconscious mind, while founding on both "unconscious impressions" and "muscle sensing." (See Reed, 1997, pp. 71-77.) Helmholtz's doctrine of "unconscious inference" can be seen as a symptom of the shift from the science of the soul to the science of the mind built up by new psychologists who wanted to study the conscious mind, the unconscious mind and, also, bodily processes (cf. Finger & Wade, 2002; Reed, 1997, p. 118).

Purging metaphysical concepts, panteism, nature mysticism and vitalism, positivist natural scientists opposed German *Naturphilosophie* or "Romantic science" that still cherished hopes of a science of the soul. As Ellenberger has stated, "After 1850, the philosophy of nature and Romanticism seemed to have completely disappeared. It was the period of positivism and the triumph of the mechanistic *Weltanschauung*" (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 241). The term *Weltanschauung* (world view), by the way, was coined by Wilhelm von Humboldt who "claimed that the science of a certain period was always unconsciously determined by its *Weltanschauung*" (ibid., p. 201). In psychiatry of that time, Wilhelm Griesinger, a synthesizer of brain anatomopathology and psychiatry, taught physicians to speak neural-ese, but he also proclaimed to the brain scientists and psychiatrists that "the greatest and most important part of the psychic processes were unconscious" (ibid., p. 241).

The new physiology was to be based on the sciences of physics and chemistry. Supernatural explanations for forces and mechanics were to be replaced by natural scientific ones, stating that only physical and chemical forces are active within the organism. There was no need to believe in mystical vital and creative forces. The concept of energy (changing its state, but its quantity remaining the same) took their place (Finger & Wade, 2002.)

The *physiological unconscious* was soon set into the evolutionist and organic paradigm and became part of the rhetoric of exact science. Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection was linked to the workings of the mind and its functions. The brain was conceived as an adaptive organ that had developed from animal ancestry, and the "moiety of conscious and unconscious functions" was an "optimal solution to the problem of survival." Theory of evolution gave explanations to the mystery of consciousness and its capacities as well as to the unconscious foundations of human mental life (Tallis, 1992, pp. 134-135).

Although 19th century physiologists had different ways of approaching the processes below the threshold of consciousness, of the "subconscious," or the "subliminal" (not always named as such), unconscious acts were mostly seen as purely organic, as "unconscious cerebration." This was the term used by the physiologist and naturalist William Carpenter in his *Principles of mental physiology* (1874). He gave examples of unconscious cerebration from writers' (Charlotte Brontë) and composers' (Mozart) experiences of spontaneous revelations of stories or compositions outside of the conscious and intentional efforts. Modern ideas of the *adaptive unconscious* were based on the observations made by Helmholtz, Carpenter, Hamilton and others indicating that the human perceptual system operated almost totally, and the mechanisms of thought and emotion to a large extent, outside of consciousness. However, the talk about the unconscious acts of the spirit or even the "I" made no sense (Despine, 1880) to many physiologists. On the other hand, explaining such complex creative products as the stories of Charlotte Brontë or the symphonies of Mozart as the results of mere cerebral reflex actions (a kind of pre-behaviorist "unconscious" chain of reflexes) posed great problems (Crabtree, 2003, pp. 53-59). Thus, the physiological (or organic) paradigm had to be supplemented by the psychological one.

Before Freud, in the 1880s Frederic Myers and Pierre Janet tried to formulate more psychological frameworks for human automatism, defining it as “psychological automatism,” thus combining automatism and consciousness. In introducing the psychological paradigm, Myers and Janet insisted that there are multiple centers of consciousness, or a number of consciousnesses (for example, the ordinary and the hypnotic or the somnambulistic consciousness) in one individual. The physiological “correlates” of these consciousnesses had to be taken into account, and psychological explanations should not contradict the findings of physiology, but physiology could no more solely provide the proper method of consciousness research.

Myers (1888) referred to the “Subliminal Self” as the locus of growth-oriented mental activity occurring below the threshold of ordinary consciousness, and Janet (1889) saw dissociations of consciousness, resulting in several subconscious personalities (below normal consciousness) in one individual. Myers held psychological automatisms as part of ordinary life, while Janet categorized them as manifestations of pathology. (See Crabtree, 2003.) William James sympathized with Meyer’s conception of the growth-oriented subconscious and esteemed it as a great contribution to new 20th century psychology (see Taylor, 1983, p. 43). Freud, by the way, had lifelong hostility toward Janet’s version of the subconscious (Freud insisted on “*unbewusst*,” not on “*unterbewusst*” nor “*nebenbewusst*”) and of his “psychological analysis.” The illusion or pretension of priority weighed heavily on Freud.

FREUDIAN STORIES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS...

The *Freudian concept of the unconscious* (the *dynamic unconscious*) has both romantic and rationalistic aspects. It is defined quite rationalistically (according to the tradition of the natural sciences), but the phenomena attached to it contain irrational, awe-inspiring, nightly and ghastly aspects that need to be scientifically tamed by the principle of psychic determinism and metapsychological points of view, and to be guided by evenly floating attention on the part of the analyst. The psychic or the mental was not to be equated with consciousness. The invisibility of the unconscious is particularly exemplified by the drives (Darwin psychologized) and libido, i.e., sexual drive energy (Brücke et al. psychologized), both having an organic, biological foundation. They cannot be grasped straight, but are only interpolated indirectly, through their proposed derivatives (symptoms, dreams, the psychopathology of everyday life), from cathecting and decathecting of objects in the amoeba-like drive-energy economy. Sexuality was first located in certain erotogenic zones, but later on Freud became more doubtful about them and situated sexuality in the entire surface of the skin, in every sense organ and in every internal organ, also including the brain and its “verve” for knowledge. Sexuality became rhythmical moving across the zones and parts of the subject’s body.

The “contents” of the unconscious (and the conscious too) have been “narrated” by populating it with drives (impulses and sexual drive energy), phantasies, images, emotions, memories and different kinds of thing-(re)presentations derived from infantile sources. Freud was hesitant about unconscious emotions. The totality of the repressed (as the foundation of the dynamics of the mind) belongs to the unconscious, although not the totality of the unconscious belongs to the repressed. In Freud’s topological version of the unconscious, the Ucs. was one of the three *systems* of the psychic apparatus (the two other being the Cs. and the Pcs.). Freud gave the Ucs. specific characterizations: primary process (thinking) following the pleasure principle, unbound drive energy, absence of negation, of opposites, of doubts, of conflicts, of time, of mortality, the monopoly of thing-(re)presentations, not of word-(re)presentations. Firm boundaries are said to “melt in a free chaotic mingling of forms” (Ehrenzweig, 1967, p. 3). This “cauldron” of the unconscious has given opportunities for different fictionalizations and depictions. Freud’s conceptions also include cognitive hints at thinking and paleologic. (On Freud and cognitive science, see Bucci, 1997.)

In Freud’s second topography, the structural model, the distinction between the unconscious, the preconscious and the conscious became intrasystemic, no more intersystemic. For Freud, nothing was below, or above in the psyche. The unconscious, in the structural model, was not solely in the id (that

is totally unconscious), but also located in the ego and in the superego (that are partly conscious and preconscious). Freud called (1933) his model of the psyche, or mapping the mind as “tentative.” To orient ourselves we must mix separate color fields (as in modern art), and perhaps even disciplines, in order to reach new relational knowledge of the psyche. Neither space nor fictional universe has a structure that would have exactly that structure our imaginary or image schemata produce (cf. Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, pp. 508-509).

The positing of the Freudian unconscious requires presupposing that real thoughts (not experienced by the subject) preexist the analysis and that resistance to these thoughts is a constant general life force. The first presupposition concerns the “*realistic exigence* that transforms the facts into proof of the unconscious,” and the second presupposition concerns “*functional formalism*” that discards the first-person drama and leads to a drama in the third person with its elements, psychic entities, instances and processes. (Politzer 1928/1994, pp. 108-109.) From Politzer’s (ibid., 119-120) point of view, the analysis transposes the being in the first person to the level of the story, and thus, for example, the latent content of a dream or of a symptom is no more than a description, a narrative, a “conventional story” that has a “lived attitude” as its theme. When a lived attitude or a behavior is more than the accompanying story, there is a lack or a gap that has to be filled by structuring the unconscious complement (actually relative to consciousness), by projecting into the unconscious what is lacking in the story in order to make it adequate. The function of the unconscious is to complete the analytical story, and this can be done by postulating in theory that “we cannot live more than we think” and that the being in the first person always needs an adequate knowledgeable story (ibid., 120). The reversal of priorities would impose an impossible task on psychoanalysis: It would mean admitting that being can exceed knowledge, that a human being is not omniscient, and that not everything unknown to the subject would be reached by the analyst, and, finally, that there is no reclusion in the unconscious for the “lacking description.”

... AND BEYOND

Several psychoanalytic versions of the unconscious have been presented after Freud. To put it shortly here, they have moved via Jung and his *collective unconscious* to more constructive and creative ones (Ehrenzweig, 1967) and via Lacan to the *linguistically structured unconscious*. Jung had influences from romantic notions of the universal unconscious, and he inhabited the collective unconscious by archetypes, by humanity’s archaic encounters with basic situations and emotional upsets, kind of “potentials” or “deposits” ready to burst out, to be enlivened, not as such, but through myths, fairy tales, symbols and personifications (f. ex., animus, anima, Philemon, Wotan). In Jung’s vision, archetypes are neither historically nor culturally determined, but they determine historical and cultural phenomena, induce numinous experiences, and may, after inner struggles, lead to integrative mystic mandala wholeness and holy unifications of opposites. Jung’s psychospiritual quest reached such esoteric fields as astrology, alchemy and the UFOs.

As to the *linguistic unconscious*, the concept was around in linguistics as early as the 1880s, long before Lacan (see Thass-Thienemann, 1967, 1968). For example, Heymann Steinthal and Hermann Paul acknowledged all manifestations of speech growing out of the unconscious mind (see Paul, 1880/1888, p. 23). It was Lacan, however, who got inspired by Roman Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss and asserted that “madness is lived *entirely* in the register of meaning” (Marini, 1992, p. 113), that “the unconscious of the subject is the [transindividual] discourse of the other” (others in the self), that “the unconscious [and the symptom] is structured *like* [not the same as] a language” and that man is a subject, a *parlêtre*, founded and alienated by language and full of censored chapters (see, f. ex., Lacan 1953/1977, pp. 50, 55, 59). Contradictory in many instances, Lacan (ibid., pp. 40-47) saw in the psychoanalytic process the patient moving from the “empty speech” [of stereotypes and the language barrier] to “full speech,” leading to “the birth of truth in speech,” albeit an ambiguous truth of “what is neither true nor false” [outside of dual-value binary logic]. Thus, pages of forgotten shame and pages of compelling glory are revealed.

Influenced by the modern “thinking machine,” game theory and cybernetics, Lacan later relativized the “chain of signifiers,” the “body of words” as being beyond any linguistic definition, relating the symbolic to the body. For Lacan (1970a), language was the “condition of the unconscious,” but the unconscious became also the “condition of linguistics” (Lacan, 1970b). As a mark of distinction, Lacan called his own perspective “linguistry” (*linguisterie*) (see Marini, 1992, pp. 47-53). Through the Lacanian pun, literature, as the bastion of symbols, was renamed “lituraterre,” the playground of words against Law (Lacan, 1971).

After the Second World War, ego psychology and existential philosophy revised psychoanalytic presuppositions and leaned toward the conscious workings of the ego, in cultural and social contexts, giving the ego its own “conflict-free” energy and autonomy in comparison with the id. Reality control, the adaptive (both autoplasmic and alloplastic), integrative and rational functions of the ego and “preconscious automatisms” were fashionable themes in ego psychology (cf., f. ex., Hartmann, 1939/1958). The unconscious fell out of the trend in the 1950s, but revisions of the unconscious were soon to follow.

Developing psychoanalytic aesthetics and art theory on the basis of ego psychology and object relations theory, Anton Ehrenzweig (1967, pp. 261-262) reminded that actually “id and ego once evolved together from a common undifferentiated matrix,” and he even presupposed the *computational and matrixial unconscious*, the undifferentiated structure fit for scanning, “utterly mobile and ready to absorb new serial structures in its wide amoeba-like embrace.” He (*ibid.*, pp. 260-263) also claimed that

“[...] the concept of the primary process as the archaic, wholly irrational function of the deep unconscious, is now undergoing a drastic revision. This revision, in Marion Milner’s words, is due partly to the need for accommodating the facts of art. These facts suggest forcibly that the undifferentiated matrix is technically far superior to the narrowly focused conscious processes. [...] This constructive role of the unconscious is difficult to accept. [...] The conscious and unconscious matrices are not merely linked. Surface thought is wholly immersed in the matrix of the primary process. [...] In a single indivisible process creativity links inside and outside. [...] The neglect of the undifferentiated structure of primary process phantasy has been responsible for the deadlock which has held up the progress of psycho-analytic aesthetics for over half a century.”

Later, Ignacio Matte-Blanco (1975) has gone further and introduced a more *systemic* psychoanalytic view of the unconscious as “infinite sets.” For him, the chaos of the unconscious was deceptive. Using mathematical logic, Matte-Blanco suggested that symmetrical logic is at the base of primary process and all affectivity containing experiences of infinity (f. ex. in omnipotence, idealization, love, dread and grief). Asymmetrical logic is at the background of secondary process, but both forms of logic also intermingle in thought processes (*ibid.*; see also Rayner, 1981).

THE “COOL” COGNITIVE UNCONSCIOUS

Along with the shift from logocentrism to cognitocentrism (and the stories of information processing and knowledge building), there have been shifts from the fabrications of the dynamic, “hot” and “seething” unconscious to “cooler,” computational and cognitive constructions of the unconscious. John Kihlstrom (1987) talked about subliminal priming, the activation of automatic programmes in the *cognitive unconscious*. The comparison between the Freudian and the cognitive unconscious is set into metaphorical language: “Their [the psychoanalysts’] unconscious was hot and wet; it seethed with lust and anger; it was hallucinatory, primitive, and irrational. The unconscious of contemporary psychology is kinder and gentler than that and more reality bound and rational, even if not entirely cold and dry” (Kihlstrom, Barnhardt & Tataryn, 1992, p. 789; see also Pervin, 2003, pp. 242-253).

The revival of interest in the unconscious was accelerating by the late 1980s. The information-processing view studied automatic, unintentional and uncontrollable but efficient processing occurring outside of consciousness. Information processing, knowledge strategies and self-regulation styles have

been studied in interaction with memory processes, emotions, (e)motives, planning, goals of action, values and beliefs, schemata and interpretive frames, partly built on implicit knowledge and nonconscious image/memory bases.

The cognitive unconscious (a kind of *incognito*) was seen to contain primarily thoughts and ideas, not motivations (except perhaps nowadays “emotives”), while the contents of the dynamic unconscious are sexual and aggressive drive impulses, fantasies, desires, motives, memories and thoughts. The cognitive unconscious does not have defensive functions (cognitions either have never reached consciousness or have become automatic or routinized), while the dynamic unconscious has several defenses on developmentally different levels. From the cognitive point of view, unconscious processes are, qualitatively, logical and rational, not highly different from cognitive processes, while the Freudian conception of the unconscious processes pinpoints illogical (paleological) and irrational qualia.

The contents of the dynamic unconscious (that “other scene” repressed by the “bar”) are not easily accessible to consciousness but demand special procedures of free association and the interpretation of dreams, slips of the tongue and symptoms. Freud, however, did not later naively believe that we could recall the past as such. He clearly held, somewhat in the vein of hermeneutics, that the unconscious cannot be “cognized” as such. It has to be transformed or translated into the contents of consciousness (see Freud, 1915, p. 166). Such a process is seen hermeneutically as “recursive and dialogical, opening up a ‘liminal space’ (Iser, 2000, pp. 5-12) between the text and the register the interpreter brings to bear on the text” (Veivo & Knuuttila, 2005, p. 297). “[...] the end product of interpretation is always a translation: a reformulation of the text in the interpreter’s idiom” (ibid.).

Cognitive literary studies, however, consider meaning as a mental phenomenon and meaning making as a mental process, decontextualizing the text, the register (the mental operations) leaving hardly space and place for explicating the literariness (the internal texture) of a literary text, indistinguishable from other cultural texts. When the text or language does not any more figure as a plausible autonomous agency (contrary to what structuralists and post-structuralists claimed), the cognitive mind has become the actor, literature and its literariness disappearing into the mind, as reflections of the cognitive processes.

Texts of (and stories about) the unconscious are mental-textual, set in theoretical frameworks that postulate the narrative (articulate) thought where something is lacking from experience. The literary texts are situated in the circular field where mind affects brain affects mind, and where mind/brain affects environment affects mind/brain. Still very few literary studies make use of brain research (the story and image of the brain) and especially developmental cognitive neuroscience (Norman Holland’s approaches being the heralds in this regard).

One of the latest additions to the stories of the unconscious, with growing neurocentrism, is the *cognitive-neural* “exact” hard data-driven *unconscious* (studied, f. ex., in subliminal perception, preconscious processing, split-brain research, blindsight, implicit memory/learning/knowledge; see O’Brien & Jureidini, 2002). Experimental techniques, brain imaging and scanning, cognitive neuroscience, artificial intelligence/life research, (neuro)computer science, dynamic non-linear complex systems theory, chaos theory, evolutionary psychology – all contribute to studying unconscious or nonconscious processes. Brain science of the 1960s and 1970s eschewed concepts that referred to the unconscious, while nowadays they occur routinely in consciousness and brain research and in the philosophy and psychology of mind/brain (cf. Tallis, 2002, pp. 176-177).

Neuro-evolutionary and evolutionary-psychological conceptualizations have proposed, for example, the existence of three “human” brains: a reptilian (pre-emotional) brain, a mammalian or crocodile (emotional) brain and an actual human brain with the more recent cortical circuits (MacLean, 1975; see also Le Doux, 1996; Tallis, 1992, pp. 134-135). “‘Blind,’ unconscious, automatic processes” (Dawkins, 1988) are said to be active in the brain, so that we can speak of the *neuro-evolutionary unconscious* of the species. According to Gerald Edelman’s (1987) neural Darwinism, each moment of consciousness means an adaptation to environment (as has been the case in the scope of millennia), networks of cells competing with each other in the scope of milliseconds to gain a temporary emergence in consciousness.

The whole evolution and the on-going activity of the brain and the marvel of consciousness is back-grounded by unconscious spaces that in some species date back to hundreds of millions of years.

The new cognitive (re)evolution has also brought forth the discursive mind with its socio-cultural cognitions, social affective-cognitive interactions and regulations as well as the *affective-cognitive-narrative* view of the *unconscious*. It has not been possible to find modules and “programs” in the brain that would “trigger” or “attract” specific storylines and narrative structures. Behind storylines (narrative constructions) there are most probably several interacting brain structures and processes. Beginning from infantile attractors (childhood feelings and memories, object representations, associations and fantasies), our brains have developed at ever higher levels of organisation and differentiation, interacting and changing with experience-based storylines. Storylines infiltrate concepts, making the concepts fluctuate, and storylines change in perpetual metamorphoses.

NEW MIXTURES AND APPARITIONS

It is through (literary, analytical, historical, developmental) interpretations, or “perturbations,” that the attractors are loosened from their infantile anchorage, while the acceptance of complexity, responsibility and nuanced differentiation is fostered. Thus the bandwidth of the mind and the “grammars,” or the rule sets of the attractors are more flexibly extended (cf. Palombo, 1999). Representations, associations, memories and fantasies become less stale and less rigidly determined. This applies also to the theoretical and methodological patterns of research.

Literary research does not have to stubbornly stick to a single definitive theory and to exclaim, “Show me your ‘facts’ and ‘theory,’ and I will show you my better facts and more extensive (more penetrating-into-truth, more legitimate) theory.” By reaching out for reciprocal and fertile cross-disciplinary relations, literary researchers and historians can make trans-theoretical and trans-methodological advances, not as purveyors of the truth, but as promoters of knowledge and understanding in action, caught in the act of forming and transforming, semantically, somatically, intellectually and emotionally (cf. Ihanus, 2005a, p. 251).

As long as the reverberations of the past in present relations and future perspectives remain unacknowledged, transferences and countertransferences are fixed in endless and compulsive reiteration of the past. On the other hand, reappraisals and workings-through are accompanied by transformative transferences and countertransferences that break the “should” of the past in favor of the affirmation of change. The “ecstasy” (“Ek-stase” by Heidegger, meaning out of stasis) of disciplinary change and invention is related to the rediscovery of a futurity that is intrinsic to human passions.

The present tense of “theory” is always its terminal state out of which one has to steer toward anticipation that makes existence “authentically futural.” The “futural,” the source of restorying the unconscious, in literary theory and research also has to do with the latest advances in the interdisciplinary fields of evolutionary and cultural studies, of complex and epigenetic dynamic systems perspectives, of neuroscientific and various kinds of psychological research focusing on developmental life-cycle processes, attachment, coping, and co-adaptive strategies in relation to physical, psychical and socio-cultural environments (cf. Ihanus, 2005a, p. 251). Again, we have to add the (*socio*-)cultural *unconscious* in order to refer to the out-of-awareness cultural processes that are automatically enacted especially through nonverbal modes of expression and taken for granted by members of a culture, as if they were innate (cf. Hall, 1981).

Different stories of the unconscious, whether they be Freudian, Jungian, Lacanian, behaviorist (the sum total of automatic and conditioned reflexes), evolutionary, cognitive or neuroscientific, have potential for the interactions, for mutually restorying the *dialogic* (Billig, 1997, 1998) or the *polylogic unconscious*. Language and rhetoric (of truth) can be both expressive and repressive, the repressive aspects of language being immersed in dialogues. On the other hand, repression itself (and repressive acts of language and theorizing) can be examined as a dialogic process (ibid.)

Intertextual and intersubjective narratives are circulatory (itinerary) systems, distributing and

disturbing cognitions, connecting networks, linkages and fluctuations. Their metaphors are priming memory (cf. Levin, 1991, 2003), and serving as bridges, carrying over transferences to readers-writers involving and revolving their text-processing and meaning-making mind/brain. New inter- and crossdisciplinary apparitions (such as cognitive and affective neuroscience, neural Darwinism, evolutionary psychology, cognitive-analytic approaches and neuropsychanalysis) shun fixed positions and rigid divides.

CONSTRUCTIONS AND CO-CONSTRUCTIONS

“Chronically accessible constructs” (Bargh, 1989; see also Pervin, 2003, pp. 248-249) are automatic ways of viewing the self, the others, and the world, but also of reifying, stabilizing and freezing metaphors about the unconscious into outworn (*Abnutzung* à la Nietzsche) concepts that are fixed to a permanent meaning formation (a disciplinary monolith or a block). Such constructs lend themselves too easily, are mechanically activated with little relevant information. Maybe also the neatly packed and categorized sets of the unconscious are examples of such constructs? They can bias our perception, sensitivity, memory and expectations and channel our anticipations of futures to come (*à venir* à la Derrida) to the firm conclusion of the future already arrived (*déjà arrivé*).

We can direct ourselves to confirm these constructs rather than to perceive and remember events that would disconfirm and change them. “You have discovered these traits together ten times, but have you also counted the times you have not found them together,” asked Lichtenberg (1990, p. 100) once in his notebook. What can be, what should not be, is already primed or predisposed by our too readily accessible and available constructs, and ensuing binding theoretical positions (bastions that have lost their currents). Maybe we should count much more than three levels of consciousness (or versions of the unconscious). Even ten is not enough, since different “worlds” and multiple levels of consciousness can simultaneously relate to each other.

In naturalizing and narrating the unconscious we may come to the frontier or divide where the supposed organization, order, structure or system of the unconscious turns out to be fictional, the whole of the unconscious being fabricated and storied by human (posthuman) consciousness trapped in matrices, the tripartite division of the psyche, for example, signifying nothing. There are innumerable co-existing universes. The journey through the process of narrativization of the unconscious is not science fiction, but it may concern fictions of science and scientific fictions of the intrapsychic world.

The “becoming conscious of” something that has been unconscious is also a “just so story,” as is the “original” unconscious (phantasy), or the “primal horde and parricide,” or the Oedipus myth, or information and cognition, or the phenomenological self and authentic life (to mention just few key concepts) amid the competing discourses of the behavioral and social sciences and therapeutics. If “something,” a fictional construct with official denotations and idiosyncratic connotations (animal spirits, forces, drives, archetypes, atoms, dark matter, schemata, scripts, even the whole of cognition, neural networks, computer programs, brain processes, matrices) is hidden “out there,” or “there under,” we cannot become conscious of it as such, only through transformations and translations into more or less explicit and conscious representations (cf. Talvitie & Ihanus, 2002).

Journeying through the field of more personal and expressive self-related narration we can transform implicit (or implied) knowledge into explicit “knowing and feeling characters” that are capable of both metacognition and “meta-emotion.” For example, while we are reading/writing literary texts, our meta-emotional self-regulative and self-reflective processing combined with reading/writing transferences and metacognition help us assess what, how, when, where and why we feel in the text, in the matrix of the affective-cognitive mind/brain (including reading/writing pleasures and frustrations, feelings attached to an author/authorship, narrative figures, narration, style and aesthetics) (cf. Ihanus, 2005b, pp. 71-73).

The construction and co-construction of complex narration entails playful meaning negotiations, interpretive moves and strategies that make use of stratified attractors of meaning spanned through

different life histories, contexts and fictional worlds. The psychic real always has to be approximated and interpolated. Its projections on the (inter)faces of the outer world (others' faces) pose more questions to be processed than we can dream of having time to answer. Will the unconscious transform itself to the *simulated, virtual and matrixial unconscious*? Will there be any interunconscious net communication? In the relational field of network avatars, in the Sim Universe or cyberspace of multiple distributed and disseminated worlds, do "we humans" still recognize "our humanness"? Are we aware of our fragmented and core identities? Can we at all be conscious of being in the matrix, programmed throughout, and self-regulated by processed processing? Or have we with the dynamic unconscious already irreversibly regressed in the service of the other? In one of his sonnets R. D. Laing approached the forced situation of the mind/brain: "[...] But here I'm in a jam. / I'm motionlessly fleeing from my mind. // I'm devastated by a dreary war / That may be only manure from my brain. / But it goes on. I can't remember what it's for. / There's none to whom I dare complain. [...]" (Laing, 1979, p. 36.)

THE BRIDGING TASK OF LITERATURE

Have you been able to follow me through different versions of the unconscious? Did we actually count more than ten? At least this list is not exhaustive: animistic, nature philosophical, physiological, Freudian (dynamic), Jungian (collective), Lacanian (linguistic), more constructive psychodynamic, behaviorist, cognitive, neuro-evolutionary, matrixial, dialogic/polylogic, and additional inter- and crossdisciplinary ones. Hesitating at the end: if this what I say and count is true, it is one more (once upon a time) story of truth, changing between the discourses of the participants and between the texts of the reciprocal worlds. The truth, as an incorporated and inscribed self-deception, must be switched – or possibly, in order to make the possible possible, it should (or could it, perhaps it might) disappear for good.

The text of the other does not answer interactively. In this age of net fiction, interactive writing and blogging, there is no interaction between the text and the reader (the "interactional fallacy"; see Pettersson, 2005, p. 68), but there are inter-reader agreements or disagreements on the interpretations of the textual facts. The texture of the unconscious is a tissue that is fabricated by literary and non-literary stories of how things happen and are ordered (to make sense to us), and these stories have their own constructions of "literariness" and "facticity" of science. The regulation of boundaries proceeds through master stories and storied mastery.

Writers undoubtedly and intuitively have realized the import of the unconscious and of restoring the unconscious. This is their contribution to science, although there are many "eccentric" formulations of the unconscious in literature (see, f. ex., Lawrence, 1921, 1922). So what? And what next? A new version, "a new soaring impalpable imperishable being" (Joyce, 1916/1956, p. 169)? The literary-scientific enterprise will perhaps loosen strict identities and disciplinary identifications, and go on asking questions, such as what literary experimental journeys can contribute to scientific explorations. There is no one and only model of the unconscious (like that of the "hidden deep structure and meaning"), but various potentials to be imaginatively entered, enjoyed and shared as present (*in praesentia*) presents in interimaginary conversations, not treated absent-mindedly as abstract (*in absentia*) atomistic entities or essences.

The narrative point of view does not mean reducing the human mind to a "story machine" with its particular logic and cognitive processing, but allows the emergence of non-conceptualised experiential aspects (changing feelings, phantasies and images), and the sharing and discussing times and places, perspectives and engagements. As Vygotsky (1971; see László, 2002, p. 11) put it, literature is a "social technique for emotions," while it articulates unspecific and nonconscious feelings in social relations. Literature provides "scaffolding."

The experiences of separateness and togetherness belong to sociodramatic plays, and playfulness in literature means mindfulness of textual and intertextual networks with their linkages and connections. Through literary mindscapes, we can pave the way for studying transformative transferences, the priming

of memory, similarity judgment and all kinds of comparisons in text processing and meaning making. Thus, the carrying over of the fluctuations of the unconscious into both intersubjective and personal literary space is potentiated. The non-fixed nature of the unconscious is a permanently intriguing challenge to the bridging task of literature.

The future of the unconscious is to be discussed and negotiated. Here is not the place of a sermon or of a prediction. By the way, prediction used to be only one of the rhetorical forms of the Hebrew prophets (*nabi*). Their task, as prolocutors, was not only to foretell future events, but even first and foremost to speak, as His mouth (cf. Arlow, 1951, pp. 375-376), “in front of” an audience in the present, outlining, introducing the subject of the future (here and now: of the unconscious) to discussion. What kinds of futures (or unconsciousnesses) those present want? How will they work through and toward futures of unconsciousnesses, co-constructing and retelling them in the unfolding narratives, in the name of – ?

Finally, in storying the mindscape, and in connecting the void, the source of images and words, I evoke and imagine some alchemical environments, the laboratories where experimental transformations and invisible sublimations of the unknown substances were supposed to take place, in the silence of the past (“And silence is another metaphor?”; Laing, 1979, p. 33). No image, however, will represent the unconscious. For example, Freud saw nothing of the unconscious in Salvador Dalí’s surrealist works, only deliberate machinations. Neither did Lacan see “the slightest trace of a thought in the brain” electroencephalograms (quoted by Roudinesco, 1997, pp. 378-379). Still, like alchemists we can work in the laboratory or simulacrum of our mind toward permutations and transformations, missing something in the waiting room, waiting for something to appear as an apparition of the invisible: “Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols, a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea [...]?” (Joyce, 1916/1956, p. 169).

In writing and through writing, by discussing in the workshop, we combine sensations, perceptions, memories, emotions and thoughts, melting and fusing “substances,” refusing to get stuck to known substances but heading waywardly toward the unknown, to be storied further by malleable metaphors. There are surplus-values and surplus-enjoyment beyond the pleasure principle in minding literature or signifying “litraterre.”

Sartre (1952/1963, p. 584) in his study on Jean Genet formulated that “we are what we make of what they made of us.” While writing (or painting) we create our parents (and ancestors), and recreate and re-enact subjectively experienced modes of parenting (cf. Dervin, 1996, p. 189). We smiths, hitting the fleeting associations and experiences on the anvil of our mind, experimenting with our wishful realities, “forging anew” “in the smithy of my soul,” and in our workshop “out of the sluggish matter of the earth” “the uncreated conscience [and the unconscious] of my race” (Joyce 1916/1956, pp. 169, 253), while our brains are neurally and in many social-affective-cognitive ways developing along our multiple storylines. Are we more advanced than the alchemists?

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Aging and desire in a few novels

SOLANGE LEIBOVICI (*)

Can we apply literature to psychoanalysis, as the French literary critic Pierre Bayard proposes, and instead on projecting a theory on literature, work the other way around and produce theory on the base of literary texts?¹ What this “applied literature” would try to achieve is not confirming well-known psychoanalytical theories, but bringing new and original insights to the field of psychology. In applied psychoanalysis the activity comes from psychoanalysis, and in Shoshana Felman’s words “psychoanalysis occupies the place of a subject, literature that of an object”. The relation of interpretation is structured as a “relation of master and slave”, a dynamic encounter whose outcome is the sole recognition of the master. The function of literature is here “to serve precisely the desire of psychoanalytical theory”.²

In “applied literature”, theory is no longer something that helps us read and understand the text: theory is suggested by the text itself, in a unique and irreplaceable way, to help us discover what happens in the mind. In other words, theory is no longer an existing corpus of concepts that can be learned and applied to cultural products, but something virtual, that will or will not be understood by the reader.

Bayard’s ideas about applied literature however do not implicate that the text becomes the master, or the *sujet-supposé-savoir*, the “subject presumed to know”. Literature doesn’t know, but it may expose a body of knowledge, because how could we assume that writers like Shakespeare, Joyce, Proust or Philip Roth have not themselves reflect upon psychological phenomena, and that they have not left behind in their work theoretical constructions based on those phenomena?

According to Bayard, the fundamental difference between applied literature and other reading theories inspired by psychoanalysis, is the question we ask the literary text. And of course there is not one answer available, but different answers that will depend on the question asked. This question is different from the one applied psychoanalysis confronts the text with, which is: *what are the unconscious meanings of the text?* Without underestimating or even denying that a text has indeed unconscious meanings, what “applied literature” tries to find is what new insights a literary text can bring to our reflexion on the working of the psyche. The question we may ask here is: *what can literature tell us about old age?*

The French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu describes creation of old age as an intense libidinal recharge caused by the perspective the artist or the writer discovers (sometimes after near-fatal illness) that he

(*) University of Amsterdam, Literary Studies, Oude Turfmarkt 147, 1012 GC Amsterdam, Netherlands.

¹ P. Bayard (2004), *Peut-on appliquer la littérature à la psychanalyse?*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, pp. 43-45.

² S. Felman (1977), *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 5-8.

still has time to work and to create. This happens at sixty, and again at eighty. At eighty, he feels great joy being still alive and capable of working, and having at least twenty more years in front of him (after a crisis, we always rethink life in term of twenty-years slices). This causes a splitting in the libidinal life: according to Freud, Eros and Thanatos use the same libidinal energy, but in this case the death drive is repressed or projected (“only other people die, not me”) while the life instincts are liberated. There is a strong, often unconscious belief in the own immortality. For a very long time, we deny the possibility of our own death, or we project it to a far future. When death comes near, this denying ability is confirmed and becomes the source of renewed creativity.³ At the age of 73, the French writer Albert Cohen publishes *Belle du Seigneur* and starts a second or even third literary career. A few months before his death, Picasso declares he will never die.

The characters created by older writers seem to illustrate this splitting of libidinal life, expressed in the anxiety to die and the will to survive. In contemporary novels, characters struggle with Eros and Thanatos and we see them accept – or not – the ordeals of old age and the metamorphosis, sometimes the disappearance of desire.

It is quite impossible to imagine what old age is when you are young. You have to witness the decay of your own body to grasp it. Something unusual happens then: while your remaining vitality tries to keep a distance from your weakening body, at the same time you may feel strong and even invulnerable. You are aware of the increase of signs that lead to unpleasant conclusions, but still you seem to be on the outside. You are not dying all the time: it happens in an invisible way (Philip Roth in *The Dying Animal*). The ability to live, the vital fluids, life itself, are slowly but steadily drained out of the body. As small parts of time escape life, leaving you forever, you still experience this nearly unnoticeable loss of vitality as a sign you are still alive (Tomas di Lampedusa in *The Leopard*).

The only thing you understand about old people when you are still young, is that they carry the mark of their time, and by doing this you freeze them in time. But to be old doesn't mean that your past is frozen: it is still very much alive, and you are haunted by it and by the fullness of it as much as you are haunted by the fact that you are still alive. In fact you live two lives at the same time, both strong and intense: the old life, which you are forced to leave behind you but still exists, and the present life, which is a slow process of loss and mourning.

To show how these two lives are intertwined, the older character is often placed opposite a younger man. Because they are too frail to do the things they used to but still want to enjoy them, aging characters are compelled to live by proxy. “How do you like your brandy sir? – In a glass. – I used to like mine with champagne. I like to see people drink. You may smoke too. I can still enjoy the smell of it. Nice state of affairs when a man has to indulge his vices by proxy.” (General Sternwood to Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*).

In *The Actual*, the old entrepreneur Adletsky, who is very old and small, so small he might just fly away into eternity, asks the narrator to observe social events in his place and discuss people and events with him. Living by proxy means to live through another person, and in a way the older man is like a vampire feeding himself with the younger man's fresher life.

One of the most described processes of aging is that you have to give up oral pleasures like smoking and drinking. In *La coscienza di Zeno*, a novel about to smoke or not to smoke, the hero is caught up in a strange dilemma: Zeno does not succeed in quitting his self-destructive but delightful habit, because in order to quit smoking, he has to smoke “the last cigarette”, and this implies that he cannot quit because there will always be another last cigarette. The paradox is that to stop smoking, he has to go on doing it. Zeno even begins a psychoanalytic treatment, which fails to cure him of his addiction. He discovers that instead of the talking cure, he could start a writing cure, in which he will try to discover the roots of his “propensione di fumare”, his propensity to smoke.

³ D. Anzieu (1981), *Le corps de l'oeuvre*, Paris: Gallimard.

There are major differences between Zeno's therapy or *fumo-analysis* and traditional psychoanalysis: it is based on writing instead of talking, it makes use of the pencil that presses on the paper instead of the airy vagueness of the spoken word, it creates something that is palpable and will not disappear, contrary to the free associations, which are as brief and easy to forget as dreams, or the smoke of cigarettes. It is, like Richard Klein writes in *Cigarettes are Sublime*, "vertical instead of horizontal".⁴

Being old means that time has changed your body in "a storehouse of artificial parts". The decaying body is the only story left, escaping death the only occupation in a life that used to be filled with work and love and all kinds of interesting events. The personal biography coincides with the medical biography. This causes a feeling of alienation towards the physical self. Old age is not even a merciless struggle, it's carnage. (Philip Roth in *Everyman*). Lucian Freud's paintings show the desperate, fierce and moving decay of bodies that once were beautiful. His famous selfportrait, naked with only his shoes on, is the artist's insolent response to a society addicted to youth and beauty.

There are two ways to escape the depression: concentrating on the death of others, and escaping in erotic fantasies. Philip Roth's character in *Everyman* finds peace in the graveyard where his parents are buried. But what most characters are looking for is the confirmation their erotic desires are still alive. The loss of vitality can be interpreted as a sign of life (in psychoanalytical terms we would say this is a defence, reversal into the opposite), but the intensity of erotic fantasies might be a mask for a decreasing of desire, for what Ernst Jones called *aphanisis*, the disappearance of sexual desire.

The older man's love for a younger woman is always restless and filled with fear and jealousy. "Jealousy. That poison. And without any cause what so ever. (...) On the nights she is not with me I worry like mad. (...) How do I know a younger man will not take her away from me?" (Philip Roth in *The Dying Animal*). Maybe this is one of the reasons why desire concentrates on reminiscence or takes the face of fantasy. Most of the times, desire is stirred up by a gaze, a glance. Don Fabrizio, the Leopard, watches the statue of a nymph and imagines how Neptune will kiss her secretly in the darkness of the Sicilian night. In Venice, Von Aschenbach watches the young boy Tadzio, but never speaks to him. In fact it is not the real Tadzio he has fallen in love with, but the image of beauty and the resemblance to a Greek statue. Tadzio is a projection of Aschenbach's aesthetic visions, he doesn't seem to have a life of his own. Garcia Marquez's ninety-year old hero only sees his young "melancholic whore" when she sleeps. She becomes an apparition and he can do with her whatever he wants to: change the colour of her skin or the colour of her eyes, the dress she wears, imagine how she lies sleeping. Instead of touching, love becomes watching.

This is the phase where desire begins to fade away, to disappear, to become a frozen image, and, though seemingly even bright and intense as it always was, less physical. Desire is reduced to its essence, maybe Lacan's *objet a*, which is not necessarily connected to the mother. Like Ethel Person remarks, desire is encoded in fantasy, and the real experience of the mother-child relationship should not be used to explain the origin of those fantasies, which are related to what she calls "sex print", a range of specific sexual fantasies invoked as a means of arousal.⁵

The literal meaning of the Greek term *Aphanisis* is "disappearance". Ernest Jones used it to mean "the disappearance of sexual desire". Lacan has modified the term substantially: aphanisis is not only the disappearance of desire but the disappearance of the subject, the fading of the subject. The subject fades or disappears in the face of desire and in the face of the object. For Lacan, the fear of the disappearance of sexual desire is connected to the fear of castration. However, literature shows that the fear of disappearance of desire is connected to the anxiety caused by the final disappearance.

The dance, as an esthetic pleasure and a mating ritual, tells us a lot about the fading of desire.

⁴ R. Klein (1993), *Cigarettes Are Sublime*, New York: Duke University Press.

⁵ E. Spector Person (1999), *The Sexual Century*, New York: Yale University Press.

Maybe the dance is only experienced as a memory, a nearly forgotten souvenir of lust, lived in a time when the hero was still young. Dancing an *tango apache* with a tall, voluptuous woman in a mood so sensuous Garcia Marquez's hero can feel the blood rushing through her veins, suddenly becomes the sign of a fate impossible to avoid: desire and death, Eros and Thanatos. (Garcia Marquez, *Memory of my Melancholic Whores*).

Don Fabrizio, prince of Salina, wants to dance with beautiful Angelica, but not the mazurka to which she invites him: his joints wouldn't be capable of dancing such a lively, military dance. He prefers a waltz, and during the dance nearly conscious memories and feelings are awoken by Angelica's beauty and flowery scent.⁶ After the dance, Angelica invites him to eat something with her and her fiancée Tancredi. Don Fabrizio refuses, conscious that when he was a young man, he wouldn't have liked an aged uncle to dine with him and his beloved. He thinks it's better to bore oneself than to bore other people. Here too, dancing brings back memory of youth, erotic encounters and pleasure. And after the dance reality returns, with the bitter feeling of loneliness and loss. (Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*).

Dancing can also be looking at the other dancing. "Dance for me", Coleman Silk asks his lover Faunia. He did it before, with Steena, and both times the music is Artie Shaw's *The Man I love*, and both times Coleman says the same words: "Where did I find you, Voluptas? How did I find you? Who are you?" But with Faunia the situation is different: Steena was ashamed of the erotic dancing, but while Coleman looks at Faunia, she looks back, she is the one who seems to lead, giving herself completely and escaping at the same time. (Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*).

In Irvin Yalom's *The Schopenhauer Cure*, we meet psychoanalyst Julius, who has a very serious illness and knows he will die soon. He describes the changes that take place in his mind and in his way of looking upon the world around him. Psychoanalysis cannot help him to make most of the time he still has left, as psychoanalysis also failed to cure one of his patients, Philip, who became a philosophical councillor. With Philip's help, Julius discovers that philosophy, especially the works of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, can have a stimulating effect in the therapy-group he has lead for several years. Philosophy is an inspiring addition to their never-ending conversation, and all of the group-members are stunned by the help they get from it.

Irvin Yalom stresses that by denying death, we misdirect our search for happiness. The true meaning of life lies in engaging in what we fear most, and confronting death is the key to living an authentic and happy life. This is in fact what Freud writes in one of his few articles about death, "On Transience" ("Vergänglichkeit", 1915), where he speaks about the important role of transience, because the limitation of the possibility to enjoy and be happy increases its value.

Unlike the psychoanalyst, the writer is a person who has not been strongly influenced, even dominated by someone else's vocabulary. Maybe the insights he puts in his work could help us to fill in the empty spaces in psychoanalysis, the spaces where psychoanalysis does not work, like fear of aging and fear of dying. Each stage of life has its own somatic and psychic normality as well as its own pathology, and both are reflected in literature. According to Garcia Marquez's hero, being fifty is a decisive phase, because you discover that almost everyone is younger than you. Being sixty is intense and intensive, as you suspect there is no time left for mistakes. Seventy is terrifying, because you very well know this could be the end. But becoming ninety makes him aware that life doesn't simply pass by: "it is a unique opportunity to turn around on the barbecue's grille and bake the other side for another ninety years." (*Memories of my Melancholic Whores*).

The written fumo-analysis Italo Svevo describes in *La coscienza di Zeno* is a theoretical construction and a criticism of psychoanalysis. For Svevo, the traditional analyst is fixated on the narcissistic atmosphere of the analysis, he wants to convince his patient that smoking is only a symptom of other, more funda-

⁶ This scene is particularly beautiful in Visconti's film, where it gets far more attention than in the novel.

mental obsessive compulsive tendencies and complexes; he wants Zeno to recognize the fact that he only started smoking to compete with his father, whom he always saw smoking big cigars. Zeno's *fumo-analysis* is succesful where psychoanalysis failed: Zeno understands that he doesn't have to make the decision to quit. As he frees himself of the paradoxical logic of "the last cigarette", smoking looses his magic and he is able to stop.

On a more technical level, writing instead of traditional free-associating can also have its benefits. In *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*, Michael White and David Epston stress the importance of narratives in therapeutic treatments. The stories we write about our lives introduce us to an intertextual world, where lives are situated in texts within texts. Every telling or retelling of a story is also a new telling that encapsulates and expands upon the previous telling.⁷ What Michael White calls "storied therapy", which includes letters and all kinds of documents, is a form of therapy that privileges a person's lived experience and enables him/her to redefine his own relationship to the problems he encounters in his life, just like Zeno does in his written history of his obsessiveness about quitting smoking. Psychoanalysis may have been too fixated on the spoken word and the free-association and have therefore forgotten about the written word.

As the German psychoanalyst Gabriele Junkers remarks, many analysts have a strange aversion to working clinically with elderly people. There are different reasons for that. In psychoanalytic literature, the potential for development in the middel and later stages of life was only acknowledged in recent years. They are still under Freud's influence, who writes that "when near or above the year of fifty, the elasticity of mental processes on which treatment depends upon, is, as a rule, lacking: old people are no longer educable;"⁸ There is also the transference situation, which is transposed so that they are unconsciously confronted with aging parental figures. The fear of death is a subject analysts are afraid to touch, and they often hide behind the hypothesis that the unconscious ignores death. Maybe my unconscious doesn't know about death anxiety because death doesn't exist in the unconscious, but I surely do. "The primitive dread of death resides in the unconscious – a dread that is part of the fabric of being, that is formed early in life before the development of precise, conceptual formulation, a dread that is chilling, uncanny, and inchoate, a dread that exists prior to and outside of language and image." (Irvin Yalom in *Existential Psychotherapy*).

I think we can see literature as a kind of psychoanalysis, and psychoanalysis as a kind of literature, because both involve aspects of language, memory and fantasy that are strongly connected to each other. Looking at all there has been written about old age, one might be amazed by the fact that psychoanalysts seem to have so little to say about it, while aging has everything to do with psychoanalysis, with the economy of the drives, the control of lust, watching instead of doing, the disappearance of desire. Still, since 1920 less than 20 papers on the subject have been published in the *International Journal for Psychoanalysis*. In the seventies, Pearl King already asked for more research in this field.⁹ She reminds us Abraham wrote that some of his most successful cures had been achieved with middle-aged patients. But in addition to clinical research, literature might offer a vast and fascinating corpus about experiencing old age.

LITERATURE

The Actual by Saul Bellow (published in 1997, Bellow was 82).

The Leopard by Tomasi di Lampedusa (published in 1957, Lampedusa was 61).

La Coscienza di Zeno by Italo Zvevo (published in 1923, Zvevo was 67).

⁷ M. White, & D. Epston (1990), *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*, New York: Norton and Company.

⁸ S. Freud (1905), "On psychotherapy", in *Standard Edition*, 7, pp. 257-268.

⁹ G. Junkers (2006), *Is It Too Late? Key Papers on Psychoanalysis and Aging*, London: Karnac.

The Dying Animal by Philip Roth (published in 2001, Roth was 68).
Everyman by Philip Roth (published in 2006, the writer is now 73).
The Human Stain by Philip Roth (published in 2000).
Memories of my Melancholic Whores by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (published in 2004, Marquez was 77).
The Schopenhauer Cure by Irvin Yalom (published in 2004, Yalom was 73).
Death in Venice by Thomas Mann (although the author was still young when he wrote it).

Representations of elderly in childish illustrated books

KOTOPOULOS H. TRIANTAFYLLOS ()*

*KARAKITSIOS ANDREAS (**)*

OBJECTIVES, PROCEDURE AND RESEARCH TOOLS OF THE PROJECT

The objective of the undertaken paper focuses on the representation of the aged in the pictures of illustrated books of children's literature which circulated in Greece during the publications of 2004. In this project, various representations of grandfathers and grandmothers, their facial characteristics, the roles and activities they undertake, their personalities and the relationships they develop with the other members of the family, are closely examined. The representations of the aged are traced exclusively in the distinctive "code" of illustration which is usually prolific in children's illustrated books.

Children's books, fiction and non-fiction, and illustrated ones influence in various ways what models children have and their attitude towards the elders, since the social and political actualities and the resulting ideology of the mainstream are reflected in them (P. Hunt, 2001). The content of the illustrations of children's books makes up a distinct sort of representation of a cultural reality which both individuals and organized social groups process, promulgate and simultaneously reveal the ideological and cultural space within which they can be identified and placed. Illustration, much like children's literary narration, reproduces and propagates along the same general lines the ideas, the values, the models, the expectations and the attitudes of a group but also of the whole of society of an era during a specific point in time. At the same time though, because illustrations address readers who are children, they assume a specific significance, since a child is more susceptible with regards to an adult reader and furthermore the child as a public social symbol has acquired a tremendous symbolic meaning. It is quite natural for the "adventure" of children's illustrations just like the "adventure" of narration both of which address children to maintain a relevant sensitivity and care which, in certain

(*) The Faculty of Education, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. E-mail: ktotopou@nured.auth.gr

(**) The Faculty of Education, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. E-mail: akarakit@nured.auth.gr

circumstances, can be turned into a painful self-censorship every time that the main receiver of the messages is the young reader.

Within a general framework, reading and examining the research material is expected to offer a wide range of “image” information sufficient for the objectives of the project. With the help of various readings of illustrations which are described in detail in the chapter of methodology, the components of an approach which confronts illustration as a reservoir of cultural practices and a way of inquiry on topics which specialize in the stereotypes and the characteristic features of the aged emerge. Studying thus the “image” illustrations in the vicinity of the illustrated children’s book where the receiver is usually and mainly the young child of a certain age, can offer much towards the understanding of the doubtful social functions and the human attitudes they include, meaning stereotypes, attitudes, values and conceptions. It is also understandable that the process of the representation of the world and in specific that of the aged which is attempted through illustrations can not be a “neutral” representation of the social reality, but a reproductive mechanism of the mainstream culture and of the social hierarchy. In specific, the “code” of children’s illustrations employs strategies and tactics which persuade rather easily about what’s self-evident and what’s truly logical, something which is easily acceptable as well since it is not threatened by any shadows of a doubt as it is registered in the special group of those cultural products which are placed among children’s literature.

Finally, in this rather fluid state, this stereotypical image of the aged is turned into a generalization, it becomes simplified, consolidated and more often than not it ends up being a national or cultural stereotype. Nowadays, these sorts of generalizations formulate a rather complicate network of mutual and successive feedback which is depicted in a clearly discernible manner mainly by the media. Children’s literature, besides other symbolic means of expression and representation, had always played and still plays a very significant part in the function of this network and chiefly in its illustrations because it can transfer and depict in the long term the stereotypical image of the portraits of the aged in contrast to the mass media whose function is rather sharp and in the short term.

Confronting literary production and the corresponding illustration as empirical data which transcends the limits of traditional philological analyses is evidently no novelty. Vygotski’s analyses on the work of Shakespeare (1915/1972) and the acceptance of Piaget’s model of development by Lucien Goldman (1977) and the sociology of literature could make up the most characteristic expressions of an inquiring direction which jeopardizes the direct incorporation of empirical and philological data aiming at the analysis of the social structures and the processes of the social formulations of subjectivity.

Historically talking, children’s literature functioned as an attempt of registering the positive characteristics of the aged mainly due to a strong sense of programming which serves fundamental rationales and expectations of both the educational system and the organized society. It is commonly accepted that the existence of the aged in children’s literary texts is prolific and virtually imperative and useful in many ways. A typical reading of the topics dealt with in children’s literature proves the above mentioned points without making any special analyses. In special research conducted in Western Europe it is evident that the portrait of grandfathers and grandmothers which has always been stereotypical and unbelievably positive is also impressed with essential and occasionally leading way in the children’s literary work (E. Ansello, 1977). A formal reading of issues of children’s literature without specialised analyses proves the above ascertainments (H. Sakellariou, 1987; B. Anagnostopoulos, 1996).

In Greece, similar research has been restricted in school textbooks, “My Language” of elementary school and the elders are portrayed usually within the framework of representations of the family and the roles the two sexes assume (D. Makrinioti, 1986; A. Frangoudaki, 1979; D. Anagnostopoulou, 2002) which verify in a way the positive factor in the corresponding portraits of greek grandfathers and grandmothers. Their significant role in the function of the family is also established, with the grandmother playing a greater role in the field of sentiment and the grandfather in a spiritual manner.

Approximately 53 children’s literary and illustrated books were chosen and analyzed whose writers and illustrators were Greek. The choice of the books was made from the public libraries, public and private schools and the only criterion was that the book was in at least three public libraries and three schools. From each book, the most representative picture and the illustrations of the elders

were chosen and they were divided into three categories. The first contained pictures with representations of the grandfather, the second with the grandmothers and the third with both. The year 2004 was chosen as an exceptionally productive period of publication of children's illustrated books.

As it is the case in all kinds and genres of literature and children's literature in specific, the same applies in the case of defining the illustrated book where the current definitions are inadequate and of different content and significance from one country to the next. However, the definition of the illustrated book is generally accepted and it incorporates three basic characteristics. Firstly the term children's, meaning that the basic receptor is the child-reader (proficient or not), second, the term literary, meaning the presence of the language code in its literary dimension and third, the image, meaning the presence of the code of images. Quite naturally, the term "children's illustrated book" can be described as the combination of two different codes, that of language or literary dimension and that of illustration having as a determining characteristic the qualitative and the quantitative presence of the illustration in the presentation of the subject matter of the book beyond the language code used (G. Kitsaras, 1993).

The answer to the question which code prevails is never easy or useful. The role and the significance of the illustration in the development of the content is a complicate and intricate process. Along general lines the illustration sometimes follows the philosophy of the representation of the messages of the text, usually reinforcing it, and at other times it enhances it and suggests a different reading (M. Kanatsouli, 1999). New categories are formulated keeping in mind the primary or secondary role played by the illustrations in the book. When the logic which prevails behind the illustration moves somewhere between the borders of an illustrative and an interpretive function of the text, then obviously its role is accompanying and secondary in regards to the text's representation of messages and it consists a distinct and well-defined category of "children's illustrated book", where the basic role is held by the code of language used. However, when the role and significance of the image and the illustration is determining and direct and it practically negates the corresponding role of language, meaning there is no literary text or if it does exist its role is confined to titles and auxiliary captions of the illustration, then a new category of children's book is formulated which corresponds to the term *picture book* which is widely used (A. Karakitsios, 1993).

In general the term "children's illustrated book" is considered an easy reading material for the ages between three (3) and nine (9). The most important events and happenings as well as the most important characters are depicted with the use of pictures. Its size never exceeds 20 to 25 pages and it is directed to non readers, non proficient or primary readers. If a book has few illustrations it is directed to older children while an abundance of illustrations turns the book into reading material for younger children who do not possess developed reading abilities. In this case, the illustrations function as vehicles of meanings and the young children-readers express themselves more through the illustrations, in other words they present their feelings and thoughts more through images and less or not at all through the text (D. Anagnostopoulou, 2002)

The method of analysis used in this study is based on *context analysis* (M. Vamvoukas, 1998). With this method the material is classified in fundamental categories which present the text concentrated and achieve thus up to a certain degree the substitution of subjective esteem with objective analysis. Certain fundamental categories were chosen which became special gauging categories and were changed into quantitative categories such as: physical characteristics of grandfathers and grandmothers, accessories used in their appearance, their distinctive activities and the correlation with the roles they undertake. In the cases where more than one of facial features coincides, for example beards or moustaches, the prevailing choice was marked. When in a book there were many representations of grandparents, the most representative one was chosen. In addition other factors were investigated such as the visual angle through which the elders are represented (face to face, side-view, from the back) their physique, the kind of people grandparents come in contact with and finally the visual angle of the representation.

Being a senior citizen is a special part of the life of most people both because of the personal experiences one gains and the impact s/he has on others. During significant eras of social development (rural, industrial and post-industrial) it has always been a remarkable aspect of organized societies. Historically one becomes a grandparent soon enough, if people have children early on and if their children become parents themselves quite young, something which isn't the case in contemporary societies (nor in greek society). Today, pressure and the impact of parameters such as a greater time spend on studies, the value and prestige that a career holds for a woman, the emergence of new attitudes for the role of the family but also the fast development of medicine, have raised a woman's age of child-bearing to around 30 years old. In the 90's the average child-bearing age of citizens in Western Europe was much higher in comparison with the 60's and 70's and supposedly the appearance of grandparents has become a slim possibility. But life expectancy has been raised to 80 and the population boom has created an enormous number of elderly people most of which is grandfathers and grandmothers. It is estimated that in the greek society the majority of the elderly plays the role of the grandparent, while this percentage is quite astonishing in the USA reaching 94% (Hooymann & Kiyak 1988). In the United Kingdom more than 50% of the population has grandchildren by the age of 54. In Italy, 38.4% of the population above 40 have grandchildren. The ratio increases according to age while grandmothers outnumber grandfathers (C. Sciplino, & P. Smith, 2004).

A first definition of the elderly concludes that it's people usually above 40 years old. Of course such a definition which is based only on age as the determining factor is probably inaccurate and rather amiss since there are individuals above 40 which do not consider themselves – and rightly so – as elderly and there are also individuals on the border of 40 who are already grandparents without being old or possessing the typical characteristics of the elderly, meaning old-age features such as grey hair, moustache, old-fashioned clothing, and social characteristics of retirement or social withdrawal.

A much more objective, safe and comprehensible definition of the elderly could be achieved if we take into consideration the exercise and function of the social role a grandparent serves. It is a fact that when grandparents have grandchildren, quite naturally a connection between two different generations is achieved, between grandparents and grandchildren, with defining roles and responsibilities, rights and duties (R. Beland, & T. Mills, 2001). When attempting to define a grandparent the most predominant role is played by the societal role of the grandparent than the actual age, which varies from generation to generation, from one society to the next, from one country to another.

In the past the social status of a grandparent was rather high and the adults received respect and esteem. In the past, the social status of the grandfather and the grandmother was quite high and people as a whole had a great respect for the adults. Rather typical and stereotypical attitudes such as “the wisdom that comes along with age” and typical dominant behaviors, such as “respect for grey hair” along with long-standing privileges such as elders sitting in the front rows of ceremonies or even in the bus and church were representative of an industrial society. It is reported that white wigs carried prestige and value to those who wore them since they functioned subconsciously as symbols of social strength and wisdom. Knowledge and wisdom were privileges of adults and mainly of the elders (J. Demos, 1987; J. Quadagno, 1999). These notions disappear in the beginning of the 20th century in greek society together with the shrinking of the rural populations and it is believed that this change is associated with a certain scorn towards those who owned land. Of course the changes and the attitudes as far as the role of the elders is concerned in connection with various social formulations and interactions among the social echelons and social groups has changed dramatically in recent years with the elders losing ground – creating a rather explosive and fluid situation where the image of the grandfather and the grandmother is mainly a negative one. In the media, the presence of the elders is borderline or nonexistent.

Today, despite all those conditions which diminish the significance of the “image” of the grandfather and the grandmother, their role remains significant (L. Janelli, 1988). Their presence affects the function of the family for various reasons. First, grandparents are able to influence in a great degree the emotional

development of their grandchildren and their self-respect (V. Adkins, 1999; M. Griff, 1999). Secondly, they can change the potential of the inner relationships of the family because their eventual development from parents to elders and grandparents imposes a new understanding of the relationships and roles with the rest of the family. Thirdly, the role of the grandparents has always been considered in the greek society as traditionally supplementary in matters that concern the grandchildren's development and upbringing and despite the continual conflicts between the different generations, the presence of the grandparents remains useful and nothing can replace it. Especially in rural and semi-urban regions, the grandparents are those who replace parents and even preschool education.

RESULTS

1. In illustrated books, representations of grandparents maintained a typical balance. Grandparents appear slightly more, 19 times to 14 illustrations with grandmothers, while in 20 illustrations both sexes appear together.

2. The typical portraits of grandparents possess the stereotypical depictions. As far as the features of the grandfather go, the most typical characteristics appear with significant fluctuations in the statistics, $\chi^2=14,7$, $p<0.01$. The majority of grandfathers ($n=21$) is depicted having grey hair, a rather large number ($n=15$) appear bold or with a receding hairline, while the combination (beard, moustache and grey hair) prevails ($n=29$). Only a smaller number of grandfathers appear with a moustache and a beard. Of course, the majority has all of the above mentioned characteristics, such as grey hair, moustache, beard and boldness – to put it briefly a very stereotypical depiction of the grandfather, very similar to a previously established image of the elderly, something that has already been noted in international studies (C. Sciplino, & P. Smith, 2005).

3. In the grandmother's outward appearance, there are remarkable characteristics which raise statistical interest, $\chi^2=13,05$, $p<0.01$. Grandmothers appear having grey hair ($n=23$). Eleven times their hair is put in a bun, a very typical and traditional tendency, especially for the grandmother who lives far from the big urban centers, while what prevails is the combination of grey hair in a bun, 7 times, $n=7$. We have to note here though a substantial differentiation with the features of the grandfather, since there are two depictions of grandmothers having black hair, a fact that foretells the relevant changes in the stereotype of the grandmother but which also keeps up with the image of the contemporary grandmother.

4. As far as the accessories that grandparents use, the following applies. In the case of the grandfather, the accessories appear with some order of escalation which carries a borderline statistical significance, $\chi^2=6,75$, $p<0,5$. Quite oddly, the presence of a cane and glasses are only slight ($n=3$ canes and $n=6$ pair of glasses). On the contrary the most popular accessory is the hat ($n=13$) and clothing apparel for going out with all the stereotypical characteristics of adult clothing (clothes, gloves, tie, belt, scarf). Quite the opposite, grandmothers wear glasses more often ($n=10$ versus $n=6$ grandfathers), and they never appear wearing clothing apparel for walking. More often than not, they are depicted ($n=5$) wearing some sort of overalls for doing household chores with an apron and ($n=9$) with a kerchief on their head, rather typical of women living in rural and mountainous regions. These variations are a result of the stereotypical notions held about the roles of the sexes in the family, incorporating all the characteristics of the Mediterranean mentality and are of a tremendous statistical interest because they prove the strength of the sexist stereotypes in the greek society.

5. The above mentioned remarks are confirmed with the examples cited. The activities that grandparents are associated with are their coexistence and cohabitation with their grandchildren, a fact that allows a number of activities and duties mainly on the side of the grandfather, because no specific activity can be reported from the side of the grandchild ($n=13$), as one might have expected. The time grandmothers spend with their grandchildren is somewhat smaller but not substantially ($n=10$). What is interesting though in the case of grandmothers is that there is a significant number of activities associated with them, all about household chores, ($n=7$), such as cooking, vacuuming, shopping, while something

similar does not apply to the grandfathers whose activities consist of walks and discussions. Furthermore, no typical or stereotypical activity appeared, such as telling fairy tales to grandchildren or giving advice and making suggestions or even cases of grandparents' lecturing and preaching their grand children, which is evident in the texts but not in the illustrations.

6. The quality of the activities is closely associated with the characteristics and the content of the coexistence. The overwhelming majority of grandparents ($n=30$) is depicted in company with their grandchildren, and a rather large number ($n=14$) is depicted only together with the adult members of the family ($n=7$). The figures are statistically significant, ($\chi^2=16$, $2<0.001$). As far as the visual angle of the representation it is typical. The majority of illustrators prefers a depiction of $\frac{3}{4}$, probably for technical reasons ($n=23$) in contrast to other choices en face ($n=9$) and side-view ($n=5$) with a statistical consistency, $\chi^2=13,7$, $p<0.001$). The same can not be said about the representation of the grandmothers, where the subsequent choices (11,8 and 15) show no statistical differences.

As far as the representation of grandfathers and grandmothers is concerned in matters of their physique there is an element of surprise – their health is satisfactory since in both sexes there are only minor references to health problems (8 grandparents and 9 grandmothers), while representations with no health problems are 31 and 25.

Finally, the manner of illustration that prevails is the one which is less realistic and more interpretive/symbolic ($n=12$ versus $n=41$). It also should be noted that there only a few representations of animals with human features.

CONCLUSIONS

This study had been designed to analyze the content of illustrations in children's illustrated books of a specific year of publication aiming to establish and record the representation of the elderly and in specific to outline and to analyze the roles, the activities and the outward characteristics of grandparents. Having in mind the absence of similar studies in greek literature, a succinct and detecting logic has been used with the ultimate goal of recording first and later examining the particular characteristics of "images" relating to the elderly. Looking at our results we are enabled to focus our observations on specific, rather simple, conclusions.

1. The first unaffected conclusion is a quite natural consequence without presenting any surprises and it pertains to the emergence of small but persistent changes and differentiations in the "image" of the grandparents. When we think of grandparents the usual images that come to mind first depict a grey-haired man or woman sitting on a rocking chair and, depending on their sex, either playing ball with his grandchildren or digging in the garden or making dinner or cookies or tidying around the house helping a daughter or accompanying grandchildren to games, etc. Moreover, quite generally and stereotypically expectations record and chose images of old people with evident the passage of time on their faces, in other words tired people sitting in their armchairs or on their couch and images of retired old people without an active professional life, even though both grandparents are not always that old and they actually never indulge in the activities which the above mentioned stereotypical images depicted. These stereotypical images are a rather rare sight that goes unconfirmed.

In specific, a latent shift in many typical stereotypes is evident. Grandparents are depicted having up to a certain degree typical and traditional roles, such as conversing and coexisting with grandchildren and the least activity with the rest of the family. But there are some changes in their representation which are characteristic of the times. It is surprising that there is an absence of activities that the grandfather could partake, showing a grandfather who indulges in sitting around the house, reading his paper or watching TV – activities of a man who holds a special place in the family. It is also surprising that another typical image is missing that of the grandparent reading the fairy tale to his/her grandchildren. The stereotype that does not seem to undergo any changes is that of the grandmother's role and activities, who appears to participate actively only in the household chores. It is quite disconcerting to realize that the elderly are portrayed as coexisting either with their grandchildren or alone. This states the total

marginalization of the elderly even in the greek society. The sudden and fast shift from an extended family to a nuclear family seems to have affected substantially the quality of the presence (occurrence, position) of the grandparents in the house.

2. The second conclusion we have reached is that in general the representations of the grandparents lead to the formation of a homogenous group with specific outward characteristics and specific roles for both sexes, even though in the appearance of the grandmother certain elements indicative of the recent changes have seeped into the illustrations. In opposition to the typical, overwhelming representation of the grandmother with her hair in a bun or in a kerchief (an indication of cultural differentiation) and grey hair, a few grandmothers are depicted with black or blonde hair and with clothing that does not refer to formal outings and occasions. It seems that the illustrators of children's books, just like writers, portray in their work the stereotypes of the mainstream and of the dominant ideology. But in comparison with the writers, they only slightly depict the changes that have taken place – the latter though, develop and record in the same texts equal behaviors between the two sexes.

3. The third conclusion is connected to the absence of the elderly who are sick or disabled and in general weak. The overwhelming majority of the elderly in children's books is depicted as enjoying physical well-being without illnesses and disabilities, which is of course associated with the improvement of medical services towards the elderly but also with the general "image" of a healthy elder. Only in two instances, and not that clearly either, the picture of death is depicted, and the representation has a somewhat neutral element, which is achieved due to the absence of frightened looks and sad faces of the people in the picture. A realistic or just a simple presentation of such typical scenes is very interesting as well as all the social changes that have occurred during the last years in the roles of grandfathers and grandmothers, because children (the readers of books) from early on develop their ideas about the elderly and react as they deem proper, adopting or rejecting stereotypical attitudes. It is also rather useful to assume that a process of re-socialization is necessary in order for the older children to be helped to uproot negative myths or tendencies concerning the process of aging. It is also useful for the child to become familiar slowly with the concept of old age and to be able gradually to accept the process of growing old and confront easily a sick grandparent.

4. No elders of other ethnic or cultural groups are depicted nor any grandchildren of the same groups. No trace of class distinctions (poor/rich grandparent) is evident.

5. Finally as far as personalities are concerned (this is confirmed by the text more than by the illustration) it seems that contemporary children's literature continues to depict positively grandparents and to establish a distinct and always positive acceptance of the elderly within the greek family.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The field of study could be upgraded with the analysis of the extent of identification between the portraits of the grandparents in the books and illustrations that have been used, in other words an analytical correlation between the two different codes of illustration and literary text. Moreover the future research could focus on the differences, if any, between Greek and illustrators of other nationalities (cross-cultural comparison) but also on the changes or shifts that have already occurred in recent years, attempting comparative analysis of children's illustrated books of the previous century and the present one.

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For more information about Grandparenthood: <http://www.gold.ac.uk/research/rtn>.

APPENDIX(*)

- *My best friend*, C. Boulotis / B. Papageorgiou, Patakis.
- *The town with the rainbow*, C. Boulotis / D. Karapanou, Patakis.
- *A little kiss travels*, A. Markopoulou - K. Koufopoulou / E. Vavouri, Papadopoulos.
- *No, no do not give up*, C. Chatoglou / K. Theodorou, Secondary Education address of country of Chios.
- *The washing of Santa Claus*, I. Kiritisi / E. Vavouri, Papadopoulos.
- *The life of our Saints* (6), S. Gourioti / E. Gourioti, Orthodoxi Kipseli.
- *Europe's abduction*, B. Michailaki / C. Tagari, Diaplasi.
- *The fox and the crow*, N. Chounos / C. Varlamos, Angira.
- *Strawberrystory: a history full of love, teardrops and little strawberries*, R. Vagiani / Artoon, Kedros.
- *The saint Dimitrios and the refugees children*, M. Vigopoulou / C. Gousidis, Akritis.
- *The egoist giant*, Wilde O. (transl. D. Bourani) / K. Veroutsou.

(*) The first name/s refers to the author/s of the book and the second – after the / symbol – to the illustrator/s. The last name concerns the editor. All the books have been published during the 2004 period.

- *The egoist giant*, Wilde O. (transl. E. Dimitropoulaki) / D. Psychogiou, Angira.
- *The Santa Claus in our life*, M. Vigopoulou / C. Gousidis, Akritas.
- *Santa Claus's troubles*, L. Vasiliou / D. Stamatiadi, Kedros.
- *Six small big fairy tales*, A. Kokoreli / V. Papatsarouchas, Ellinika Grammata.
- *The Iasonas, the thief and the phantom*, K. Mouriki / P. Fourka, Mikri Militos.
- *Mathaios and his grandfather*, Pioumini R. (transl. V. Nika) / E. Vavouri, Patakis.
- *A baby without a name*, H. Papamoschou / E. Griva, Patakis.
- *Sweet cluster grape*, M. Goumenopoulou / E. Vavouri, Patakis.
- *Gargantua, Rabelais F.* (adaptation X. Sakellariou) / V. Grivas, Mikri Militos.
- *Popularly fairy tales from Paros and Antiparos*, G. Sergi / F. Klironomou, Livanis.
- *Phoebus... and the other phoebus*, G. Grekou / A. Simeonidi, Ellinika Grammata.
- *Life is beautiful*, C. Giantsiou / N. Kapatsioulia, Psychogios.
- *Nikanoras the shepherd and the romeiko*, K. Ganotis / S. Giagianou, Pilos.
- *Michael Strogoff*, Jules Verne (transl. M. Karali) / L. Katsantonis, Kedros.
- *Morfoulis is sick*, A. Dasiou / E. Fragou, Mikrokosmos.
- *Minion and Pothitos prince*, Z. M. Leprins (transl. E. Lada) / E. Lada, Livanis.
- *Changing house*, A. Michalopoulou / Svetlin, Papadopoulos.
- *The tomato grandfather*, K. Doxiadi / M. Tzamboura, Papadopoulos.
- *A small wooden box*, T. Chatzopoulos / M. Manousakis, Metaixmio.
- *Stories and fairy tales from Greece*, Papadopoulou Eleni / S. Palantzas, Minoas.
- *Lydia in the land of colours*, L. Lichnara / L. Varvarousi, Kastaniotis.
- *Two songs with tale*, G. Niolis / G. Niolis, Kalentis.
- *Aris the boy from Greece*, K. Giannikou / K. Giannikou, Modern Times.
- *Three magician, wise and kings*, G. Mirat / C. Dimos, Kastaniotis.
- *Theseus the glory of Athens*, A. Simeonoglou / C. Dimos, Psychogios.
- *The story of Iros*, M. Kekropoulou / N. Dimitriadis, Enalios.
- *Bouboulina, a life for the country*, R. Rossi / S. Palantzas, Minoas.
- *The grandfather and his hat*, T. Sofi / T. Sofi - E. Ravani - N. Frangedaki, Municipality of Serres.
- *The mayor and the butterflies*, M. Pepona / M. Pepona, Diaplasi.
- *The smiling little caramel, Louiza and the grin*, M. Adriopoulou / S. Palantzas, Minoas.
- *The dragon who ate the sun*, L. Psarafti / E. Vavouri, Patakis.
- *Mistress - mother sea*, T. Moraiti / S. Gousis, Taxideftis.
- *The brave frying-pan John*, Z. Valasi / K. Veroutsou, Kedros.
- *A dream full of precious stones*, E. Bouchalaki / Lagoudianakis, Kounalakis.
- *The wooden doll*, M. Liratzis / E. Logvinovska, Patakis.
- *I was inspired to tell ten and a half fairy tales*, V. Iliopoulos / V. Lampitsi, Patakis.
- *The dog, the rooster and the fox*, Aesop (E. Choreanti) / L. Katsantonis, Kedros.
- *Old professions that do not exist anymore*, S. Chatzicocolaki / V. Diamanti, Kedros.
- *Climentini's week*, G. Nouris / C. Dimos, Ellinika Grammata.
- *The mistress of snow*, Grimm (transl. E. Christopoulou) / M. Bacha, Metaixmio.
- *24 fairy tales for laughing and for teaching*, P. Pamboudi / P. Pamboudi, Roes.
- *Santa Claus goes to the war*, A. Kokoreli / N. Adrikopoulos, Ellinika Grammata.

Mourning and writing in Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*

DONALD VANOUSE (*)

Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* is a memoir of her experiences during the year following the sudden death of her husband, John Gregory Dunne. He died of a heart attack on December 30, 2003. She began the memoir on October 4, 2004 (6). It is not a narrative of "emotion recollected in tranquillity." Didion exposes the patterns of thought she has been experiencing during this year of grief, and she identifies the shift by which she relinquishes modes of irrational behavior for the acquiescences of mourning. Early in the memoir, she asserts that there has been an invisibility imposed upon death in contemporary American life (60). There has been strong appreciation of this memoir in book reviews, however, and in the granting of the National Book Award for 2005, in large printings by the publisher (350,000 in the first months), and in the plans for a one-woman dramatization on Broadway in 2007 starring Vanessa Redgrave. It may be that Didion's memoir speaks to an American need to accept loss and achieve mourning. In her "Forward" to the collection of essays *Political Fictions* (2001), for example, Didion asserts that "reactive angers... had driven American politics since the 1960's" (16). Perhaps Didion's exploration of her entrapments in grief and guilt can enhance awareness of cultural irrationalities emerging from the inability to accept loss.

The memoir reveals both Didion's personal fantasy that "information is control" (94) and her lifelong commitment to "read, learn, work it up, go to the literature" (44).

She quotes from the *Merck Manual*, from medical and psychoanalytic sources including Freud and Melanie Klein, and from numerous poets (including Auden, Eliot, E.E. Cummings, Delmore Schwartz, and Gerard Manley Hopkins), from Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* as well as from John Gregory Dunne's writings and her own; she even consults the log kept by the elevator operator at their apartment, and the autopsy report indicating the time and cause of her husband's death. These citations identify her respect for language and literature in comprehending her emotional experiences, but they also seem to indicate Didion's attempts to displace her emotions and impose intellectual control.

She quotes a long passage from an article by Vamik D. Volkan, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Virginia, on the treatment of "pathological mourners" (55). After a page of outraged scoffing at his abstract generalizations, she notes that she is "directing anger toward the entirely unknown"

(*) The Department of English, State University of New York, Oswego, New York 13126, USA.

psychiatrist” (57). Such behavior, she realizes, is one of the characteristics of the pathological mourner discussed by Volker.

One reviewer has suggested that the structure of the narrative itself provides a glimpse of Didion’s desire to control the reader. The reviewer notes that we only learn “in the second half of the memoir” that Dunne had a long history of heart problems (Kramer). Didion does, however, identify a Medtronic card with the date of the implanting of a pacemaker (3 June, 2003) among the items the hospital gives her from the contents of his pockets. Nevertheless, Didion herself acknowledges that personal issues determine her literary structure. She says, “The way I write is who I am” (7). It might be appropriate, in these terms, to say that she is only able to discuss Dunne’s cardiac problems *after* she has recognized that her unwillingness to acknowledge these dangers had created barriers in their communication.

The “Magical Thinking” in the title of the memoir refers to the numerous instances of denial in Didion’s responses to her husband’s death. These denials are, in fact, attempts to rescue him from the cardiac failure which has already ended his life. Early in the memoir, Didion quotes from a *New York Times* article on the behavior of the mother of a nineteen-year-old who had been killed by a bomb in Kirkuk. When an official comes to inform the woman of her son’s death, she refuses to open the door. She believes that she can prevent her son from dying by not admitting the messenger (13). Didion read this article eleven months after her husband’s death. She recognizes that the mother’s irrational behavior is a parallel to her own. She had delayed calling family members in California because she thought John might not have died *there* yet. She felt that she must stay at home because John would need her to be there in order to return. She cannot discard a pair of his shoes or move the stack of books he was reading because he will need them in order to return. Even in consenting to an autopsy, she believes the doctors may discover that his death resulted from a minor problem that could still be fixed (37). She states that she was “in no way prepared to accept [the] news [of his death] as final” (32). There is an echo of this intense desire for the power to “reverse his death” late in the memoir (184). It seems to emerge from the period when she has begun the work of mourning. She reflects upon a moment when she might have chosen ‘to say one small thing that made him happy.’ She asks, “If I had said it in time, would it have worked?” (146). Would it have kept him alive? This flicker of guilt seems to identify the significance of guilt in the denials and the desperate desires of Didion’s “magical thinking.” Freud observes that the “loss of a love object constitutes an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in a love relationship to make itself felt” (132). Behind the guilt, unseen angers flicker.

Many of Didion’s earlier writings indicate that she has had life-long literary engagement with loss and anxiety. In an early essay entitled “Why I Write,” for example, she recalls that she began “writing things down” when she was five years old.” She observes that children who “[keep] private notebooks are lonely and resistant rearrangers of things, anxious malcontents, children afflicted apparently at birth with some presentiment of loss” (*Bethlehem* 136-7). This childhood desire to protect herself from loss by rearranging things in words parallels the “magical thinking” of her grief. There are similar issues of loss in “Goodbye to All That” (1967), her essay on moving from New York City to California (*Bethlehem* 224-36). Even her essay on encountering a variety of changes during a visit to her family home in California concludes with a quotation from a Gerard Manly Hopkins’ poem on the projections of grief: “Margaret are you grieving/ Over goldengrove unleaving?” The poem ends with Hopkins’ analytical interpretation: “It is the blight man was born for/ It is Margaret you mourn for.” Didion includes a quotation from this very Hopkins’ poem in this memoir on the death of her husband. The poem is cited late in the memoir, and it enables her to acknowledge that her mourning of Dunn expresses a mourning for herself (*Bethlehem* 187; *Year* 197-8). Such correlations between her earlier writings on loss and fear and *The Year of Magical Thinking* suggest that important elements in Didion’s grief at her husband’s death are reflections of unacknowledged anxieties that extend back to her childhood.

There is a startling instance of Didion’s sharing of her personal psychological history in *The White Album* (1979). The title essay of the collection, linking her personal voice to cultural history, identifies her as a participant in the “New Journalism” which emerged in the 1960’s. After she notes that the cultural changes of the 1960’s and early 70’s had led her “to doubt the premises of all the stories” she had told herself to make life comprehensible, she quotes from a psychiatric evaluation of her illness

which was made at St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica, California. A brief portion of the psychiatric report indicates Didion's symptoms and her emotional fragility:

In June of this year, patient experienced an attack of vertigo, nausea, and a feeling that she was going to pass out.... [B]asic affective controls... are insecurely and tenuously maintained by... defense mechanisms including intellectualization, obsessive compulsive devices, projection, reaction formation, and somatization (14-5).

These symptoms developed during a period in which she "felt the necessity to revise the circuitry of [her] mind" (see 44). The issues in the psychiatrist's report clearly parallel the disorientations that she experiences in her grief after the death of her husband. *The Year of Magical Thinking* is, in fact, a report upon "revising the circuitry of her mind." An editor, in introducing Didion's essays for an anthology, says that two of her novels, *Play it as it Lays* (1968) and *A Book of Common Prayer* (1977), both "portray women who attempt to survive a catastrophic life" (Smart, 311).

Didion's life during the *Year of Magical Thinking* was, in fact, catastrophic beyond the sudden death of her husband. Five days before John's fatal heart attack, their only child, Quintana, had gone into the hospital with flu-like symptoms that quickly developed into a severe, life-threatening sepsis. In fact, Joan and John had just returned from visiting their daughter in the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital when Dunne suddenly died of heart failure.

In responding to her daughter's illness, Didion's desire for control confronts the limits of her power in the disheartening "morphing" of the symptoms of the intractable illness. She introduces information from her research into discussions with the doctors, resists the removal of the EEC wires and the tracheotomy tube for no reason, and at one point nearly goes to the hospital wearing green scrubs. She says that she was "trying like a sheepdog to herd the doctors" (127-6). She learns, however, that her anxious questionings and suggestions "made no difference" (100). Quintana is still alive at the end of the period of this memoir (though she died shortly after). Experiences with Quintana's mysterious illness seem to contribute to Didion's developing capacity for accepting the limits of her "managerial skills" (98) and her responsibility.

In describing her struggle with grief following John's death, Didion reports on experiences that she entitles the "vortex effect." The opposite of the "magical thinking" by which she tries to *deny* the death of her husband, the "vortex effect" whirls her back into remembered moments of emotional resonance. Certain Los Angeles streets, an image of the California sea coast on a television advertisement, and even a ride on an escalator in Boston are among the events that trigger a "sharp memory" and an uncontrollable rush of associations, tears and a sense of powerlessness. By the midpoint of the memoir, the "vortex" experiences include swarming images that impel her return to emotionally difficult moments in her life with Quintana as well as with John.

"Would I need to relive every mistake?" Didion asks. She notes that the "vortex" leads from something neutral or harmless toward events in which, for example, "one of us had said the wrong thing. Or stopped speaking. Or imagined the other had stopped speaking." At this point, she includes a sustained quotation from Freud's essay on "Mourning and Melancholia":

Each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up and hypercathected, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it.... It is remarkable that this painful unpleasure is taken as a matter of course by us.

Didion concludes; "So Freud explained what he saw as the 'work' of grief, which as described sounded suspiciously like the vortex" (132-3). Didion's research into texts concerning the issues of her emotional experience leads to this moment of recognition. This insight does not altogether end the "vortex" experiences reported in the memoir, but it seems to be a part of a turn toward accepting loss, toward mourning.

Just as she suppresses the issue of John's cardiac condition, Didion also withholds his age (71) at the time of his death. She does mention several times that they had been married for 40 years, and she notes that, for John, she seemed always to be at the age she was at the time of their marriage. She says

in that regard: “Marriage is not only time: it is also, paradoxically, the denial of time” (197). The suppression of John’s age in the memoir seems to provide another glimpse of Didion’s sustained denials of the encroaching possibility of death. John himself had a clearer awareness of the threat posed by his heart condition. In the autumn before his death, they had disagreed about his wish to visit Paris. He had said, finally, that “he had a sense that if he didn’t go to Paris in November he would never again go to Paris.” She felt this was a form of “blackmail” (80). They made the trip. A snippet of a representative conversation indicates her recognition of a recurring pattern of evasion:

*When something happens to me, he would frequently say.
Nothing will happen to you, I would say
But if it does (196).*

Didion includes numerous instances of even more explicit warnings. After learning of his heart condition, Dunne reminds her of his own father’s death in his 50’s (41), and he addresses his heart condition in his own writing. In the memoir, Didion discusses her rereading of his narrative, *Harp* as “less sunny” than she had remembered it (154). Her comments on this rereading hesitates and circles around a friend’s funeral on a day in August, 1987 when John had been to see his doctor. There is an intertwining of the narrative of the funeral with “something else” that happened: John had learned of the severity of his heart condition. We don’t hear what he might have said to Joan. We learn that John, the narrator in *Harp*, tells his wife that he learned he “was a candidate for a catastrophic cardiac event.... [and he] started to cry.” Didion says, “I had not remembered this or I had determinedly chosen not to remember this” (155). Later, when another doctor diagnoses the significance of John’s ventricular fibrillation with an unmistakably vivid image, John shares the report with her: “We call it the widow-maker, pal,” the doctor had dryly observed (157). There is, in fact, a series of references to “omens and messages” that she had missed (152). There is even a kind of refrain in the memoir taken from her reading of Phillip Aries’ *The Hour of our Death*. Gawain in the *Song of Roland* knows more than his doctor and his priests about his forthcoming death: “*I tell you that I shall not live two days*” (see: 16, 153, 219). Until the last instance of this refrain, Didion prints it in italics. The hero’s uncanny awareness becomes, typographically, an accepted reality. This recognition that John was aware of his impending death seems to be a valuable element in Didion’s movement into mourning. Such recognition frees her from responsibility for his death and from her need for the desperations of magical thinking.

Didion begins to express a sense of irrecoverable loss and to submit to her own limitations. There is, for example, the recognition that she had “*not sufficiently appreciated*” some of the moments which characterized their marriage. They had worked together as writers, sharing projects and providing editorial readings, but numerous gestures had not been recognized. He had dedicated his book *True Confessions* to his mother and to Joan and Quintana, for example, with the added word: “Generations” (154). It affirms their lives in connection to his family. She had not sufficiently appreciated it. She recalls that when they began an airplane journey, he always took he hand. When she reads in John’s college yearbook that Adlai Stephenson had spoken to the class, she realizes that he had never mentioned the event. She reaches a point of asserting that “we knew not the smallest fraction of what there was to know” of each other (196). These glimpses of omissions and lost opportunities are presented without any expression of a need to recover or repeat or correct those incidents in their lives.

More significant, perhaps, is Didion’s recognition that her need to be right has created impossible demands and blocked her in making important admissions (see 141 for example). Her immersion in the loss of understanding and control has returned her to a recognition of the vast geological patterns, beyond human control that were her childhood reference points in considering the changes in the world: “some of the islands that were there then would now be gone, just shallows” (227). She says that she achieved no “clarity” or “resolution” as a result of writing this memoir (225), but she concludes by recalling that while swimming with John in the tide on the California coast he was not afraid to feel the swell change and ride its “swiftness and power” (227).

He was not afraid to let go.

Didion’s psychoanalytically informed memoir gives a valuable visibility to the emotional expe-

riences provoked by unexpected death. In addition to reporting her personal disorientations following John Gregory Dunne's heart attack, Didion provides a vivid supplement to her earlier works on narrative-writing and the fragility of identity.

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The psychology of humiliation: Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" and Mann's "Mario and the Magician"

BERTRAM WYATT-BROWN (*)

Curiously, the psychological impact of being thoroughly and devastatingly humiliated has never received much theoretical literary exposition and interpretation. A scholar of ancient Icelandic literature with a special interest in the psychology of humiliation, remarks, "Although humiliation figures in the life of almost all scholars it has had virtually no scholarly life."¹ The DSM-III-R has neither humiliation nor its close affiliate shame in the index. Besides its pervasiveness in ordinary affairs, humiliation has often involved whole nations and peoples. Close study of the psychological and even the political ramifications of humiliation and the trauma and spiraling reactions that it causes is in its relative infancy.²

In any case, ever since Achilles dragged Hector's body behind his chariot as he circled the walls of Troy, men have known how to shame enemies and drive them to despair and loss of will. The motions to disgrace deviants, military foes, and under-classes of race, religious faith, and ethnicity has a sadly universal history. We are horrified to learn that during the Iraqi War, for instance, U.S. personnel forced detainees to perform obscenities in their nakedness. The ostensible purpose was to extract intelligence with problematic results as experts on the topic constantly but fruitlessly point out. The

(*) University of Florida, 212 Stony Run Lane, Baltimore, Maryland 21210-3006, USA. E-mail: bwyattbrown@verizon.net

¹ William Ian Miller, *Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 131.

² I should mention, however, the fine work of James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper, 1998); Fred E. Katz, *Ordinary People and Extraordinary Evil: A Report on the Beguilings of Evil* (New York: Albany State University of New York, 1993); Stanley Milgram, "Behavioral Study of Obedience," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67 (1963): 371-078; Stanley Milgram, "The Compulsion To Do Evil: Obedience to Criminal Orders," *Patterns of Prejudice* 1 (1967): 3-7; Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), and Evelin Linder, "Were Ordinary Germans Hitler's 'Willing Executioners'? *Idea: A Journal of Social Issues* 5 (December 11, 2000).

swift amputations of limbs of Sierra Leonians, the raping of women in the presence of their Somalian families, Jordanian honor killings for a woman's so-called sexual offenses, and the reduction of Jews' identity to tattooed numbers in the death camps of Nazi Germany – these are all familiar, fairly recent examples.

Yet, as mentioned, the topic itself is seldom set in terms of the social and psychological processes involved. After all, horrendous deeds of humiliation do occur in both dictatorial and democratic societies. We would expect the former connection but not the latter. In fact, as William Ian Miller observes, “rather than subverting democracy,” the implementation of humiliating acts largely makes “available to the low as well as to the high a strategy of indifference” and, we might add, even delicious pleasure in the maltreatment of victims.³ Actually Sigmund Freud, like Thomas Mann later in the 1920s, recognized the way in which leaders and followers strengthened each other in the pursuit of sometimes hideous violence. To be sure, Freud incorporated it into his psychological theories when in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) when he stressed the pressure that ordinary people *en masse* can exert on their leaders. They must do their will or face rejection. The leader “must himself be held in fascination by a strong faith (in an idea) in order to awaken the group's faith; he must possess a strong and imposing will, which the group, which has no will of its own, can accept from him.” Such a figure must be a fanatical believer in his own ideas. Yet, they must be ideas shared among his followers or cohesion and obedience are lost.⁴ Thus, the man in charge is most likely to win full command of his public by charismatic means that those present find not only compatible but inspiring. The two stories illustrate this point.

Beforehand, though, we need a helpful definition of the procedure that fashions the giving and receiving of humiliation. Evelin Lindner, a German-born psychologist with worldwide experience, provides it. She divides the issue into three divisions: “the perpetrator's act, the victim's feeling, and the social process.”⁵ She stresses, though, that it does not end there. Reactions of the humiliated may take a number of different forms – acceptance of the tormentor's power in obsequiousness, reaction in revenge that begins, perhaps, a cycle of violent aggression and response that grows out of control, or deep psychological depression – perhaps post-traumatic stress disorder. We can only touch on the three initial components here.

The analysis begins with Nathaniel Hawthorne's grim and gothic short story, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux.”⁶ It was written in 1832, exactly a hundred years before our second example, Thomas Mann's “Mario and the Magician.” A century may separate the pair, but they both bear startlingly rich examinations into the human tragedy of mesmerizing, dictatorial exertions over ordinary people. Hawthorne and Mann both understood the vulnerabilities of human beings under the spell of more powerfully willed magnetic, political figures. They lend themselves to such leaders in order to gain a power derived from that seemingly godlike source. These commanding figures exploit their victims' frangible identities and their willing followers' desire for a supremacy over others, however temporary that mastery may

³ William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 206.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. Ernest Jones, and James Strachey (1921; London: Liverwright, 1951), 57. I thank Dr. Lars J. Schalin, a psychoanalyst of Helsinki, Finland, for calling attention to Freud's insights in his plenary address, “In the Problems of Envy with Examples from the Stage and from History,” the 23rd International Conference on Literature and Psychology,” University of Helsinki, 28 June 2006.

⁵ Evelin Lindner, *Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict* (2006), ix.

⁶ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” in *Complete Works* (12 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 3: 616-41. Ironically for so grim a story, the tale was first published in S. G. Goodrich, *The Token*, a gift book with largely sentimental and pleasantly romantic poems and prose. According to the historian George Forgie, it was largely “ignored by literary critics before 1950” but has since risen in scholarly estimation to being one of “Hawthorne's most important works.” See George B. Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age* (New York: Norton, 1979), 110; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 6-24.

be. A brief synopsis of Hawthorne's masterpiece follows.

"My Kinsman, Major Molineux" takes place in a colonial port – Boston though not so named – a hundred or so years before its publication. To give it greater universality, Hawthorne notifies the reader this is not a parable about an incipient American Revolution. Nonetheless, as Hawthorne notes early in the tale, popular discontent with the reigning government is running high. In fact, one historian claims that for the representation of Major Molineux, Hawthorne had in mind Thomas Hutchinson, a hated Massachusetts colonial governor. His house was burned to the ground by a mob in 1765. It had been led by two disguised figures.⁷ If so, the New England author reconfigured the situation quite severely so that Molineux, a fallen member of the Court or colonial party, is the victim of mob action, not the governor who appears in the tale as a man of "authority." Since Hawthorne was a close student of ancient folklore, the fiction conforms, however, to the notion of the disgraced "Scapegoat King." The failed ruler is sacrificed to appease the ancient gods, as Freud explained in *Totem and Taboo* and Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*.⁸ Anyhow, both Hawthorne and Mann's stories to be discussed are political in character. These authors perceptively recognized that democracy was a fragile thing, that unscrupulous crowd manipulators could bring disorder, humiliation, and cruelty in the name of order and justice.

Robin, an eighteen-year-old youth is the central character. He has arrived after sundown from his distant rural home to make his career in the dark, unwholesome grimness of the city. He feels as if he was already subject to a magical conjuration. Perhaps it only a dream, but he knows that his bearings are gradually slipping away.⁹ His task, though, is to find his much respected first-cousin-once-removed – Major Molineux. "The Major," Robin later tells a kindly gentleman that his powerful relative "had visited" Robin's family "in great pomp, a year or two before."¹⁰ He had indicated interest in young Robin. To have a patron was most necessary in that period when jobs were scarce, advancement slow and scanty. Seeking directions, Robin first hails, as the shadows grow, "a man in years, with a full periwig of gray hair, a wide-skirted coat of dark cloth, and silk stockings rolled above his knees. He carried a long and polished cane, which he struck down perpendicularly before him at every step; and at regular intervals he uttered two successive hems, of a peculiarly solemn and sepulchral intonation." When queried about the residence of the Major, the old fellow rages, "I know not the man you speak of! What! I have authority. I have – hem, hem – authority." Two barbers in their shop roar with laughter over the unequal and humiliating outburst. It is as if they are demonstrating how the lowly join in the cruel plans of those above them. The scene illustrates the point that Miller has made. As in a Greek drama, the townsmen's derision stalks the discomfited Robin throughout his miserable search from an inn, a tavern, and a brothel. Turning angry at last, Robin then runs up to another man whom he had seen earlier. Only now the cloaked stranger's face has become a hideous mask. He had besmeared one half of his countenance with a black substance. Red dyestuff covered the other side, with a huge and

⁷ Peter Shaw, "Their Kinsman, Thomas Hutchinson, Hawthorne, the Boston Patriots, and His Majesty's Royal Governor," *Early American Literature*, 11, (1976): 183-90. Neal Frank, *Hawthorne's Early Tales: A Critical Study* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1972), 231; Alexander W. Allison, "The Literary Contexts of 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux,'" *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 23 (1968): 304-05n, and Frederick Newberry, *Hawthorne's Divided Loyalties: England and America in His Works* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 1987), 62-66, see the story in terms of a moral and religious context, not altogether a political one.

⁸ See Peter Shaw, "Fathers, Sons, and the Ambiguities in 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux,'" in Albert J. Von Frank, ed., *Critical Essays on Hawthorne's Short Stories* (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1991), 110-23. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (London: Moffat, Yard, 1918), and Sir James George Frazer *The Golden Bough A Study in Magic and Religion*, ed. Robert Fraser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁹ Samuel Chase Coale, *Mesmerism and Hawthorne: Mediums of American Romance* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 41-42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 631, 632.

disfigured nose between. Roughly he dismisses the lad with the admonition that he should wait right there for an hour – and then disappears.¹¹ The youth obeys and sits on the roadside before a cold, solitary church building.

Homesick, Robin thinks of the unworldly joys of his rustic parents and how they must be sending up prayers for their beloved son so far away. But he knows that they would be disappointed if he returned a failure. Another, more affable stranger approaches, and learning of his quest, advises Robin to linger as the previous figure had warned. Yet, he promises that Robin would soon see the Major. As they converse, the pair hear a sour blast of a trumpet along with increasingly loud shouts of a mob. Night has completely fallen. Carrying bright torches, they noisily march along. At their head, on an enormous steed, is the devil-like stranger with the parti-colored face, clothed in full military regalia. Members of the crowd are also dressed in fantastic, frightening costumes. Their leader orders a halt and “the trumpets vomited horrid breath, and held their peace; the shouts and laughter of the people died away, and there remained only an universal hum, nearly allied to silence.”¹² There, in their midst Robin sees a poor wretch in a wooden cart. It is his patron, Major Molineux. He is attired in what Hawthorne describes as “tar-and-feathery dignity.”¹³ Despite his muscular build and graying stateliness, the Major had been brought low. His face is pale as death and yet far more ghastly. The broad forehead has become contracted in his agony. His eyes are red and wild. Frothy spittle drips from his trembling lips. His body wracks with convulsions, which he vainly tries to control out of pride, even under the pressure of overpowering degradation. Molineux’s punishment for falling out of favor with the provincial government leaders is as demeaning and severe as if he had been castrated.

The Major looks up and sees his young cousin in the crowd, a further abasement for someone whose “head,” Hawthorne comments, had “grown gray in honor.” The kinsmen stare at each other. Robin’s knees shake. His hair almost stands on end, overcome, it could be said, in an Aristotelian manner, by “a mixture of pity and terror.” All those whom he had encountered only to be rejected are in the crowd. They wait expectantly to see his reaction. The brothel strumpet, the brusque innkeeper, the tavern guests, and the barbers. Then, overhead, from the governor’s balcony he hears a raucous laugh – “Haw, haw, haw, – hem, hem, – haw, haw, haw.” On the head of the pompous stroller was no longer the powdered wig but a nightcap. His silk hosiery hangs loosely at his knees. Still, he still grasps the polished cane, symbol of authority. With this final blow to his self-confidence and sense of autonomy, Robin bursts into uncontrollable laughter, as if in answering bray. The crowd joins in his shouts. His, though, are the loudest of all. The grim-faced commander then moves the crowd away.¹⁴

“On they went,” Hawthorne writes, “like fiends that throng in mockery around some dead potentate, mighty no more, but majestic still in his agony.” Freud and Frazer could not have improved on this observation. The ceremony of disgrace ends, and the revelers scatter. The major’s cart moves away. Drained of all feeling, Robin turns to his companion and says in resignation, “Thanks to you, and to my other friends, I have at last met my kinsman, and he will scarce desire to see my face again.”¹⁵ He asks for directions home, but the kind gentleman suggests instead that Robin stay longer. After all, he is a promising lad who may well succeed regardless of Molineux’s fate.

Although the perspective is that of a very young man meeting a cruel world, in a few pages Hawthorne has also described a basic moral theme that applies to more societies, circumstances, times, and cultures than the setting indicates. The narration clearly indicates the pace of humiliation as the psychologist Lindner has outlined: first, the tormentor’s act of control – in this case the governor and his Satanic military

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 618, 628, 629.

¹² Hawthorne, *Works*, quoted in David Leverenz, “Historicizing Hell in Hawthorne’s Tales,” in Millicent Bell, ed., *New Essays on Hawthorne’s Major Tales* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 105-6.

¹³ Hawthorne, *Works*, 3: 637.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 638.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 639-41.

aide to a pre-arranged understanding among all the townspeople that the Major must be mocked and rendered impotent. Fortuitously Robin's arrival increased Major Molineux's anguish and disgrace.

In both Hawthorne and Mann's stories, as later explained, mesmerism is part of the horror, a hellish nightmare of foreboding with a theatrical hypnotist or sorts squeezing individuality out of his subjects. Robin's series of humiliating experiences are designed to break his sense of identity, as it happens, so that even familial loyalty and honor are gradually expelled from his soul.¹⁶ The governor, the militia officer, and the crowd all conspire to bring dishonor on the pair, but, of course, especially on the major, who had once been a figure of substance and power.

Finally, there is the social process in which the desired confrontation takes place. What effect the Major's downfall has on the impressionable young man is psychologically plausible. It might be called an early example of the Patty Hearst and Stockholm hostage syndromes. The mental condition is named after the robbery of a bank in Stockholm in late August 1973. Armed with machine guns, Jan-Erik Olsson and a partner seized four hostages, three women and a man, strapped them with dynamite, shoved them into a bank vault, and held them for six days. When they were freed, the rescuers discovered that the prisoners had grown fond of their captors. One woman even became engaged to one of the perpetrators. Another worked up a legal defense fund for the hostage-takers. The forensic psychiatrist on the case, Nils Bejerot, coined the phrase Stockholm Syndrome.¹⁷ This form of identification with an oppressor has wide implications in wife abuse cases, Hitler's manipulations of followers, the treatment of war prisoners, victims of incest, and other such horrors.

The Freudian analyst might explain that Hawthorne had in mind a proto-Oedipal enactment here – with Robin the putative “son” of the Major whose removal opens possibilities for himself. Robin, still the innocent, sees the pageant as a child would, with himself the center of adult concern. Nonetheless, the old man under the balcony and the demonic militiaman had more serious business to perform. In this case, the “father” or patriarchal figure of the community is the victor. The individual with power can manipulate others, especially the young and easily misled. In any case, the climax of the story demonstrates a social fact of traditional and even modern life.

When crises arose, Hawthorne implies, rich and poor, high and low, join together in the selection of a figure or group to blame. Justice was only public retribution, not abstract principle. If these inclinations were peculiar to New England in its pre-Revolutionary years, the story would be a curious comment on antique ways and little more. But the ethic of shame – the use of the scapegoat, as previously mentioned – that produced Molineux's total disgrace belongs to a barbarous world that we would hardly recognize. Unfortunately, however, we find that it surrounds us in current foreign and military affairs. The weight of the community upon the individual is most dramatically demonstrated in Robin's reaction to the sight of the mob and its prize. Robin's shout is the catharsis attending any tragedy. Yet, it is one we have seen in the humiliation of Iraqi prisoners and in the humiliation and murder of civilians out of revenge at Haditha in Iraq and most likely elsewhere.

¹⁶ See also Arthur T. Broes, “Journey into Moral Darkness: ‘My Kinsman, Major Molineux’ as Allegory,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 19 (1964): 171-84; Thomas E. Connors, “‘My Kinsman, Major Molineux’: A Reading,” *Modern Language Notes*, 74 (1959): 299-302. Simon O. Lesser, “The Image of the Father: A Reading of ‘My Kinsman, Major Molineux’ and ‘I Want to Know Why,’” *Partisan Review*, 22 (1955): 372-90; Seymour L. Gross, “Hawthorne's ‘My Kinsman, Major Molineux’: History as Moral Adventure,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 12 (1957): 97-109; Harvey Pearce, “Hawthorne and the Sense of the Past or, the Immortality of Major Molineux,” *ELH*, 21 (1954): 327-49; Peter Shaw, “Fathers, Sons, and the Ambiguities of Revolution in ‘My Kinsman, Major Molineux,’” *New England Quarterly* 49 (1976): 559-76; and Julian Smith, “Historical Ambiguity in ‘My Kinsman, Major Molineux,’” *English Language Notes* 8 (1970): 115-20.

¹⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stockholm_syndrom. See also, Joseph M. Carver, “Love and Stockholm Syndrome: The Mystery of Loving an Abuser,” <http://www.mental-health-matters.com/articles/article.php?artID=469>.

Turning to Thomas Mann's story, which in German is *Mario und der Zauberer*, a similar pattern develops. We see how humiliation psychologically distorts the moral compass of victims or destroys them and how that state of mind makes possible the exercise of raw power.¹⁸ Like the latter's story, Mann explores the psychology of shame, embarrassment, and reaction. So much of his writing poses order and convention against disorder and the human capacity for and fascination with chaos and evil. Hawthorne dealt with the same issue. Personally Mann was a proper bourgeois. His attire was always impeccable. He had the manners of a cultured upper middle-class refinement and formal bearing. But he also was aware of a deep sense of alienation from such constrictions.

Mann, as we all know, suffered his own self-humiliation in his apparently unrequited homosexuality. Married and respectable as he was, though, he knew the dangers of slipping off the pedestal of respectable manhood into momentary gratification and then ruin. The literary critic Irvin Stock writes how Mann, then fifty-two, fell in love with a handsome nineteen-year-old boy, "Klaus H," one of the many for whom he developed a yearning.¹⁹ His biographers Ronald Hayman and Anthony Heilbut leave no doubt regarding his intense homosexual longings for young adult males. Earlier in his career he sought to find a means to express his feelings without self-exposure and the inevitable censure and humiliation it would arouse. In 1897, he discovered the device of the "break-through story." He was referring to *Little Herr Friedemann*, a novella. Like Cipolla in "Mario and the Magician," the protagonist is a hunchback, representing the perverse nature of homosexuality. The deformed Herr Friedemann is infatuated with a young girl, not a male. Astrid Lange-Kirshheim explores the tale with great skill.²⁰

The personal experience that prompted the tale of "Mario and the Magician," though, occurred earlier, in 1926. Thomas Mann and his family went to the Italian seaside on holiday.²¹ The effort to control his sensibilities left him depleted and feeling much older than his actual years.²² Of course, "Death in Venice" has been interpreted as Mann's most confessional work on that subject. It appeared in America in 1931, a year earlier than "Mario's" English publication. The main character is the aging Professor Gustave Aeschenbach, craving the attention of Tadzio, the teenage beauty at the Venetian hotel. Although homosexuality is involved, "Mario and the Magician" seems much more oblique and more political than either "Death in Venice" or Hawthorne's tale, which does not have the immediacy of impending disaster that Mann's story conveys.

The plot concerns a German narrator who takes his wife and two children to the Italian resort of Torre di Venere (Tower of Venus) on the Tyrrhenian Sea. As in progressing the case of Hawthorne's "My Kinsman," the reader feels a growing sense of unease and even horror as Mann's tale unfolds. At the fashionable Grand Hotel, the family runs afoul of a domineering Italian duchess. Her complaints to a simpering management force the German family to relinquish a favored table in the dining room. A bully likewise makes life miserable for the narrator's little boy. Worst of all, the lad's father permits his eight-year old daughter on the sandy seaside to wash out her bathing suit naked. The other bathers vocally denounce this breach of decorum in strenuous and humiliating terms. Harassed by an indignant hotel guest with bowler hat, the father has to appear before the municipal authorities, endure further verbal chastisement, and pay a fine. The beleaguered family leaves for a modest pensione nearby.

¹⁸ "Mario and the Magician," first appeared as a serial in the *Nouvelles Littéraires* 11 (10 Sept. to 15 Oct. 1932): 517-522. The edition used here is Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice and Seven Other Stories*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Random House, 1989), 133-178.

¹⁹ Irvin Stock, *Ironie Out of Love: The Novels of Thomas Mann* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1994), 9.

²⁰ See Astrid Lange-Kirshheim, "Gender Trouble in Thomas Mann's Novella, *Luischen* [Little Louise]," paper presented at the IPSA Conference, Helsinki, 2006. *Luischen* is a companion novella to *Little Herr Friedemann*. I thank Dr. Lange-Kirshheim for giving me a copy of her presentation.

²¹ Ronald Hayman, *Thomas Mann: A Biography* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 378.

²² Ronald Hayman *Thomas Mann: A Biography* (New York: Scribner, 1995) and Anthony Heilbut, *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

There, the two children are thrilled to attend a mesmerist's performance. He is a bombastic, super-patriotic, Mussolini-like Italian. He calls himself Cavaliere Cipolla. This manipulative hunchback is no less frightening than Hawthorne's demonic horseman and no less theatrical in appearance and in action. He wears a top hat, white gloves, a hidden riding-whip, "a wide black pereline with a velvet collar and satin lining."²³ The manner he presented was not at all to put the audience at ease. He is the personification of nationalistic arrogance and contempt for others. A young and handsome tough mocks him. Cipolla has his quick revenge. He hypnotizes the workingman against his will. On command, the young man throws out his tongue at the crowd – a serious insult in Italian convention. Gloating in his victory, Cipolla boasts that "the brother of Il Duce has honoured me by his presence." He then performs various hypnotic acts, each more seemingly implausible and demeaning to the participants than the last. The audience thoroughly enjoys these little shaming dramas. The hypnotist orders a whole group of young men to dance in a peculiar way. Perhaps Mann had in mind the military goose-step that had become popular in Italy as well as Germany. The dancing participants are seemingly happy to submit to Cipolla's will. One of them, however, refuses with "heroic obstinacy" to move about crazily. Cipolla, though, wins. Hypnotized, the boy eventually succumbs and dances. The narrator explains, "it was the negative character of the young man's fighting position which was his undoing."²⁴ The narrator's children are enchanted. Yet the dancing was as grotesque as the reveling procession that Hawthorne's Robin witnessed.

Just as Major Molineux enters Hawthorne's tale late in its telling, so too does the shy and melancholy Mario, whose name oddly begins the title. He is a good-looking twenty-year old waiter at a garden café. Like Robin, Mario has had little experience with the evils of the world. The children idolize the waiter, who serves them chocolates and ice cream nearly every day. Hailing him first as a "Ganymeade," Cipolla makes the youth think that, he, the conjurer, is Silvestra, the lad's girl friend. "'Kiss me!' says the hunchback. 'Trust me, I love thee.'" Mario does as bidden. It was, writes Mann, "a moment, grotesque and thrilling, the moment of Mario's bliss. In an evil span of time, crowded with a sense of the illusiveness of all joy, one sound became audible, and that not quite at once, but on the instant of the melancholy and ribald meeting between Mario's lips and the repulsive flesh which thrust itself forward for his caress." Somehow in this and other scenes, Mann makes clear that the members of the audience gasps in revulsion but quickly turn to awe and admiration for the clever manipulator of their emotions. The spectators, especially Mario's peers, break out in wild glee to see him made into a humiliated dupe. At the crack of Cipolla's whip, Mario recovers and staggers down the stairs from the stage. The crowd howls its delight and approval. Mario suddenly turns around. The audience then hears two "shattering detonations."²⁵ Cipolla falls back dead. The narrator hurries his children from the scene, as others scream and the carabinieri rush in. Mann says the horror was over. Yet, there is the implication that what the novella represents had only just begun.

It should be clear that humiliation is a central feature of the Fascist phenomenon. James Waller in *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* argues that blind obedience to authority may involve "a mystical shift from one self to another that enables a person to commit extraordinary evil" or at least fall under the spell of a mesmerist like the parti-colored militia officer, the magician Cipolla – or his doppel-gänger, Mussolini.²⁶ How is it possible to transform otherwise rational people to participate in acts of vicious hatred? Christopher R. Browning in his studies of the Holocaust found that common folk fell into the killing mode without recognizing any moral inhibition. "Once a regime like the Nazis gets in, they mobilize and harness most people to do what they want them to do. Once they've destroyed alternative political movements, then resistance in the modern era is very

²³ Mann, "Mario," 147.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 177-78.

²⁶ Waller, *Becoming Evil*, 111.

difficult.” Few were coerced at the point of a gun to fire on victims in a massacre. Walter Mattner, a self-confessed executioner recalled, “When the first truckload [of victims] arrived, my hand was slightly trembling when shooting, but one gets used to this. When the tenth load arrived, I was already aiming more calmly and shot securely at the many women, children, and infants.”²⁷

Robert Jay Lifton and Waller both explain that a process of disassociation takes place with the result the individual separates one part of his self from another. The doubling makes possible the preservation of a conventional self-identity, but the second permits a denial of guilt and responsibility. The demonic horseman has a divided face – red and black. Since perhaps prehistoric times those colors have marked the polarities in hell – the blackness of death, the redness of fire and blood.²⁸ “Doubling involves,” Lifton argues, “both an unconscious dimension – take place largely outside of awareness – and a significant change in moral consciousness.”²⁹ Such a description might certainly fit the reaction of the crowd to Cipolla and his eerily hypnotic tricks in “Mario.” But, as Waller pointedly asks, is the doubling the cause of the cruelty or its consequence, or in other words is this unconscious bifurcation simply a means to avoid thinking very hard about what one is doing, a casual lapse of conscience?³⁰ The fact is that genuine pleasure in destructive behavior arises because the object of contempt and hatred is deemed not really human. The “Major” is made into a feathered and castrated figure, a capon, no longer like other men in dress, pride, or manner. The transformation of his appearance permits the crowd to see him as an object of derision, not even of pity. As the philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum puts it, human beings require a means to bound themselves together against the “other,” who thus helps them “to exemplify the boundary line between the truly human and the basely animal.”³¹ The satisfaction of making the outsider into a beast or fool arises from the sense that we are happily far from vile animality and clownishness ourselves.

In the Rumanian playwright Eugene Ionescu’s *Rhinocéros*, human beings become rhinoceri in seriatim until only the narrator remains intractable against the forces of conformity and Orwellian Group Think. Just as Mann was prompted by the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany, Ionescu was appalled by the Iron Guard in his native country in the 1930s. Mussolini, however, was Fascism’s founder and its mastermind, and hence Mann set his story in Italy. But he recognized that his fellow Germans were also fast succumbing to the Cipollian mentality, to coin a phrase. In the late 1920s Hitler was thought to be a second-hand Mussolini, not a premier figure. That reversal of notoriety would occur only after “Mario” was published. Both Hawthorne and Mann understood the nature of human suggestibility and how leaders could play with the hidden and sexual urges of their followers – the joys in humiliating the vulnerable and the terrors and evil that the process engenders.

This is a subject, as mentioned at the beginning, that should engage much concern within the social-science field. After all, we have seen how the torture of detainees at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib – and presumably elsewhere too – have employed the techniques of shame and humiliation by forcing unclothed prisoners to perform obscene acts even more grotesque than Cipolla’s mesmerized subjects. Nakedness signals shame even now as it did in the Garden of Eden. But the United States military

²⁷ Christopher R. Browning quoted in David Williamson, “How Hitler Reached the Final Solution,” *USA Today* (Society for the Advancement of Education) (September 2004):1 (*Questia* reprint: <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5007106518>).

²⁸ See Victor Witter Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 59-92, especially 74; Richard Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate: New Interpretations of Greek, Roman and Kindred Evidence Also of Some Basic Jewish and Christian Beliefs* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 535-36, 541-42; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 455-56.

²⁹ Lifton quoted in Waller, *Becoming Evil*, 115.

³⁰ Waller, 118-19.

³¹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 347.

torturers were themselves shamed, at least in the eyes of the world, by the acts they commanded prisoners to perform – even if they did not know it. John Limon, a professor of English literature, asks, “Is there anything to be learned from the way shame works on all levels: leaders who order acts of torture to be performed; American citizens who are ashamed of their leaders; soldiers and civilian interrogators who perform the acts; detainees on whom the acts are performed?”³² The two stories, “My Kinsman,” and “Mario” do not resolve such questions with finality. Yet they succeed in compelling us to seek answers.

³² John K. Limon, “The Shame of ‘The Shame of Abu Ghraib,’” paper presented at the 23rd Annual Conference for the Application of Psychoanalysis to the Arts, University of Helsinki, Finland, 28 June 2006.

Cosmic Auto/Biography and Homo (In)Sapiens: John Vernon's *A Book of Reasons*

SUZETTE HENKE (*)

John Vernon's unusual fraternal memoir, *A Book of Reasons*, garnered modest acclaim in the *New York Times* in 1999, but then met with inattention, if not insouciance, on the part of teachers and scholars of auto/biography. Such a powerful and searingly intelligent memoir deserves serious attention from American readers, since Vernon, an acclaimed fiction writer and modernist critic, has engaged in an experimental exercise in radical de/formation of the autobiographical genre. Amalgamating a myriad of literary and scientific models that range from the Bible, Montaigne, and Saint Augustine to John Gardner and Stephen Hawking, Vernon has authored a text that expands the boundaries of confessional narrative in order to create an original genre that might be categorized as "onto-epistemological" or "onto-eschatological" memoir - or, perhaps, as metaphysical autobiography. He seeks to recuperate a philosophical tradition whereby ostensibly secular systems "moved within a metaphor of spiritual aspiration" and "epistemology, metaphysics, and the theory of the imagination were often 'displaced and reconstituted theology'" (Matz 35). As Jesse Matz explains in *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics*, even "psychology in its earlier moments was allegory.... One major strain of psychology depends upon spiritual quest to justify its account of the interactions of mind and matter: picking up from Leibniz, ... proceeding through Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler, Hartley, and Whytt, this tradition makes a theological endpoint organize the story of the way basic elements make up human reason, ethics, and belief. The story is allegorical in that it tells a more important larger story" (35-6). Vernon's unique contribution to the genre of metaphysical autobiography should provoke intense critical discussion among scholars interested in experimental forms of memoir.

"WHY?..." This is one of the first questions a developing child asks, only to discover that one ingenuous question leads to a dozen more. Why does the sun rise? Why does the moon become visible at night? Why do the stars erupt in a darkened sky and disappear at dawn? The questions are endless but, for a finite creature, the answers reach an ever-receding limit defined by the parameters of knowledge, intelligence, and creative imagination. We are not so much a "wise" species, *homo sapiens*, as a curious, questioning, and reasoning one. We ask questions and interrogate our environment, then sift through a

(*) University of Louisville, Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences, Louisville, Kentucky 40292, USA. E-mail: suzette.henke@louisville.edu

middenheap of fact and fancy, history and myth, science and subterfuge, to seek a *reason* for the phenomena we investigate. If causal connection remains obscure, writers invent reasons that inhabit the space of myth. We fabricate associations where none exist, then rationalize our emotional bias, prejudice, desire, or fancy by concocting reasons to justify (ostensibly) our mature choices in a baffling universe. Ultimately, we reach an impasse – a dark tunnel or impenetrable wall where all our reasons are exhausted, and we must rely either on our instincts for survival or on a blind leap of faith to compensate for limited knowledge. Only some form of spiritual belief, be it religious or humanist, can provide a Derridean supplement for those reasons that elude the empirical scientist. In the end, we are forced to confront the hopelessness of our eternal quest for the *arcnum*, the *ratio* of reasons that might finally explain all the rest.

As rational creatures, we ponder the ineffable, explore the inexplicable, reach for the stars, then scientifically deconstruct their fiery nebulae. In the midst of this eternal inquisition of our cosmic environment, we finally confront the auto/biographical question that haunts any rational, sentient being: What is the reason for it all? Why do I exist? Does my life (or that of any other human being) have an ultimate purpose? Can I reason my way through the enigma of individual mortality? What is a wasted life, and what are the criteria for personal fulfillment? Whence came I, and where am I going? Is there a teleological reason for my existence, or does my life follow an inexorable trajectory from being to nonbeing – from the wondrous miracle of mental awareness to the absurdity of personal annihilation?

Such ponderous issues haunt the heart of every human being, and traumatic events often jumpstart our psychological gears and hurl us into a state of metaphysical yearning. Hence Vernon's remarkable project in *A Book of Reasons*. When his older brother Paul dies in his mid-sixties of an aneurysm, Vernon inaugurates a post-traumatic quest that turns bereavement into metaphysical speculation, shock into creative reconstruction.¹ The ostensible subject of this fraternal memoir is Paul (the auto/fictional version of Francis) Vernon, who was fifteen years older than John – almost like an uncle rather than an older brother. When John and his parents moved to Boston, Paul remained behind with Grandma in the village of Wire Valley, where this odd inter-generational couple kept one another company until Grandma's erratic behavior gave way to the delusional frenzy of Alzheimer's. An adolescent Paul joined his parents and younger sibling in their Boston apartment, where the bathroom was appropriated by Paul under the auspices of inventor and ham radio devotee.

Paul's weekly bathwater was left for his brother John, who seemed to absorb those fraternal molecules of soapscum and dirt with resignation and equanimity. But whereas Paul played with technical equipment and never learned to spell, a more intellectual John found refuge in a world of books that opened up educational opportunities and promised release from proletarian penury. Paul served a stint in the army, then signed on with Raytheon until mid-life retirement. He remained alone, isolated, idiosyncratic, and – most of all – inscrutable. There were annual visits to John and his family, when Paul seemed to find consolation in the company of a compassionate Hannah and John's two energetic sons. But his first visit to the couple, when John was a graduate student at the University of California at Davis, was not successful. John's sophisticated friends savagely exploited Paul's generosity, sneered and made fun of him behind his back, then guffawed at his provincial demeanor. An emotionally parsimonious clique, the group was unwilling to proffer the prize of social acceptance. Like a puppy begging for human approval, the dogged Paul fled this world of intellectual arrogance, with his lower-class tail

¹ In a 2001 conversation, John Vernon assured me that the figure of Paul was based on his older brother Francis, and that his *Book of Reasons* was 99% autobiographical and 1% autofiction. He found it necessary, for instance, in this thinly veiled memoir, to change Francis Vernon's name to Paul and, similarly, to depict his wife, Ann Frick Vernon, in the persona of Hannah. I suspect that he vaguely alludes to his home in upstate New York, without ever naming either the city or the university, to suggest an uncanny proximity between classical/contemporary Ithaca and his Odyssean journey home to Binghamton, New York.

abashedly tucked between his legs. A Volkswagen minibus and Grandma's rocker were left behind as gifts of appeasement. Later, Paul loaned John and Hannah a thousand dollars for the down payment on their first home. Later still, he forgave the debt – but not before his dog, a bitch with pups, had bitten John on the leg and tattooed a permanent mark of canine ferocity on the author's corporeal integument.

After early retirement, the idiosyncratic Paul, left alone with his dogs, cats, and radio equipment, gradually turned from queer to crazy – or so it seemed to the younger brother nominated to settle his estate. When Vernon confronts the unspeakable filth and chaos of Paul's abandoned home, he feels the double(d) shock of pain and bereavement intensified by physical horror and emotional disgust. Paul had apparently relinquished any semblance of household order, cleanliness, or social propriety. He surrendered what Julia Kristeva calls the "clean and proper body" to the "powers of horror" and the forces of abjection. All that should be cast off and separated from the civilized human being was hoarded, retained, piled up, and treasured, in patterns of anal-retentive behavior gone haywire. As Kristeva explains in *The Powers of Horror*, all corporeal waste is symptomatic of the "objective frailty of [the] symbolic order.... Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death" (71). "The corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall) ... is cesspool and death.... A wound with blood and pus, ... refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live.... It is no longer I who expel, 'I' is expelled.... The corpse, seen without God and outside science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life" (3-4).

Nursing his maniacal obsessions, Paul had apparently succumbed to the personal equivalent of cosmic chaos. He stopped trying to accomplish anything of importance and ceased to care about what happened to him in the context of a civilized human community. He simply let the filth wash over him like a warm bath of excremental ordure. When the plumbing in his bungalow broke down, Paul took refuge in a proliferation of Pepsi bottles and cigarettes, then used the heating shaft as an *ad hoc* toilet. Innumerable soda bottles stuffed with tobacco butts lined his lair like straw in a bird's nest. Without benefit of running water, his kitchen sink became a sordid repository for feline feces. When Paul was taken to a nearby hospital by the Volunteer Fire Brigade, after suffering an aneurysm, those unlucky pets unable to escape from his house found themselves sealed in a grotesque death-trap. One can hardly imagine the dispiriting task of extricating desiccated feline carcasses from a pile of feces and rubble. Yet that, in fact, is what Vernon had to handle when he first set foot on Paul's abandoned property.

A lesser soul would have frozen with horror, fled in fright, or considered burning the house in a ritual holocaust. The author confesses that such temptations did cross his mind. Finally, however, he recoils from his own disgust and chooses a different ritual tantamount to Hercules' cleansing of the Augean stables. With Herculean resolve, he contracts for a clean-up crew and personally removes the feline carcasses. A professor of modern literature and creative writing at Binghamton University, Vernon surely must have had in mind the indefatigable charwomen who symbolically rescued the Ramsays' Hebridean vacation home in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. In a similar ritual of cleansing, John restores his dead brother's erstwhile habitation and salvages some ham radio equipment, along with Grandma's photograph. Amidst the scattered debris, piled in a middenheap for decades, he finds a newspaper snapshot of a younger Paul. His brother is magically imaged like a Greek god bearing a flowering branch of apple blossoms and burgeoning fruit in miraculous and impossible contiguity. Here is the literature instructor's pregnant replication of Walt Whitman's lilacs or T. S. Eliot's hyacinth girl – a timeless symbol of youth and renewal, hope and resurrection, as endless promise of regeneration.

The central metaphysical question that haunts the textual unconscious of this unusual memoir concerns the ontological meaning of human existence: Was Paul's life wasted? Is the life of any human being unique, and hence of intrinsic value? Or do we, as fragile vessels of subjective consciousness, merely amass ethical nodes of affection or productivity that appear to justify – or give reason to – a lifetime of repetition and renewed biological effort? Is the value of human consciousness endemic to each experiential life-world, or must psychological fulfillment be earned through love and creativity?

Why do we exist at all, and what is the reason for our Heideggerian being-in-the-world as embodied subjects?

John Vernon is a university professor whose mind has been steeped for several decades in literature, philosophy, metaphysics, and critical theory. In searching for reasons, he rationally turns to philosophers like Kierkegaard and Heidegger, to writers as diverse as John Milton and Harold Bloom, and to contemporary French theorists as dense as Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva. His restless, searching mind roams further afield – to theories of anthropology, physics, chemistry, and cosmology. This ambitious onto-epistemological project seems to imply that if there be a reason accessible to human intelligence, it lies in the Renaissance notion of *scientia* that Vernon so boldly pursues. On an heroic quest to re-educate himself in the Renaissance tradition of omnivorous scientific inquiry, the seeker summons to his aid the accumulations of past wisdom – the best that has been thought and known in western culture – for a *raison d'être* that might somehow justify his late brother's truncated life. In the process of this mid-life moral education, Vernon seeks to uncover the profound wellsprings of his own (and every) human life's psychological (self-)justification. Although the project is buttressed with a vast panoply of scientific investigation, his evocative technique pivots on a style of aesthetic impressionism, whereby "the writer's impression... makes something slight and sketchy stand for some larger experience" (Matz 45). Vernon's ontological approach is decidedly phenomenological and reminiscent of "Heidegger's effort to correlate being and existence, of Merleau-Ponty's solution to epistemological dualism, [and] of phenomenology's basic synthesis of empirical and idealistic modes" (Matz 175). As Matz reminds us, sometimes "the inspiration to that synthesis can come only insofar as one makes a collaborative object of an *abject* other" (193). The object of phenomenological impressionism is "total perceptivity" (Matz 201) and an aesthetic intervention "between romantic unities and modernist fragmentation, and (conceptually) between utopianism and social critique" (Matz 2). Aesthetic impressionism, says Matz, offers the equivalent of a "literary phenomenology," artistically "rendering life as it really seemed to individual subjective experience" (13-14). Vernon's onto-eschatological project, rendered in impressionistic prose, facilitates a "spiritual quest to justify its account of the interactions of mind and matter" through a volitional process of "moral education, which in turn leads to grace" (Matz 36).

In a brave, honest, often brilliant auto/biographical meditation in the tradition of Montaigne's *Essais*, Vernon self-consciously interrogates his newfound role as his brother's reluctant and unwitting biographer. He constructs their sibling relationship on the model of the Genesis story of Cain and Abel – cunning agricultural worker versus pastoral shepherd, urban architect versus cave-dweller, tool-maker versus (ig)noble savage. Having refused to function as his brother's keeper during Paul's lifetime, Jack self-consciously assumes the role of elegiac memoirist, committed to memorializing the effigy of his deceased sibling by imbricating this outsider's seemingly wasted life into the anthropological context of human history and the scientific enigma of cosmic chaos.

With each scientific, anthropological, or metaphysical premise Vernon interrogates in the name of ontological inquiry, he further defines not only the elusive reason that might redeem his brother's apparently wasted life, but that might distinguish the intellectual Cain figure from the semi-literate, proletarian wastrel whose pastoral innocence gave way to a desuetude indistinguishable from madness. Vernon confesses that he has pursued a career in academia with an obsessive-compulsive resolve that earned him public approval and professional acclaim. But such accolades, he realizes, cannot in themselves constitute a meaningful *raison d'être*. Academic accomplishment might, in fact, be counter-productive, as it inflates the professorial ego and shrivels pedagogical compassion. Such a sacrificial life journey runs the risk of perpetuating, in the end, the shameful mark of Cain.

In becoming the self-appointed custodian of his brother's memory, Vernon has assumed a formidable, implicitly heroic task. He refuses to shirk fraternal resemblances – even as he acknowledges, with a certain shock and horror, that the imago of Paul has hovered, like a Jungian shadow self, in the irrational recesses of his own refined and erudite consciousness. In the course of this elegiac odyssey, John is forced to admit and come to terms with the reason behind his obsessive pursuit of ambitious intellectual projects. He now understands some of the reasons why he desperately needed to separate himself from the rugged, inscrutable, swarthy, inarticulate lout that he often perceived his elder brother to be.

Alienated, in one way or another, from every member of his biological family, the gifted and talented academic felt obsessively compelled to define his own life, career, and societal persona against and in opposition to an embarrassing, maladjusted sibling. John lived, studied, married, and prospered in the shadow of a mordant ghost whose fate stood in threatening, skeletal, but genetic opposition to the author himself. He compulsively dismissed the estranged Paul as “other” and felt obliged to distance, mock, and virtually ignore the alter ego whom he had passionately and indefatigably struggled *not* to resemble. Denying any similarity to the br/other he was forced to murder in his imagination, the surviving subject is finally forced to confront the shock of his own mortality, reflected in the shocking resonance of his obsessive-compulsive scholarly drive in its Alice-in-Wonderland mirror image of a rabbit hole degraded by the filth of physiological detritus.

One thinks of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*, the psychoanalytic paradigm of sibling rivalry that Vernon exploits to interpret fraternal conflict. And the prose of this highly crafted memoir summons another Freudian model, as well: that of an “uncanny” ambiance that makes the familiar strange and strikes a chord of eerie reminiscence suggestive of the infant’s violent expulsion from the *Heimweh* of a maternal body uncannily shared, *seriatum*, by sibling rivals. As Freud explains: “This *unheimliche* place... is the entrance to the former *Heim* of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning.... [W]e may interpret the place as being [the] mother’s genitals or her body” (*SE* 27:245). Having entered the world through the same birth canal, and having gestated in the same female womb, the brothers are linked inexorably by a common uterine enclosure, now symbolically defiled by the residue of a chaotic, schizoid life-style. Although these mature siblings would seem to represent, in their social personae, the Janus image of fraternal opposition, their maternal *Heimweh* of biological origin calls Vernon back to a primordial nostalgia for physiological nurturance and a presymbolic biological territory reminiscent of a maternal love free of desire or demand – an altruism without correlative obligation.

Still another literary avatar of the violent fraternal conflict imbricated in the textual unconscious of Vernon’s memoir might be found in the sibling strife that drives the convoluted (non-)narrative of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*. In HCE’s waking dream, a compulsively prurient Shawn the Post delivers mercenary messages of civilization, propriety, greed, and decorum, while his alienated but anally liberated brother, Shem the Penman, survives in the littered lair of a Haunted Inkbattlehouse and revels in an abject environment of “pure mousefarm filth” that fertilizes the creative emissions of an authorial body producing literary texts inscribed with the fecal ink of the writer’s experiential *excrementa*. Freud’s analysis of infantile delight in fecal production parodically justifies, for Joyce, the irrational excesses of aleatory art.

Vernon’s final gift to the memory of his deceased brother Paul strikes me as both Joycean and poetic. He correlates his brother’s accidental and contingent biological development with the phylogeny of the race, on the one hand; and with a lyrical and visionary rendering of the explosion of cosmic being from originary chaos, on the other. If the writer seeks ultimate origins as the epistemological end of his intellectual quest, he must finally be satisfied with the failure of reason(s) in the context of an awesome, irrational, and inexplicable universe. Why should anything *be* rather than not? Vernon consults Heidegger’s ontological inductions, as well as biblical, mythic, and aboriginal tales of human ancestry and cosmic beginnings. Such eschatological reasoning implodes in a cloud of primordial dust – the imagined chemical soup that originated from a hypothetical Big Bang. The mind reels, far beyond the elucidations accessible via Genesis, Charles Darwin, or Stephen Hawking. No ultimate reason can finally be gleaned from this line of reasoning stretching to infinity – only a Möbius strip of involuted scientific speculation turning back upon itself. Like the Ouraburos swallowing its own tail, Vernon’s biographical tale recoils upon itself to memorialize the embryonic miracle of his brother’s (and, implicitly, his own) gestation and to celebrate fraternal birth in the context of an inscrutable theological mystery.

Throughout this fraught metaphysical memoir, Vernon resembles another scientifically minded Joycean character, Leopold Bloom, who is confronted in the “Ithaca” episode of *Ulysses* with a challenging cosmological meditation on the “cold of interstellar space, thousands of degrees below freezing point or the absolute zero of Fahrenheit, Centigrade or Réaumur” mitigated by “the incipient intimations of

proximate dawn” (*U* 17.1246-48). Indeed, Bloom faces the cosmic mysteries earlier elaborated by Blaise Pascal, as Joyce’s contemporary hero mentally reconstructs “the parallax or parallactic drift of socalled fixed stars, ... in comparison with which the years, threescore and ten, of allotted human life formed a parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity” (*U* 17.1052-56). Like Bloom in his “increasingly vaster” nocturnal meditation, Vernon focuses his ontological inquiry on an examination of Pascal’s “two infinities,” from genetic molecular structure and the invisible quarks of quantum physics to an ever-expanding universe of inscrutable nebular configurations. Both 20th-century texts (Joyce’s and Vernon’s) might well have been inspired by Pascal’s intriguing *Pensées*, a work delineating the “whole visible world” as “only an imperceptible atom in the ample bosom of nature. No idea approaches it.... It is an infinite sphere, the center of which is everywhere, the circumference nowhere.... For in fact what is man in nature? A Nothing in comparison with the Infinite, an All in comparison with the Nothing, a mean between nothing and everything” (16-17).

Vernon’s religious faith, in this document, proves as nebulous as the fiery stars which he ostensibly scrutinizes. Though educated as a Roman Catholic in Boston, he reveals the agnosticism of a skeptical St. Augustine or a cogitating Montaigne, silently invoking a deity who may or may not exist. Echoing the uncertainty of Pascal’s *Pensées*, Vernon makes a wager based on love rather than on reason. What saves him from succumbing to the ghosts of intergenerational trauma and haunting flashbacks is his ability to reformulate bereavement in pensive, lyrical, autobiographical prose. Through the folds of this qualified tribute seeps a fraternal love as unquenchable as the stars – as vivid as the love he feels for his wife Hannah and for the two sons they so passionately cherish. Surviving in order *not* to be Paul, Vernon clings to a hopeful, daring, and regenerative subject position as faithful husband and committed *paterfamilias*.

The pores of his text exude paternal care and an amorous devotion to his wife of twenty years, the inimitable Hannah, who serves as the Beatrice of his Dantesque journey and the Penelope of his Homeric divagations. No Hercules he, Vernon returns, like a wandering Odysseus, to the warmth and shelter of his home in upstate New York (a location geographically proximate to another Ithaca). There, in the comforting presence of a drowsy wife and sleeping sons, he finds the reason to justify his existence in a mysterious and unknowable cosmic habitation: Like the Nostos section of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the end of Vernon’s memoir restores the wandering hero to the bed of his contemporary Penelope in the lyrical mode of a midlife Epithalamion. And like the “Penelope” episode of *Ulysses*, Vernon’s text ends on a note of epiphany and grace. As Richard Ellmann observes about the conclusion of Joyce’s epic, the final words of Molly Bloom’s monologue evince an “epithalamium; love is its cause of motion. The spirit is liberated from its bonds through a Eucharistic occasion.... Though such occasions are as rare as miracles, they require no divine intercession. They arise in quintessential purity from the mottled life of everyday” (379).

The joy of domestic sanctuary and familial devotion is too simple to articulate, too pervasive to define. Amidst the chaos and bereavement that engulf his spirit and dominate his life-world after Paul’s death, the one thing that remains to rescue Vernon from the kind of perdition that plagued his prodigal brother is spousal and filial affection. Such love was, and remains, the *reason* for it all – the struggle to deny fraternity, the compensatory memoir, Jack’s Herculean efforts to restore his brother’s house, and the preposterous project of shoring up the Eliotic fragments of Paul’s ruined life by making his abject environment habitable once again – and celebrating this symbolic triumph in elegant, enduring prose. One hopes that, by the end of this unique memoir, Paul Vernon’s wayward spirit will have found shelter in the literary temple erected in his honor by an author who has, indeed, become his brother’s keeper, keeping safe his memory through autobiographical elegy. As John returns home to Binghamton, New York, his fraternal burdens of intergenerational trauma and emotional alienation have finally been exorcised and released with the corpse of his dead – and recently buried – fraternal alter ego.

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Puberty crisis and ego-split: Robert Musil's novel *The Bewilderment of Törless the Boarder*

RAINER J. KAUS (*)

An art whose means is language will always bring forth a high degree of critical creativity because language itself is a critique of life: it names, it hits the target, it designates and judges by bringing things to life.

(Thomas Mann)

Almost 125 years ago, in 1880, the Austrian writer, Robert Musil, was born in Klagenfurt. He died in 1942 after having emigrated to Switzerland, without having completed his great novel, *The Man Without Qualities*. In 1906, exactly one hundred years ago, his first work was published, *The Bewilderment of Törless the Boarder*, a novel of puberty in which the various stages of adolescent development are described in extreme exaggerations of emotional life. It is worth mentioning Musil's own experiences in a military education institution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Törless's sufferings of puberty become the excuse to leave the usual reality of everyday life and to escape into a second reality, an alien, confusing layer of his soul that is against morality. At about the same time, around the turn of the twentieth century, the psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud, began to explore the unconscious. His famous dream-book had already been published (*Interpretation of Dreams* 1900).

Musil's novel begins at the railway station of a small provincial town near the route leading to Russia. All the colours are faded and sad, which lends a melancholy touch to the whole scene. Frau Hofrat Törless, a lady of about forty, and her husband take leave of her son who is to attend, for the next few years, a military academy where the sons of the best families in the country receive their education. In the first few weeks he writes letters to his parents full of home-sickness in which he describes life at the boarding school. Later on, a certain emptiness takes hold, an emptiness which could also be a depressive reaction to the loss of his home. Dissatisfied, he seeks an experience which could help him to cope with this new phase of his life.

(*) Philosophische Fakultät der Universität zu Köln, Institut für deutsche Sprache und Literatur, Gronewaldstr. 2, 50931 Koeln, Germany.

It is also the time when sexual maturity begins, “slowly and darkly, to well up within him”. (Musil, p. 9¹) At the boarding school, after a short friendship with a prince, which however breaks down because of an argument about religious questions, he seeks a relationship to two boys, Reiting and Beineberg, the most impertinent and challenging pupils of their year, “wild and unruly to the point of brutality”. (Musil, p. 9) For his own part “it seemed at the time as though he had no character whatsoever”. (Musil, p. 10) He therefore seeks a relationship with friends who impress him with their unruliness and licentiousness. Törless senses within himself a “dull, chilly melancholy” and a “terrible apathy”. (Musil, p. 20)

“He was waiting for something (...) For what...? Something surprising, something he had never seen, (...) something with a terrible, animal sensuality, (...) it’s something quite mute – a choking in the throat, a barely perceptible thought – and only if one really wanted to say it with words would it come out like that. But even then it bears only a remote resemblance, as though in a vast enlargement, in which one not only sees everything more clearly, but even things that aren’t there ... and yet it was something to be ashamed of.” (Musil, p. 15f)

He loves moods of solitude, has sexual fantasies when he observes Beineberg, sees something indecent in his awkward movements and feels a kind of shame as if there really had been something between them.

Together with Beineberg he visits Bozena, an ageing, degraded prostitute who, originally a peasant girl, got a position in town as a lady’s maid and waitress. Although his first passion is not enduring, it already brings parts of his inner life to the surface, and his visits to the prostitute increasingly become a secret joy. He cannot help but think of his mother.

“This woman is, for me, a tangle of everything that is sexually desirable; and my mother is a creature who has until now walked through my life at a cloudless distance, clear and without depth, like a star beyond all desire.” (Musil, p. 34)

An experience with a prostitute is not infrequently the first object-choice for an adolescent boy. Later on, Bozena also mentions Basini, a fellow pupil of the two, who visits her almost every Sunday and boasts of women even though he is completely inexperienced.

The pupils usually stored their money, letters and valuables in long boxes called play-boxes. Once when money is missing, Reiting suspects Basini. In the upper part of the school there is a kind of attic filled with a jumble of old stage backdrops. From there stairs lead to a secret storeroom for equipment, the so-called Red Chamber whose walls are completely covered with blood-red flag material. Apart from the three friends, scarcely anyone knows of the existence of this cubby-hole. Törless does not like this small room, but frequently climbs up there with the other two because he wants to keep up with his comrades’ exploits. Sometimes he

“was afraid that there was more truth behind their fantasies than he was able to see. In a sense he felt torn between two worlds, one that was solidly respectable, in which everything took place in regular and rational ways, the world to which he was accustomed at home, and a world of adventure, full of darkness, mystery, blood and unimagined surprises.” (Musil, p. 44)

Reiting tells of Basini’s financial dependency on him and that he places ‘conditions’ upon him, that he always has to be of service to him. Basini confesses his theft tearfully and begs for mercy. All this frightens Törless, but it is also seductive for him. He says that Basini must be reported and punished, but the other two want to keep him in dependency and at first desist from reporting him. In return, Basini has to obey them and do their bidding. Basini is taller than Törless, but a weakling, with soft, slow movements and girlish facial features. Already his Italian-sounding name hints at beauty, softness and a

¹ Robert Musil, *The Confusions of Young Törless*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, London: Penguin, 2001. Here the translation of the title as *The Bewilderment of Törless the Boarder* is preferred. All page references are to the Penguin edition.

certain unbridled temperament. Törless avoids Basini and asks for advice from his parents in a letter. They approve of the decision to give Basini one more chance to improve.

One night, Beineberg tells Törless of Reiting's sexual relationship with Basini while Reiting himself is present. The three are still discussing whether to report Basini, but decide instead to torment him and keep him in dependency. Törless, however, sees in him also the human being who now is to be made into a victim. He senses the danger, is afraid of the limitlessness, of going on to "infinity" (Musil, p. 69), a concept which he knows about from his mathematics lessons. He is torn between fascination and disquiet.

"It came upon Törless like a madness, experiencing objects, processes and people as things with ambiguous meanings. As something fettered by some inventor's power to a harmless, explanatory word, and as something wholly alien that seemed at every moment to threaten to break its bonds." (Musil, p. 70)

They get Basini to come to the Red Chamber in the attic. Beineberg recounts his disgraceful actions. Then they strip him and start to whip him. Here Törless experiences how the fantasy of a dull inkling intensifies into a sensuous desire and finally expresses itself as a sadistic perversion. He, too, himself feels

"a bestial desire to leap in with the others and deliver the beating". (Musil, p. 98),

but something paralyses him. To his astonishment he finds himself in a state of sexual excitation. The two friends disappear with Basini into the darkness and when they return he feels an "exciting shudder". (Musil, p. 79)

Törless himself now begins to participate in the torment and calls on Basini to confess that he is a thief and "a beast, a thieving beast, *your* thieving, swinish beast". (Musil, p. 80) Later on in the mathematics class the thought of infinity returns. He talks to Beineberg about it and he visits the mathematics teacher at home. The teacher argues "that such mathematical concepts are purely mathematical logical necessities" (Musil, p. 86) and gives him a philosophical book by Kant containing the "defining aspects of our actions". (Musil, p. 86) All this unsettles Törless and he gets out his earlier attempts at poetry and tears them up.

"He flicked through one volume after another, then tore each one very slowly into very small pieces and threw them all, one by one, into the fire, each time relishing the tender emotion of farewell." (Musil, p. 88)

The next morning he tells Beineberg of his meeting with the mathematics teacher and both are affected by the idea of the irrational, the imaginary and the parallels which meet at infinity. Törless seems to be confused by the fact, but when Beineberg wants to talk about this matter with Basini once again, he refuses and emphasizes he has sought more something within himself. He recalls his childhood when he felt himself to be a small girl and already, half asleep, he feels a

"pleasant, tepid warmth – like a bath and a sensual stirring – which, although he was not at all aware of it being so, was in some enticingly unrecognizable but very emphatic way, associated with Basini." (Musil, p. 98)

One evening, alone in the classroom with Basini, he feels an astonishment in view of everything and believes that this has something to do with Basini. He looks over to Basini and feels a giddiness which increases in the next few minutes.

"Then Basini seemed to exude a physical influence, a fascination, like that which comes when one is sleeping near a woman and could at any moment pull the covers from her." (Musil, p. 105)

When he goes to bed, he is plagued by vague fantasies about Reiting and Beineberg with Basini.

On two holidays, only Basini and Törless remain in the school. At night, a strong intensification of Törless's feelings takes place.

“That night Törless came close to attacking Basini, such a murderous sensuality had awoken in him after the pain of the unthinking, dull-witted day.” (Musil, p. 108)

The next evening, the two go up to the attic chamber. Suddenly, Basini is standing naked before Törless.

“Basini had a beautiful physique; his body, almost entirely lacking in masculine forms, was as chastely slender as that of a young girl. And Törless felt the image of that nakedness lighting up in his nerves like hot, white flames. He could not escape the power of that beauty. He had never known before what beauty was.” (Musil, p. 110f)

He then barks at Basini who confesses that Beineberg’s and Reiting’s torments obviously have something to do with sexual actions and beatings. Törless wants to know everything exactly, how they prick him with needles, how they order him to bark like an animal and grunt like a pig. All this is unpleasant for him, above all, because it is supposed to happen on command. But otherwise it is not so bad at all. Here we see a clear denial in the sense of a split before us. Basini sees reality, but does not perceive it emotionally.

Törless now also wants to take part in tormenting Basini, but then pauses and says he does not want to after all. Basini weeps and says he cannot explain anything. He says that Törless would act the same way in his position. Apart from contempt, Törless now also feels pain, senses the danger also for himself. He sees a border between the life which is lived and the life which is felt.

“And between the life that is lived and the life that is felt, sensed and seen from a long way off, that invisible frontier lies like a narrow door, through which the images of events must cram themselves together in order to enter the human being.” (Musil, p. 120)

Later on, when he is lying in bed, Basini actually seduces him and says to him that he is different from his friends, not so coarse and boastful as them. After this incident, Törless meets Basini often.

“It was the secret, unspecific, melancholy sensuality, free of any human object, of the maturing boy, which is like the damp, black, seed-bearing earth in the spring and like dark, subterranean waters that need only an arbitrary cause to rise and break their walls.” (Musil, p. 124)

All this, however, seems to be like love for Törless. A passing choice of homosexual object is frequently a sign of the wavering, not yet firm choice of partner in adolescence. In search of extraordinary discoveries, Törless had pursued sensuousness, “not because he was perverse, but because his spiritual situation was temporarily aimless”. (Musil, p. 129)

Beineberg and Reiting are disturbed by Basini’s cheeky familiarity and they decide to keep on tormenting and whipping him. In his new situation, Törless’s feelings for Basini go completely cold. He now has a clear revulsion for him. Beineberg and Reiting threaten Basini with a revolver, hypnotize him and have him swing back and forth on a balcony like a pendulum. He falls and is whipped by Beineberg. Törless remains completely calm and is simply disgusted. A few days later, Basini asks him for help and tries once again to seduce him, but Törless feels only revulsion. Reiting threatens Basini with new torments, but Törless does not want to have anything more to do with it. He feels only a yearning for peace and quiet and for books. He reads his parents’ letter once again as an answer to his reports about his peculiar psychic state before the sensuous encounter with Basini.

“Once again it had been a very homespun reply, filled with tired and respectable ethics” (Musil, p. 147)

with the recommendation that Basini should report himself, which Törless also advises him to do.

The next day, the entire class gathers in the attic. Basini has to strip, letters from his mother are read out and he is pushed back and forth brutally among the others. Törless shudders because Basini is threatened with even a worse fate.

But the next morning, the headmaster puts an end to everything with a speech in which he accuses

the class of its brutality. Basini had reported himself and is expelled from the institution. Life now opens up for Törless.

“A stage of development had reached its conclusion, the soul had begun a new ring like a young tree, and that silent, overwhelming feeling excused everything that had happened.” (Musil, p. 150)

His inner excuse for all this was:

“Because I was interested in a process in my brain, something which, in spite of everything, I still don’t really understand, and something that makes what I think about it seem quite unimportant in comparison.” (Musil, p. 150f)

Afterwards, he first flees from an interrogation in the school, and then speaks before a commission somewhat confusedly about imaginary numbers, but then he becomes clearer.

“Any great realization is only half completed in the brain’s pool of light; the other half is formed in the dark soil of our innermost being, and above all it is a state of the soul on whose furthest tip the thought sits perched, like a flower.” (Musil, p. 156)

He sees everything, including thoughts, in two forms and speaks of a “second, secret, unnoticed life of things” (Musil, p. 157) which is barely accessible to understanding. It is decided that Törless should be educated privately. He himself asks his parents to be dismissed from the boarding school. When his mother picks him up, he seems cool and relaxed to her.

Musil shows in a portrayal which at first seems confusing to us, mainly through the eyes of Törless, the world of an adolescent. The story is embedded in the social structure of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy around the turn of the twentieth century. There are individual crises, just as politically a precarious situation is announcing itself. From the time when the novel was published up to the outbreak of the First World War, eight years will pass, but it must not be overlooked that the multi-ethnic state is already riven by numerous ethnic tensions. Against this background, the novel can be understood as the description of various characters, desires, feelings and fantasies on a personal level which push toward clarification in the stage of adolescence.

Törless is educated in a very protected, rather passive, feminine attitude and desires nothing other than to be able to attend this famous boarding school. Finally his parents give in to his persistent urging. But, as often happens in life, the hotly desired object becomes devalued after it is attained and the wish is inserted into its opposite. Perhaps here lies also the key to a psychic event of larger significance, the making-invisible of the real desires underlying a conscious wish.

Thus, Törless, too, discovers that behind his wish to attend this famous military academy there is a much deeper desire and destiny of his instincts. Without relating the various situations in which he gets involved at the boarding school once more, it is important to note that his friendship with the prince is probably the most tender and most moving relationship for him. His compensatory attempts with Reiting, Beineberg and Basini are not enrichments for his soul, but painful experiences which are entirely contrary to his ego.

The experience of the new savagery and brutality in his life at first satisfies only his desire for admiration and recognition. He does not yet inkle, however, the affective, psychic and mental price for this: the loss of his behavioural security and his hold in a network of norms.

Törless is driven by his emergent, sensuous life-world and the attempt to bring these discoveries into a form he can accept. Seduced by his comrades, Reiting and Beineberg, and by the sycophancy (to the point of self-denial) of his fellow pupil, Basini, his senses and his intellect are stimulated. At first he looks for a solution to this emergency in mathematics, but, disenchanted, he has to take cognisance of the fact that mathematics does not have anything to do with Kant’s transcendence and does not provide any instructions for how to act in his present, problematic situation.

He is therefore all the more receptive for sensuous attempted solutions. On the one hand, he denies his own wishes when he is almost outraged over Basini’s sudden nakedness in the Red Chamber, but

at the same time, he becomes captive to his momentary presence and power of seduction. Thus, neither in pure rationality, nor in pure sensuousness can Törless find a solution.

The exaggeration of sadism by Törless's comrades escalates into a collective hysteria of the class as a whole. In being pushed back and forth by his classmates, Basini falls to the ground like some sacrificial animal. Almost at the climax of the story, a turning takes place in Törless, a turning back to everyday reality.

During his time at the boarding school, his own feminine aspects also become obvious which he at first feels only as weakness and tries to fend off. He still cannot imagine any integration of this side into himself. Nevertheless, he does not persist statically in this position, but recalls that he already had similar feelings at a much earlier age, e.g. when passive feminine desires arose in him already as a child. The dialectical intertwining of feminine and masculine aspects and their balancing takes place finally, through all the confusion and commotion, in the coach from the boarding school to the railway station. He observes his mother secretly from the side:

“And he breathed in the faintly perfumed fragrance rising from his mother's waist.” (Musil, p. 160)

After a process of maturation, Törless can perceive his own masculinity, and his earlier desire for his own mother, which he experienced as shocking, can be transformed into a relaxed, sensuous perception of her femininity.

For the reader, the question concerning what will become of Törless remains open. If we follow the authorial narrator, he imagines Törless's future as that of an aesthetically sensitive person.

“Later, (...) Törless became a young man with a very fine and sensitive mind. He became one of those aesthetic and intellectual characters upon whom respect for the law and, to some extent, for public morals, has a calming effect, relieving them of the need to think about anything coarse and remote from the finer things of the soul; but who, when asked to declare a more personal interest in the objects of morality and the law, bring to their grandiose outward show of correctness, with its hint of irony, a certain bored insensitivity.” (Musil, p. 126)

But Törless's adolescent steps toward maturity alone do not provide any guarantee that he will be able to cope with everyday life and master life's challenges. Between the lines, so to speak, of the novel which on the surface seems to be a novel of adolescence, a second, provocative text is established which shows us in Musil's subtle, ironic mode of presentation, that the Austro-Hungarian monarchy comes to grief not only on the conglomerate of the multiethnic empire, but suffers also under an over-cultivated world of forms whose facade is not borne by any vital contents. Unconscious and hidden fantasies, sadistic affects and impulses to destructive actions therefore cannot be worked through in relation and have to seek a path of discharge in uncontrolled eruptions.

Maslovian theory in arabic poetry: A case study of al-Mutanabbi

RATNA ROSHIDA ABD RAZAK (*)

INTRODUCTION

Even though al-Mutanabbi has been the subject of a considerable number of studies, in both the East and the West, most of his poems have been studied from a different angle, while not much attention has been paid to the human being or to the psychology of the man himself. No great effort has been made to dig beneath the surface in order to examine his strong and forceful personality. Few studies of the poet himself exist, and these do not, to any great extent, examine the features of his character or his psychological make-up.¹ Many modern studies on Arabic poetry have 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.²

In order to examine the poet, we have to treat the material, i.e. the poetry, in isolation from the vast realm of conscious human experience, which includes emotional shocks, the experience of passion and the crises of human destiny in general. C. G. Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, notes that a poet's work, i.e. the poetry, is an interpretation and illumination of consciousness, or the unavoidable experience of human life with its eternally recurrent sorrows and joys.³ He also stresses the central role that the study of emotions must play in psychology because psychology is the only science that has to take the factor of values, i.e. feeling, into account.⁴

Jung further comments that the most fruitful subject for the psychologist is the poet who has not yet committed to paper a psychological interpretation of his own character. The poet leaves ample room for the psychologist to analyse, examine and interpret his poetry. In this case the poetry is similar to apparently unrevealing narrative:

An exciting narrative that is apparently quite devoid of psychological exposition is just what

(*) School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia. E-mail: ratna@usm.my

¹ J. E. Montgomery (1995), 'Al-Mutanabbi and the Psychological Grief', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 115 (2), 285-292.

² Geert Jan Van Gelder (Ed.) (1999), 'Al-Mutanabbi's Encumbering Trifles', *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 2 (1), 0.5.

³ C. G. Jung (1992), *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, London: Ark Paperbacks, p. 179.

⁴ C. G. Jung (Ed.) (1964), *Man and his Symbols*, New York: Doubleday, p. 96.

interest the psychological assumptions and the author is unconscious of them. They reveal themselves to be pure and unalloyed to the critical discernment.⁵

Psychological studies of this kind are undertaken in order to continue the efforts that have been made in the course of time to examine the nature of artistic creativity, which is still one of the most ambiguous and incomprehensible issues in the realm of psychology. The various aspects of poetic creativity in general may also be applied to other art forms, for the arts have many features in common, emerging from one source, namely the human psyche. Jung acknowledges the intangible character of artistic creation:

“Creativeness, like the freedom of the will, contains a secret. The psychologist can describe both the manifestation as process, but he can find no solution of the philosophical problems they offers. Creative man is vain riddle that we may try to answer in various ways, but always in vain.”⁶

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A POET

To investigate a personality of a poet, there is one promising psychological theory that may provide new insights in the study of a poet; this is known as humanistic psychology. There are three important proponents of this theory, namely Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslows and Karen Horney. The theory offers the most comprehensive account of psychological growth, because it concerns a way of life, not only of the person him or herself as a separate individual, but also of the person as a social being, an integral member of society.

Humanism is here taken to be a theoretical orientation that emphasizes the unique qualities of humans, especially their free will and their potential for personal growth. (Humanistic psychology originated in the United States of America. The American capitalist ideology puts stress on the individual striving to become what one can. This obviously used in management training – to fulfill oneself through one’s company). This theory postulates that the motivation for behaviour comes from a person’s unique biological and learnt tendencies to develop and change in positive directions towards the goal of self-actualization. This is the desire to realize one’s potential, to fulfill oneself, to become what one can become. In short people have a drive to become what they are most capable of becoming. The innate striving toward self-fulfillment, along with the realization of one’s unique potential is the constructive, guiding force that motivates each person to become engaged in generally positive behaviours and to enhance the self.⁷ A person who recognizes himself or herself as being in possession of artistic talent may have a need to pursue art for its own sake. As a component of fulfillment, art may be pursued instead of more profitable ends. Without art, a gap is left in the artist’s life. The humanistic theory also proposes that the environment has a very important role to play, having an enormous impact on the growth of the individual. The individual will fulfill his genetic potential, become strong and self-directing if the environment in which he or she, is favourable for growth and is based on real needs. When growth is naturally encouraged, then honesty and openness will prevail.

THE MASLOVIAN THEORY

Abraham Maslow, the humanistic theorist who believed that an accurate and viable theory of

⁵ Jung, 1992, p. 178.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 192-193.

⁷ Zimbardo, 1988, p. 437.

personality must include not only the depths, but also the heights that each individual is capable of attaining. His theory mainly relied on mentally healthy human beings, and was based on the concepts that human beings are governed by a hierarchy of biological-based needs. He used the words 'hierarchy' because he felt that these needs formed a hierarchy of propensity, since the lower needs must be satisfied in order to gratify the upper ones.⁸

According to Maslow love and esteem are the basic needs essential to everyone, and take precedence over self-actualization in the hierarchy of need. The need for self-esteem is concerned with self-respect and a feeling of personal competence, as well as the opinion of other people. A person whose most basic needs are unsatisfied, does not feel a strong need for love, but one whose physiological and safety needs are satisfied will feel a strong desire for the regard of his fellow.

Maslow's theory is primarily concerned with that part of human motivation and behavior which is based on the higher needs. He concentrates on the process of self-actualization in the movement that a healthy person makes toward "the actualization of his potential, capacities and talents". Maslow's prime concern is the highest needs which incorporate motives for growth. He defines self-actualization as the "full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities as fulfillment of mission". In addition to this, it is an episode, or a spurt, in which the powers of the person come together in a particularly efficient and intense, as well as enjoyable way. Maslow also argues that self-actualization is not a static condition, but an ongoing process of using one's capacities fully, creatively and joyfully. Maslow finds that self-actualizing people are dedicated to a vocation or a cause.

Actualizing the real self demands a culture that offers a course of activity congruent with the individual's inner bent, and which permits him to realize his capabilities. It also needs a set of significant adults who are interested in the child as a being in himself, and who will also allow him to have his own feelings, tastes, interest and values.⁹

Wherever possible, the child must be allowed to exercise his own choices. The understanding of one's inner nature and acting in accordance with it is essential, especially because Self-actualizing people, those who have come to a high level of maturation, health and self-fulfillment, have so much to teach us that sometimes they seem almost like a different breed of human being.¹⁰

In Maslovian terms, the child is a weak and dependent being whose needs for safety, protection and acceptance are so strong that he will sacrifice himself, if necessary, in order to get these things. If the child is faced with a choice between his own delightful experience and the approval of others, he generally will choose approval, and suppress his desire for delight by repression or letting it die, or not noticing it, or controlling it by will-power. Generally speaking this will lead to the development of disapproval of the delightful experience, embarrassment and secretiveness about it, and finally the inability even to experience. The primal choice, says Maslow, is "between others and one's self. If the only way to maintain the self is to lose others, then the ordinary child will live up the self". The self-actualizing person, however, will be occupied, not with controlling the urges of his ego, or with becoming "well-adjusted" to his society, but with cultivating the development of the real self, his human nature. He will expose to himself his real self and this exposure will be manifested in his greater congruence, his greater transparency and his greater spontaneity.

THE APPLICATION OF THE MASLOVIAN THEORY TO AL-MUTANABBI'S POETRY

Personality is displayed in many ways – through behaviour patterns, thoughts and feelings. Behaviour is said to occur because a drive is operative, and an association has developed between the

⁸ Maslow, 1968, p. 27.

⁹ Maslow, 1968, p. 58.

¹⁰ Maslow, 1968, p. 71.

drive stimulation and an object or a response.¹¹ Humanistic theories postulates that the motivation for bahvaiour comes from a person's unique biological and learned tendencies, and capacity to develop and change positively in relation o the goal of self-actualization, which is the desire to realize one's potential.¹²

The political and cultural environment in the 4th/10th had a great impact on the growth of al-Mutanabbi, for it helped to develop his powerful assertion of individualism, as winessed by a burst of personal expression, in the domain of literary creativity as well as political action. Literature, particularly poetry, is a vast repository of psychological insight. It can also be primarily regarded as a means of communication, because language has been employed to express one's thought and emotions.

Al-Mutanabbi fulfilled his genetic potential and became strong and self-directing when the environment was favourable for him to grow. When the growth in natural channels was encouraged, then his honesty and openness prevailed.¹³

To better understand the poet through the study of his poetry, it would be instructive to begin by creating what Freud called 'the primal situation' – the first and original situation.¹⁴ By doing so, we will be enabled to see how verbal art could have been woven into fabric of governance in early societies. Al-Mutanabbi, who early recognized in himself the possession of an artistic talent, may have had a need to pursue art for its own sake. As a component of self-fulfillment, art is often pursued instead of more profitable ends. Without art, a huge gap open up in al-Mutanabbi's life.

There are two particularly important events in al-Mutanabbi's turbulent life. The fisrt one was his disaffection with Sayf al-Dawlh, the Hamdanid Prince of Aleppo. Although al-Mutanabbi was depicted as genuinely admiring the Hamdanid prince. He fought at the prince's side in many of his military campaigns. But the compatibility between the poet's and the prince's valuation of the poet's work proved hard to maintain. The poet was accused of avarice¹⁵ while other observers portrayed Sayf al-Dawlah's failure to defend al-Mutanabbi in his argument with Ibn Khalawayh, as a betrayal.¹⁶ For the various of reasons offered above, al-Mutanabbi's life with Sayf al-Dawlah will be examined employing Maslovian theory. This is because in Maslow's theory, the two concepts, love and creativity play a vital role in self-actualization process likewise in al-Mutanabbi's case, we can make a plausible assumption that these two points are crucial elements in his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah.

THE SEARCH FOR SAFETY

In spite of its political turmoil, the 4th/10th century witnessed a remarkable growth of cultural life. Cultural and intellectual activities developed in an environment of material prosperity and religious heterodoxy. The age's creative achievements had a personal and individual character. This period also witnessed the emergence of an affluent and influential middle class, which was keen to acquire knowledge and social status. The pursuit of knowledge was considered to be a path toward human perfection and happiness.

¹¹ Edward L. Deci (1985), *Intrincis Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behaviour*, New York/London: Plenum, p. 6.

¹² Maslow, 1968, p. 113.

¹³ The work of art depends upon the environment of the artist and upon the artist himself. It depends upon his environment because this includes material for his work and values to be incorporated. It also depends upon the artist, for he is more sensitive to the tangibles and intangibles in his environment, and is more sensitive to the meanings which they have beyond the meanings customary assigned to them. (J. K. Feiblemen, 1945, *The Psychology of The Artist*, *Journal of Psychology*, xix, pp. 165-189).

¹⁴ The word primal is often used as equivalent to primitive or primordial, particularly in psychoanalysis.

¹⁵ al-Thaalibi (1956), *Yatimat al-dahr* (vol. 2, 2nd ed.), M. Muhyi al-Din Abd Hamid (Ed.), Cairo, p. 137.

¹⁶ al-Badi'I (1963), *al-Subh al-Munbi 'an Haythiyyat al-Mutanabbi*, Mustafa al-Saqqa, Muhammad Shita and 'Abd Ziyada (Eds.), Cairo: n.p., p. 87.

In al-Mutanabbi's time, rank and status were determined by knowledge, intelligence and talent. Rulers and statemen were avid patrons of learning, entertaining philosophers, scientist and men of letters in resplendent court where the cultural elite included poets, scholars and secretaries. The provincial courts of local rulers and viziers also became centres of intellectual activity. Poets served in all these courts as panegyrists, while scholars acted as secretaries, historians, astronomers, advisors, spies and purveyors of edification and delight.

From the early 'Abbasid times, patrons were often among the well-versed in literary Arabic and poetry. Many of them had received a thorough training from philologist who played a very important role in Arabic life. For religion and political purposes, many 'Abbasid caliphs were keen to be defenders of the faith. To do so, they needed to master Arabic. In the courts and homes of the patrons normally gathered men of letters. For the patrons, the way to confer their prestige, demonstrates their discernment and devotion to Arabic literature and Islamic culture was through largesse. For the men of letters, supports meant livelihood and sometimes fortunes. In order to please patrons, poets had to compose panegyrics that satisfied their patrons, by showing mastery of language. The poet would be conferred prestige after giving praise for the accomplishment and scathing satires of its enemies. Thus, the poets wandered from court to court, transferring allegiance, readily shifting landscape and horizon.

From the outset, the Arab poet was understood to perform a clearly defined social function, namely to sing the praises of his tribe, to defend its honor and attack its enemies, as well as to rouse his people to military zeal through stirring poetry. The recital of a panegyric had become an important formal occasion and provided an opportunity for the sovereign to demonstrate his generosity publicly by handsomely rewarding the poet, who, if genuinely admired his patron, could be inspired to produce truly excellent work.

Using this as starting point, in order to analyse al-Mutanabbi psychologically based on his poetry composed to his patron Sayf al-Dawlah, will primarily focus on al-Mutanabbi as a poet rather than an individual.

Safety needs include physical well-being as well as psychological security derived from stability, predictability, and structure. Al-Mutanabbi needed a strong, protective patron who not only valued his poetry, but also was able to give him many opportunities to display his ability as a poet. Only such knowledgeable, generous patronage would allow him to achieve fame and a comfortable livelihood as a poet. In 337/948 al-Mutanabbi finally succeeded in attracting the attention of the illustrious Hamdanid ruler of Aleppo, Prince Sayf al-dawlah. The Banu Hamdan were a distinguished Arab family of Bedouin origin and Shi'ite inclination. They played a vital role as warriors in affairs of the declining 'Abbasid caliphate from near the end of the 3rd/9th century until about the end of the following century.

With his newly won security, al-Mutanabbi was able to enjoy feelings safety, peace and security in the company of Sayf al-Dawlah, who became his intimate friend and comrade in arms. As a result, he was better able to appraise the heroism of the prince more justly and wholeheartedly. The satisfaction of his safety needs assured al-Mutanabbi that he was living in an environment that was stable and secure. He gained strength from the constructive energy that urged him on towards inner freedom. In addition to that, it gave him the power to sustain the inevitable pain of maturation, and made him willing to take the risk of getting rid of attitudes that had given him a feeling of safety. He started to feel the need to fulfill other desires, an indication of his healthy growth.

THE NEEDS OF BELONGING AND AFFECTION

When physiological and safety needs are largely satisfied, the needs for love, affection and belonging come to the forefront as motivations, and the whole cycle repeats itself about this new centre.

We could consider that al-Mutanabbi now hunger for affectionate relationships with friends, and specifically with a powerful and influential patron. Having gained knowledge of Sayf al-Dawlah, al-Mutanabbi then grew to love him. It could be considered that he was expressing his love to Sayf al-dawlah when he said that he had chained himself to Sayf al-Dawlah:

“I chained myself to your love in affection
He who loves good deeds is held by a chain”¹⁷

From the verses that were written in his happy period at the court of Sayf al-Dawlah, we could consider that al-Mutanabbi was able to enjoy feelings of belonging and affection:

“Every day you load up fresh
and journey to glory, there to dwell”
“And our wont is comely patience
were it with anything but your absence that we were tried”
“Every life you don’t grace is death
every sun that you are not is darkness”¹⁸

THE NEED FOR SELF ESTEEM

Assuming that at this point the first three levels of the hierarchy of al-Mutanabbi’s needs were adequately satisfied, we would expect he to become concerned with the needs for esteem. Maslow distinguishes two types of esteem needs. The first is esteem from others. This involves the desire for reputation, status, recognition, fame and feeling of being useful and necessary. Individuals need to feel respected and valued by others for their accomplishments and contribution. Self-esteem, on the other and, involves a personal desire for feelings of competence, mastery, confidence and capability.

Self-esteem is therefore closely linked to the desire for superiority and respect from others, and to some extent, these are part of an accepted practice in Arabic poetry. Moreover, for the Arabs, poetry is a source of pride and rivalry. So the poet, by skilful ordering and vivid imagery could play upon the emotions of his hearers. Al-Mutanabbi’s pride for example, can be seen in the verses written when he was saying:

“In whom indeed is the pride of every true Arab
and the refuge of the wrongdoer, and the succour of the outcast”
“If I am conceited, it is the conceit of an amazing man who has
never found any surpassing himself”¹⁹

The fulfillment of the need for self-esteem is an indication of healthy growth since it will release feelings of self confidence, worth, strength, capability, adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world.

Prompted by the envy and jealousy of the rivals when he was at Sayf al-Dawlah’s court, al-Mutanabbi’s customary arrogance, his intemperate and unbridled boasting appear in his own poetry, for example:

“Reward me, whenever a poem is recited to you, for it is only
with my poetry repeated that panegyrists come to you”
“And disregard every voice but mine, for
I am the singer who is mimicked; the rest are the echo”²⁰

THE QUEST FOR SELF ACTUALIZATION

Al-Mutanabbi began to attain the final level of Maslow’s hierarchy after he had satisfied his basic

¹⁷ See *The Diwan of Abu Tayyib Ahmad ibn al-Husain al-Mutanabbi, al-Saifiyyat*, vol. 2, A. Wormhountd (trans.), William, Penn College, 1978, p. 373.

¹⁸ Translation by A. J. Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbi*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Translation by A. J. Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbi*, pp. 22-23.

²⁰ Al-Wahidi, *Diwan*, p. 535. Translated by K. Khalaili, ‘al-Mutanabbi in his Role’, p. 8. We believe that al-Mutanabbi’s pride at this time is a healthy one. It is based on the substantial attributes and a warranted high regard for his special achievement.

needs and those for safety, love, belonging and self-esteem. This final level of Maslow's hierarchy is known as that of "self-actualization" – in other words, becoming what one is peculiarly adapted to be by nature and temperament.

Al-Mutanabbi's aim in life could never be realized unless he was utterly true to his own self and nature. As a self-actualization he could be defined as a person who was no longer principally motivated by the needs for safety, belonging love, status and self-respect because these needs had already been satisfied. However we may wonder what motivated him, or in other words, what were the psychological systems and theories that gave him motivation and drove his central concepts.

The components of the real self are potentialities. Al-Mutanabbi, who was given the appropriate conditions, was able to grow to realize his inherent potential. He became more completely himself. Thus, he became more easily self-expressive and spontaneous without effort, more daring and courageous. He launched himself fully into the stream of life. He had attained a healthy sense of the self as he was provided with a proper emotional climate, since humans will only grow to be emotionally healthy if they are surrounded by warmth and acceptance.

a) A Self-Actualizer's Love

Love, for a self-actualizer, consists primarily of a feeling of tenderness and affection coupled with great enjoyment, happiness, satisfaction, elation and even ecstasy. In the most desirable way, the self-actualizer's beloved is perceived as beautiful, good and attractive, there is a simple pleasure in looking at, and being with, the loved one. As a result, there is a tendency to focus the whole attention on the loved one. To forget other people, to narrow perception in such a way so that other things are not noticed.

Al-Mutanabbi's love for Sayf al-Dawlah grew out of his more than satisfactory life with his patron. As the self-actualizer's love relationship continues, there is a growing intimacy and honesty and self-expression, which at the height is a very rare phenomenon. Al-Mutanabbi's intense love for his patron can be deduced from the verses below:

"Why do I hide this love which wastes me away
While for Sayf al-Dawlah the world feigns love?"
"Since we all must love him, let us share his love
Proportionally according to our love of him"²¹

Al-Mutanabbi's expression of his undying love for Sayf al-Dawlah appeared when he mentioned the latter's bravery in his wars with the Byzantines. In the verse below, it shows that he genuinely admired, as well as loved, the Hamdanid prince. He also celebrates the prince's exploits in war, by using martial images that strongly assert valour and an enduring will to cut down the enemy.²²

"I've visited him when the Indian swords were sheathed
And I've seen him when swords were dripping blood"
"The flight of your enemies is victory enough
Encompassing at once triumph and regret"
"The rumours of your valour made them flee in fright
The terror of your name inspired more fear than an mighty army"²³

In composing this type of poem called panegyrics (love poem), al-Mutanabbi expressed his gratitude as an all embracing love for Sayf al-Dawlah. His impulse to praise his patron far transcended the responsibilities of his position.

²¹ Translation by S. K. Jayyusi and C. Middleton, 'Qasida 5:2-3', in S. Sperl and Christopher Shackle (Eds.), *Qasida Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 87.

²² S. K. Jayyusi, 'The Persistence of the Qasida Form', in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa, Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings*, vol. 1, p. 9.

²³ Translation by S. K. Jayyusi and C. Middleton, 'Qasida 5: 4-8', in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, vol. 2, p. 87.

“There I remembered a union it was as if I had never attained
 and a pleasureable period it was as if I had passed in one leap”
 “And a maiden of bewitching eyes, mortal and desire
 When her sweet perfume diffused over and old man he became youthful again”
 “And O my yearning, how long you have continued!
 And O, who will deliver me from the anguish of separation”

Al-Mutanabbi's strong love for Sayf al-Dalwah who can be regarded as his beloved in a spiritual sense, manifested itself perhaps most acutely when he was separated from him. He fondly remembered his lover at this time, and resigned himself to his fate:

“I desire of the Days that which they do not desire, and I
 Complain of our separation to them, but they are its warriors”
 “They banish far a love with whom we are co-joined. So how much
 More the case with a love from whom we are divided”
 “The temper of this world [is such that it] will not let loved
 One stay for long, so how can I ask it to bring back a loved
 One [that has gone]”²⁴

In the eyes of al-Mutanabbi, Sayf al-Dawlah was a perfect figure, a role model embodying all that he admired. He personified the Bedouin style of life in Syria with which al-Mutanabbi was so fascinated. Sayf al-Dawlah also possessed the valorous spirit of the desert: he had his warriors into battle personally and never hesitated to engage in single combat.

b) *Creativity and Self-Actualizing Person*

According to Maslow, the most universal characteristic of all the people he studied and observed was their creativity, regarding which he notes that a fundamental characteristic of common human nature is a potentially given to all human beings at birth. (Maslow opines that genius, talent and productivity are not synonymous since some of the greatest talent mankind like Van Gogh or Byron were not psychologically healthy people. For him, creativeness is the universal heritage of every human being that is born, and which covaries with psychological health.)

Every self-actualizing person displays a fresh and creative approach to life, a virtue by no means limited to the artist or genius. Al-Tha'alabi list, among the creative innovations al-Mutanabbi introduced, “addressing the patron as one addresses one's beloved”, and “using expressions proper to love poetry in the description of war”.

The majority both of Eastern and Western critics agree that al-Mutanabbi's poetic performance during his life with Sayf al-Dalwah marked the zenith of his profession. It is important to note that, during this period, he accomplished both commendable levels of poetic production and maturity. The poet's ability to invent something, which would leave its mark on the listener's soul and inspire emotion and passion determined the estimation of his talent. It was judged according to how far it could raise listeners' appreciation to the level of intense delight. It can be argued convincingly that al-Mutanabbi was at his most brilliant in his Saifiyyat-collection of poems, produced during his time with Sayf al-Dawlah.

CONCLUSION

To recapitulate our discussion, we suggest say that four basic tendencies characterized al-Mutanabbi's journey toward his self-actualization. The first tendency was to strive for his personal satisfaction in

²⁴ Translation by K. Khalaili, 'al-Mutanabbi in his Role', poem 4: 1-3.

ego recognition. The second was to struggle toward self-limiting adaptation for the purpose of fitting, belonging and gaining security. The third was toward self-expression and creative accomplishments and the last was toward integration or order upholding.

Al-Mutanabbi's creativity flowed spontaneously from his personality and the key to al-Mutanabbi's triumphs as a panegyrist lies in his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah. We might affirm that al-Mutanabbi was consciously and courageously struggling towards authentic self-development. However it is especially difficult to judge how far al-Mutanabbi actualized himself as a poet. As we are dealing with internal matters, it is impossible to prove absolutely any hypothesis concerning a figure from the past. Maslovian theory may nevertheless be of considerable value in allowing us to understand the motivation and the mental and emotional structure of the creative individual in general.

Al-Mutanabbi's safety predominated until he obtained secure patronage from the Handanid prince, Sayf al-Dawlah, an aristocratic warrior and the personification of Arab chivalry whose court was renown as a centre of intellectual and cultural excellence. We could say that the fundamental goal which motivated al-Mutanabbi during his time with Sayf al-Dawlah was to become a great poet. His desire to secure a special place at Sayf al-Dawlah's court reflected his ambition to achieve mastery over his art, and his privileged position was to be the means of attaining it. Apart from that it provided a conspicuous indication of the poet's power of creativity, his emotional and intellectual as well as imaginative talents.

It is crucially important to note that for humanistic psychology, in general and Maslovian theory in particular, the problem of creativeness is the problem of the creative person (rather than of simply the creative product, or of creative behaviour). In other words, the 'creative person' is not a special kind of people, but one in whom 'creativity' is unusually strongly developed. Since creative people embody the essence of our creativeness, they represent the problem of the transformation of human nature, the transformation of character, and the full development of the whole person.

It is hoped this effort will contribute to our appreciation of the brilliance of al-Mutanabbi, and of the genius of one of the truly great masters of Arabic literature.

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R. D. Laing's language of experience

GAVIN MILLER (*)

Despite a revival in psychiatric studies of his writings, the literary importance of the radical Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing has been underestimated in the years since his death in 1989. Yet Laing was immensely influential not only upon psychiatric practice, but also upon the arts. He influenced the novelists Doris Lessing and Alasdair Gray, the screenwriters David Mercer and Clancy Sigal, the playwrights David Edgar and Peter Shaffer, and poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Tom Leonard (for further details, see Showalter 220-47; Mullan *Creative Destroyer* 26-29, 89-91, 214-16, 304-6; Miller 53-85). Laing's influence upon the creative professions is not accidental: in many ways, his psychiatric writings were consciously literary productions. Indeed, his earliest ambition was to be a writer. While a high school student in 1940s Scotland, he worked his way through the local public library: "I wanted to be a writer. [...] I gave myself the age of thirty as an absolute deadline for the publication of my first book" (Laing *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly* 68-76). This literary aspiration does not mean, however, that Laing's eventual psychiatric writings were merely works of fiction. Psychiatry, as Laing saw it, needed what writing could give it: a sensitivity to obscure and recondite meanings, a revalidation of immediate experience, and a renewed "disclosure" of the world. But to value writing in this way brings potential risks: Laing's appreciation of the "world-disclosing" properties of poetic language becomes, in his worst work, an infatuation with a realm of mystical, self-validating certainties.

Previous discussion of Laing's literary status has been marred by the mythology that surrounds the man. Even as perspicacious a critic as Elaine Showalter, who has praised Laing's literary talents, makes some notable blunders. She claims that "Laing was born in 1927 in the Gorbals, the roughest, darkest, and most depressed district of Glasgow" (Showalter 224). The date is right, but the place is wrong: Laing was born in Govanhill, a middle-class district, and there he lived with his lower middle-class family (see Burston 9). The point of such mislocation is readily apparent: the imagery of roughness and darkness, of male brutality, assists Showalter in her claim that Laing's psychiatry was masculinist – "a male adventure of exploration and conquest" that "drew upon his own heroic fantasies" (Showalter 236).

A parallel rhetoric is offered by Clancy Sigal's *Zone of the Interior* (1976), a novel to which Showalter refers, and which seems to have informed her depiction of Laing as an intellectual pugilist. Sigal's

(*) Department of English, Manchester Metropolitan University, Geoffrey Manton Building, Rosemond Street West, Manchester, M15 6LL, United Kingdom EH8 9JX. E-mail: g.h.m.miller@mmu.ac.uk

roman à clef remained unpublished in the UK for almost thirty years because of fears of libel. It features Laing as “Willie Last”, an LSD-guzzling psychiatric guru sitting at the center of a network of folly and messianic rhetoric. This caricature of Laing, though often entertaining, also positions him somewhere in sub-rational masculine darkness. Last’s dialogue is rendered in a pseudo-phonetic orthography and spattered with apostrophes, while the narration of the central character (a North American) is rendered in orthographically standard, and thus rational and properly human English: “He [Willie Last] came to the front door himself. All my previous shrinks had had snooty housekeepers. ‘Och Sidney Bell, is it? Come in, mon. It’s a pleasure tae meet ye. I’ve read yir work’” (Sigal 3); later, Sidney tells how, “Dr Last hastened to assure me I was mad ‘only in th’ eggistainshul sense’” (Sigal 21).

In a curious irony, the Scots poet Tom Leonard has remarked, although not with conscious reference to Sigal’s work, that in this traditional technique of narration, “the dialect speaker tends to appear in a narrative like Laing’s patient in a hospital: there is complicity between author and reader that the speaker is ‘other’, that the user of such language cannot be the person who has written or who is reading the work” (Mullan *Creative Destroyer* 59). Showalter and Sigal therefore both rhetorically position Laing as the “other”. He slides from psychic *conquistador* to Caliban, a thing of darkness (and roughness, and depression) who struggles to imitate the speech of his masters. Naturally, it is hard to imagine an account of, say, Jacques Derrida that would carelessly and conveniently misrepresent his place of birth, or which would record his speech as if he were a comical Frenchman – a kind of Inspector Clouseau of the Sorbonne. As literary readers, we therefore have a duty to look beyond what Leonard calls the “smokescreen anecdotage about Laing” (Mullan *Creative Destroyer* 91); and this means turning to Laing’s texts, rather than to reports of his person. There is indeed some truth in the charge that Laing was at times a mere rhetorician who preferred striking assertion to careful argument. Yet there is a quite complex philosophical progression that explains Laing’s tendency to venerate “experience” as a privileged source of mystical, self-certifying insight.

Any study of Laing’s language must start with his contention that the psychiatrist is, or *should* be, a skilled reader. In his first book, *The Divided Self*, published in 1960, literary hermeneutics provides Laing’s model of the therapeutic encounter: “The personalities of doctor and psychotic, no less than the personalities of expositor and author, do not stand opposed to each other [...]. Like the expositor the therapist must have the plasticity to transpose himself into another strange and even alien view of the world. In this act, he draws on his own psychotic possibilities, without forgoing his sanity” (Laing *Divided Self* 34). The therapist is an exegete, making sense of a puzzling and baffling text by drawing upon the possibilities of being that he shares with the patient. Laing’s understanding of his psychotic patients therefore displays a keen literary sense. Metaphors for unusual experiences abound in his “readings” of psychotic speech: “Fire may be the uncertain flickering of the individual’s own inner aliveness [...] Some psychotics say in the acute phase that they are on fire” (Laing *Divided Self* 45). There are allusions and inter-textual relations: a patient who has no secure sense of her existence except in the presence of others is, to Laing, “like Tinker Bell. In order to exist she needs someone else to believe in her existence” (Laing *Divided Self* 56). Puns and multiple meanings also abound. Another patient claims she is a “toll bell” (Laing *Divided Self* 187): a bell that is tolled because she feels passive, controlled from the outside, but also a beautiful and passive girl, a “belle” of the ball, who has become what she was told to be. Laing’s literary skills are needed to understand such patients because, as he puts it, they express “‘existential’ truth [...] with the same matter-of-factness that we employ about facts that can be consensually validated in a shared world” (Laing *Divided Self* 87).

Rather than trying to “explain” psychosis, Laing offers various genres and motifs which may help to bring sense from words and actions that seem incomprehensible. Even silence and immobility may be a communicative action, rather than mere “behavior”. In his autobiography *Wisdom, Madness and Folly*, for instance, Laing confronts a hypothetical catatonic: “Is he a pillar of salt? Is he god incarnate [in] stone? Is he the still centre of the turning world?”; only when such possible understandings are exhausted, can one rightly ask the final question on the list, “Is there something the matter with his neurochemistry?” (Laing *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly* 87). Throughout Laing’s work there is an insistence on charitable exegesis wherever possible, rather than upon impersonal, non-intentional explanatory

forms. The terminology and conceptual scaffolding vary from work to work: from ontological insecurity, to the schizoid condition, to “double-binds”, to “knots”, to proscribed transcendental consciousness, and so on. But the ambition is the same throughout: to restore a fully interpersonal relationship with the other, rather than to have a relationship in which he or she is understood as possessed by some causal, or quasi-causal, mechanism.

Laing’s way of understanding is therefore very different from that employed in traditional psychoanalytic interpretation, particularly that directed at psychotic speech. Laing’s opposition to psychoanalytic interpretation is present throughout his career, but is most clearly expressed in *The Voice of Experience* (1982), where he argues that, like sophomoric literary analysis, it is an obstacle to confrontation with “otherness”. Wilfred Bion’s psychoanalytic interpretations of a psychotic patient prove particularly provoking to Laing. In the case study that Laing cites, Bion’s patient complains about a lack of interesting food and new clothes, laments the condition of his socks, and says that picking a piece of skin from his face has made him “feel quite empty” (Laing *Voice* 50). Bion interprets this as the patient’s attempt to communicate to him a feeling that he (the patient) has eaten his (Bion’s) penis. Such constructions, says Laing, are “a grinding machine which reduces any sense to total nonsense”, and forestall any genuinely revelatory interpersonal relationship: “It is difficult to imagine what the patient could say that could tell Bion anything he does not think he knows” (Laing *Voice* 52). Such reduction of the other to the same, to the already-known, merely extends the impersonal attitude: “A psychosis, like a dream, like a brain, is up for grabs, for rotation, reversal, reshuffling, slicing, apposing, juxtaposing and transposing” (Laing *Voice* 49).

Laing therefore tries to find what is intelligible in terms of the “here and now” of the other’s experience, rather than to pursue one-sided interpretations built around the “there and then” of repressed psychic materials. In *The Divided Self*, at any rate, this means that Laing’s exegeses are (consciously) in the spirit of Sartre’s discussion of subjective experiences such as nausea, shame, and vertigo. “Vertigo” for Sartre has nothing to do with inner-ears or repressed psychic trauma; it’s a subjective disclosure of freedom – the vertigo that I feel by a sheer drop is a consciousness of my freedom to throw myself into it, regardless of any psychic causality which might be supposed to impede me (see Sartre 30). Laing, in discussing experiences of being on fire, or being petrified, and so forth, is trying to do for psychotic psychology what Sartre does for more everyday experience.

Indeed, Laing’s affinity with the European phenomenological movement offers one of the surest routes to an understanding of his idea of language, and how it should be used. Laing draws the logical conclusion from what he sees as a mistaken assumption that the psychotic’s speech is unintelligible. We are, he believes, experientially impoverished – cut off from the many different modalities of experience that are phenomenologically apparent. This is why we cannot easily understand the psychotic, and it is also why we are unable to understand ourselves. We are, he claims in “The Politics of the Family”, all victims of a modern “holocaust of [...] experience on the altar of conformity” (Laing “Politics of Family” 101). The implied chiasmus is of course obvious: from the holocaust of experience there arises the twentieth-century’s experience of holocaust. In his 1967 bestseller, *The Politics of Experience*, Laing declares: “Our behavior is a function of our experience”; “If our experience is destroyed, our behavior will be destructive” (Laing *Politics* 12).

The destruction of our experience, its reduction to ash or some other useless residue, was to Laing philosophically elucidated by phenomenology’s critique of the natural sciences. Husserl in *The Crisis of the European Sciences* (1936) pointed out the side-effects of a “scientific” or “causal” theory of perception. Such a theory treats experience of the world as primarily the effect of a cause, and so experience becomes nothing more than the effect produced by the mind as objects causally impinge upon it. What we see, feel, hear, smell, savor, and desire, may have no more resemblance to what “really” exists than the crash of a cymbal to the stick that hits it:

The phenomena are only in the subjects; they are there only as causal results of events taking place in true nature, which events exist only with mathematical properties. If the intuited world of our life is merely subjective, then all the truths of pre- and extrascientific life which

have to do with its factual being are deprived of value. They have meaning only insofar as they, while themselves false, vaguely indicate an in-itself which lies behind this world of possible experience. (Husserl 54)

Or, as Laing puts it in a 1980 Lecture, “What is the Matter with Mind?”, “Sight, sound, taste, touch and smell [...] all sensibility, all values, all quality, all feelings, all motives, all intentions, spirit, soul, consciousness, subjectivity: almost everything, in fact, which we ordinarily take to be real is de-realized, is stripped of its pretensions to reality” (Laing “Matter with Mind” 10-11). A similar expression of this idea is found by the English philosopher A. N. Whitehead (1861-1947), whose work Laing also knew (and cited in *The Voice of Experience* (see Laing *Voice* 15n)). The scientific view divides the world into an unknowable causal nature, and the apparent nature given in experience: “Causal nature is the influence on the mind which is the cause of the effluence of apparent nature from the mind” (Whitehead 31). Experience, in Whitehead’s words, is “effluence” not just as what “flows out” from the action of thing upon mind, but also as a flow that is waste, toxic, or contaminated, like the effluent from a factory or a sewage works.

Laing notes that scientists typically refuse to see what philosophers such as Husserl and Whitehead have understood: that even the basis of science, sensory experience, must be reduced by *science itself* to an “effluent”. To borrow Laing’s words, “all experience, along with the most strangely modulated and transformed [...] is consigned by science to its slop bucket” (Laing *Voice* 69). Since all experience is merely an illusion mechanically produced by a realm of beings-in-themselves, then, as Laing puts it in an interview with Douglas Kirsner, the scientific view is essentially “that experience is a psychosis of matter” (Mullan *Creative Destroyer* 45): *everything* we experience should, in a consistent scientific worldview, really be as delusive and illusory as the experience of a madman.

Laing fights fire with fire. The scientific account of truth is based upon a nonsensical metaphor in which experience accurately represents something which can never be experienced – truth is the “relation between a picture and the undepictable reality the depiction in the picture alludes to” (Laing *Voice* 29). Against such incoherent metaphor, he musters his own rhetorical armory. In his Schumacher lecture, Laing ends with a list (which I shall not quote in full) of “[a] few of the other modes of existence outside the investigative competence of natural science”: these include, “love and hate, joy and sorrow, misery and happiness, pleasure and pain, right and wrong”; “everything, in fact, that makes life worth living” (Laing “Matter with Mind” 18-19). Laing wants to open our eyes to the diversity and variety of experience, to everything beyond the “primary qualities” or “things-in-themselves” nonsensically preserved in the scientific worldview. To do this, he increasingly employs the neglected rhetorical device of *enumeratio*, the making of a list or catalogue. The variety and irreducible diversity implied by *enumeratio* is central to Laing’s depiction of experiences that may be otherwise rendered anodyne or trivial. In his autobiography, *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly*, World War Two is decomposed by Laing into the horrors of modern conflict (enabled, of course, by modern technological rationality): “When World War II started no one could imagine how it could possibly end without endless devastation, poison gas, germ warfare, torture, mutilation, rape, pillage, massacres, killing and killing and killing, shelling, bombing, sea warfare, food shortage, famine and pestilence” (Laing *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly* 35). *Enumeratio* is also the scheme with which Laing depicts the things that genuinely make him feel alive: “My life-saving consolations were moonlight and gaslight, the angel on the dome of the library, music, the coal fire, fun, indeed all things – sky, sun, stars, clouds, rain, sleep, snow, flowers, trees, birds, flies, prayer, a few people, even asphalt, fog” (Laing *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly* 52). The figure repeats throughout *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly*, from the many ways of committing suicide with “razor blades, nuts and bolts, soap, broken glass, lavatory chains, buttons, knives, forks, spoons, hair, hammers, files, combs, broken saws, coins, lavatory paper, clothing” (Laing *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly* 118) to the fascination of night-time experience – “solitude, silence, desolation, camaraderie, romance, meditation, prayer, vigil, carousing, music, the moon, the stars, the dawn” (Laing *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly* 29).

There are various other techniques by which Laing forces his readers to confront the inauthenticity with which they might attempt to downgrade vast domains of their experience to some “psychosis” of

their own neurological matter. He has a gift for novel metaphor – for the reworking of what George Lakoff would call an “Idealized Cognitive Model” of madness (see Lakoff 68-76). For example, when describing the refractory wards of Gartnavel mental hospital in Glasgow during the 1950s, Laing recalls an uncanny and oddly hopeful experience that draws upon an analogy with twentieth-century avant-garde composition. In his own words: “the ward sounded like an out-of-tune orchestra endlessly tuning up, each instrument unrelated and out of pitch”, yet there is a kind of harmony, as “when the jumble of sound in a difficult piece of music all suddenly makes sense” (Laing *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly* 123). The possibility of this hidden tunefulness inspires Laing in his early experiments with a therapeutic community based on minimal intervention. By offering his musical model, rather than a medical model, Laing hopes that the reader, seeing (or perhaps hearing) madness differently, will also perceive that drugs are not a cure for an illness, but a way of trying to “harmonize” the madman with his society: “There are drugs to calm agitation, to soften frantic feelings, to tone down awful moods, to modulate the tonal region of feelings, to regulate thoughts and the style and content of imagination and dreams” (Laing *Wisdom, Madness, and Folly* 25).

There are undoubtedly many more rhetorical strategies in Laing’s discursive writings. Some are listed, for instance, by Martin Howarth-Williams (see Howarth-Williams 64-68), including the use of archetypal imagery, syntactic parallelisms, and abrupt juxtapositions between different discourses (such as mystics and politics, or religion and science). To fully consider all Laing’s prose devices is beyond the scope of this article. To analyze fully the rhetoric of his more identifiably literary or poetic writing – that of his *Sonnets* (1977), the spiraling logic of *Knots* (1970), the mini-dramas of *Do You Love Me?* (1977), or the dialogues of *Conversations with Children* (1978) – would also require lengthy consideration.

But one strategy in particular stands out as a clue to Laing’s philosophical legitimization of his rhetoric. If there is indeed a modern “holocaust of experience”, then it may be that the traces of an earlier meaning can gesture towards what has been repressed, sidelined, or simply exterminated in our lived reality. In his second book, *Self and Others*, published in 1961, Laing close reads Jean Genet’s play *The Balcony* by drawing attention to the etymology of the word prostitute: “Most of the play takes place in a brothel. The girls in the brothel are shown to be, in a literal sense, pro-stitutes. They stand for (pro-stare) whatever the client requires them to be, so that he can become for a while that figure which he wishes to be” (Laing *Self and Others* 103). The existential meaning in prostitution is its furnishing of a “collusive identity” (Laing *Self and Others* 104). To collude is to play together at self-deception: “The term collusion has the same root as de-lusion, il-lusion, and e-lusion. The root ‘lusion’ ultimately comes from the past participle of the Latin verb, *ludere*. [...] It can mean to play, to play at, or to make a sport of, to mock, to deceive” (Laing *Self and Others* 98). Such rediscovery of language is a frequent trope within Laing’s work. Elsewhere, he draws attention to the etymology of words such as *companion* (literally, a bread-sharer), *orientation* (to find the East), *diagnosis* (to see through), and the *obvious* (that which stands in one’s way, and so both evident, and an obstacle). As Martin Howarth-Williams rightly concludes, “This technique involves looking afresh at a common word [...] to discover new, or often, very *old*, meanings, which are literal, thereby sweeping away, or at least, relativizing, the conventional meaning” (Howarth-Williams 65).

This concern with uncovering an older, forgotten meaning, came to Laing from Heidegger. Glasgow in the 1950s, as well as apparently being (according to Showalter) a dark and depressed domain, was also an important centre for the translation of German-language philosophy into English. As well as Ronald Gregor Smith’s translations of Martin Buber, Glasgow also produced what was for many years the only English translation of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, the version produced by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (see Heidegger *Being and Time*). Laing, indeed, was known to both Macquarrie and Robinson: “John Macquarrie was working on the translation [of *Sein und Zeit*] which I thought was a total disaster and at times I tried to persuade him that the whole point of Heidegger was totally lost by translating *sein*, which is the German infinitive of the verb to be, *sein*, by ‘being’” (Mullan *Mad to Be Normal* 367). The influence of Heidegger is quite apparent throughout Laing’s work. In his second book, *Self and Others*, for example, Laing meditates on the English idioms that revolve around how

“a person ‘puts himself into’ his acts”, how he “may seem to be ‘full of himself’ or ‘beside himself’, or ‘to have come to himself’ again after ‘not being himself’” (Laing *Self and Others* 117). This everyday existential vocabulary directs us, he says, to a different notion of truth, one different from the representational account presupposed in causal theories of perception (see above). Citing Heidegger, Laing contends that “in natural science truth consists in a correspondence, an *adaequatio*, between what goes on *in intellectu* and what goes on *in re*” (Laing *Self and Others* 120). Yet, “there is another concept of truth which is to be found in the Greek word ἀλήθεια. In this concept, truth is literally that which is without secrecy, what discloses itself without being veiled” (Laing *Self and Others* 120). The concept of truth as *aletheia*, or disclosure, is central to the literariness of Laing’s writing. This conceptual refocusing of truth brings together Laing’s existential exegesis of schizophrenic speech, his opposition to reductive psychoanalytic interpretation, his revalidation of “anomalous” experience, and his poetic reworking of psychiatry’s rhetoric. Laing claims in *The Politics of Experience* that “[w]ords in a poem, sounds in movement, rhythm in space, attempt to recapture personal meaning in personal time and space from out of the sights and sounds of a depersonalized, dehumanized world. They are bridgeheads into alien territory [...] Their source is from the Silence at the center of each of us” (Laing *Politics* 24).

Laing argues for the function of language as a poetic disclosure of so-called “inner” being, our “personal idiom of experiencing our bodies, other people, the animate and inanimate world” (Laing *Politics* 6). This claim that poetic art discloses being (or Being) is much the same as that made by Heidegger in his later work, where he asserts that “language alone brings beings as beings into the open for the first time”, and concludes that “*All art, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of beings, is as such, in essence, poetry*” (Heidegger “Work of Art” 197). This indebtedness to Heidegger helps to explain what many have seen as the failings of Laing’s later work – an unwillingness to argue, an indifference to evidence, and a tendency to mystical assertions. Although there is a temptation to attribute these failings to the merely psychological causes at work upon Laing (e.g. drug and alcohol abuse), there is also undoubtedly a logically intelligible path to such a mode of discourse. Habermas has argued that Heidegger’s project, by insisting upon disclosure as the primary meaning of “truth”, eventually produces a series of incommensurable “truths” that are “in each case provincial and yet total; they are more like the commanding expressions of some sacral force fitted out with the aura of truth” (Habermas 154). Thus, as Laing starts to echo Heidegger more faithfully (*The Politics of Experience* is particularly filled with such repetitions, e.g. the paraphrasing of Heidegger’s “What is Metaphysics?” (Laing *Politics* 22-23)), he begins to follow the same path. Reason quickly becomes downgraded to a mere instrumental mastery over the world as Laing echoes, for example, Heidegger on the technological disclosure of nature as a “standing-reserve” (Heidegger “Technology” 322) – to describe a goose as “raw-material-for-pâté”, says Laing, is “a brutalization of, a debasement of, a desecration of [...] the true nature of human beings and of animals” (Laing *Politics* 38). What Laing correspondingly elevates is not rational discourse, but a supposed realm of self-validating certainties. In *The Voice of Experience*, for instance, Laing voices his fascination with re-incarnation: “Belief in a cycle of reincarnation is worldwide. Whole civilizations have been dominated by it”; such experience “is in no way accounted for by being dismissed as the delusions and hallucinations of the mind unable to reach to the haven of scientific disenchantment” (Laing *Voice* 99). Similarly, in *The Politics of Experience*, religious faith is also above rational critique: “Faith was never a matter of believing He existed, but of trusting in the presence that was experienced and known to exist as a self-validating datum” (Laing *Politics* 100).

What therefore marks, and mars, Laing’s later work is something like the same mystical certainty that Habermas notes in Heidegger:

The event of Being can only be meditatively experienced and presented narratively, but not argumentatively retrieved and explained [...] Dasein [“being-there”, i.e. human being – GM] is no longer considered the author of world-projects in light of which entities are at once manifested and withdrawn; instead, the *productivity* of the creation of meaning that is disclosive of the world passes over to *Being* itself. Dasein bows to the authority of an unmanipulable meaning of Being and rids itself of any will to self-affirmation (Habermas 152-53).

No doubt this sounds very abstract. Consider then an illustration from Laing's writings: he claims that "[f]ew are made to believe their experience. Paul of Tarsus was picked up by the scruff of the neck, thrown to the ground and blinded for three days. This direct experience was self-validating" (Laing *Politics* 100-01). By imbibing Heidegger with his LSD, Laing came to the position outlined in *The Politics of Experience*: "True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego [...] and the eventual re-establishment of a new kind of ego-functioning, the ego now being the servant of the divine" (Laing *Voice* 101). The schizophrenic journey is therefore something more than the masculine voyage of exploration described by Showalter; it is equally a Heideggerian transition in which "[t]he being of phenomena shifts and the phenomenon of being may no longer present itself to us as before" (Laing *Politics* 92).

Laing never fully retreated from this position (which is frequently glossed as the "romanticization of schizophrenia" – an accurate, yet partial understanding of his thesis, which is as much philosophical as psychiatric). It haunts his work, particularly in his repeated hints at the reality of re-incarnation – as in *Conversation with Children*, for instance, when his young son insists that he was a soldier who killed a lot of people, "last time I was alive" (Laing *Conversations* 1). Sigal's mockery of this thread in Laing's thought is thus scarcely an exaggeration: "When a patient is so sure she came fr' another planet", announces Willie Last, "th' integrity of her statement slices my rationality off at th' knees" (Sigal 206). Yet the movement of Laing's philosophy of language is far from eccentric: the progress from hermeneutics, existentialism, and phenomenology, to something approaching a deconstructive free-for-all (in which aliens and re-incarnation are all equal "truths") could be seen as a compressed history of an important strand in literary and critical theory. Laing's vices were, and are, shared by the intellectuals of his generation: like many, he followed the critique of "instrumental reason", but could find no alternative model of rationality. His language of experience directs us toward what is "heterogeneous" to the scientific destruction of phenomenal reality, and it does so with the skill of an accomplished novelist, playwright, or poet. But, without some alternative rational criterion with which to separate wisdom from madness and folly, Laing's language becomes at times a "mere" rhetoric which promotes a mystical submission to the anonymous power of "experience".

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The writer as fisherman: Hemingway and Wordsworth

BURTON A. MELNICK (*)

In everyday speech, in literature, in psychological writing, both psychoanalytical and academic, we fairly often find language – “stream of consciousness,” for example, or “depth psychology” – that implicitly compares the mind or psyche to a body of water. But though we are familiar enough with this comparison and have an easy intuitive understanding of it, surprisingly little has been said explicitly about the underlying conceptual metaphor: THE MIND IS A BODY OF WATER. There are some exceptions to this statement. One is the paper, which anyone interested in this subject will want to read, that María Sánchez-Vizcaíno presented a year ago in Córbona. But as Sánchez-Vizcaíno’s title indicates – “The Waters of the Mind: Rhetorical Patterns of Fluidity in Woolf, William James, Bergson and Freud” – she is mainly concerned with *flow*. Today I am more interested in the issue of *depth*. And so I would like to begin with a passage by E. M. Forster, taken from his account of the English national character and its relation to English literature. “People,” Forster writes,

talk of the mysterious East, but the West also is mysterious. It has depths that do not reveal themselves at the first gaze. We know what the sea looks like from a distance: it is of one colour, and level, and obviously cannot contain such creatures as fish. But if we look into the sea over the edge of a boat, we see a dozen colours, and depth below depth, and fish swimming in them. That sea is the English character – apparently imperturbable and even. The depths and the colours are the English romanticism and the English sensitiveness – we do not expect to find such things, but they exist. And – to continue my metaphor – the fish are the English emotions, which are always trying to get up to the surface, but don’t quite know how. For the most part we see them moving far below, distorted and obscure. Now and then they succeed and we exclaim, “Why, the Englishman has emotions! he actually can feel!” And occasionally we see that beautiful creature the flying fish, which rises out of the water altogether into the air and the sunlight. English literature is a flying fish. It is a sample of the life that goes on day after day beneath the surface; it is a proof that beauty and emotion exist in the salt, inhospitable sea. (17)

Like the sea, then, the mind has a surface, which is directly visible; below its surface, the mind, like the sea, has depths. In both cases – in both the “source” and the “target” domains – the depths are less easily visible and less easily accessible than the surface. In the depths of the sea (or of a lake or pond

(*) 80, chemin De-la-Montagne, 1224 Chêne-Bougeries, Switzerland.

or even river) there reside living creatures, which may be of great value and beauty, although, to add a point that Forster does not make, they may also be repulsive or frightening. In Forster's rather restrictive mapping of the metaphor these living creatures correspond in the target domain (mind) to *emotions-to feelings*. In fact, however, in psychology and especially perhaps in psychoanalysis, they correspond more generally to *mental phenomena*: emotions yes, but also desires and wishes and fears and memories. On occasion these submarine creatures – Forster's flying fish – make themselves visible without any outside intervention. So too, in the target domain, do certain mental phenomena sometimes rise of themselves from the depths. But there is another, related aspect of the source domain that Forster neglects. For an important human activity consists of *fishing* – of intentionally and sometimes laboriously retrieving subaqueous creatures, bringing them to the surface, and making use of them. Fishing can be vital – and this fact can carry great symbolic significance – on account of its ability to provide *sustenance*.

In the target domain, that of the mind or psyche, fishing corresponds to the attempt to retrieve feelings, memories, and the like from the region of the mind that is normally not visible and that is not immediately accessible. Such a metaphor is used frequently in psychoanalysis (in addition to the archeological, subterranean metaphor that Freud was so fond of). Indeed, perhaps on account of the influence of psychoanalysis, images of fishing are sometimes used even in everyday life to express an effort to recall forgotten memories – we might “plumb the depths” of our memory in an attempt to “fish up” some forgotten information. But the most interesting examples of piscatorial images to symbolize the retrieval of psychic material from the depths of consciousness probably come from literature – and have to do with the creation of literature.

I'm going to look at three works in which fishing is used, as it seems to me, to symbolize the psychological effort needed to bring a literary work into existence. The first two (which are so interconnected that they could count as one) are the short stories that conclude Hemingway's collection *In Our Time*: “Big Two-Hearted River: I” and “Big Two-Hearted River: II” The third is Wordsworth's poem “Resolution and Independence.” Time being short, I'm afraid that today I'll have to examine these works in a fairly summary way.

The “Big Two-Hearted River” stories are extremely detailed descriptions of a solitary fishing trip, “Big Two-Hearted River: I” setting the scene, “Big Two-Hearted River: II” describing the actual fishing. In the first of the stories, Nick Adams gets off a train at a town that has been utterly destroyed by fire. Then he hikes over country that has been “burned over and changed” (309). But before very long the burned country ends. Late in the day, Nick reaches a meadow with the river flowing at its edge. He looks “down the river at the trout rising... to insects come from the swamp on the other side of the stream when the sun went down” (312). On some high ground overlooking the meadow he carefully makes camp, and is “happy” (313). After supper, he remembers anecdotes from an earlier fishing trip. At this point he notes, apparently with some concern, that “his mind was starting to work.” He knows, however, that “he could choke it because he was tired enough” (316). And indeed he gets into bed, and goes to sleep.

The story hints at some kind of inner torment that makes Nick's escape into what he thinks of as the “good place” (313) especially necessary and meaningful, not to say therapeutic, for him. Exactly what this torment consists of we do not know. But from the other stories in *In Our Time* we know that in his personal life and, especially, in his experience of World War I, Nick has both witnessed and experienced significant violence and loss. He has been wounded physically. It's reasonable to believe that he is suffering from psychic wounds too,¹ and in fact a story from a later volume confirms that

¹ There is some controversy on this point. To a great extent the Nick Adams stories are autobiographical, and many critics feel that “Big Two-Hearted River” has to do with the aftermath of Hemingway's having been wounded in World War I. Kenneth Lynn, however, has forcefully argued that what lies behind the two stories is a quarrel between the young Hemingway and his mother, not Hemingway's war experiences (102-08). It is also possible (though Lynn does not seem to think so) that both explanations hold true at the same time. For the reading of the story given here, the reason behind Nick's inner turmoil is of not of crucial importance. The main point is that he is in turmoil. About that there is general agreement.

Nick's wound, apparently to the head, damaged him mentally and led to his being "certified as nutty" ("A Way You'll Never Be" 505).

Given that, it is very difficult to read "Big Two-Hearted River: I" without a sense that the desolation of the landscape mirrors or expresses something in Nick himself, whose experiences have, metaphorically, laid waste to his psyche as the fire has laid waste to the town and the land. There appears to be further symbolism, moreover, in the story's last paragraph, devoted largely to Nick's killing a mosquito, which appears to annoy him even though he is protected from it by his tent and by the cheese cloth that he has hung over the entrance specifically as a barrier to mosquitoes. Now, in all likelihood the mosquito comes from the *swamp*, which breeds insects. And there is, in that last paragraph, just before Nick hears the mosquito, a rather odd mention of the swamp:

Out through the front of the tent he watched the flow of the fire, when the night wind blew on it. It was a quiet night. The swamp was perfectly quiet. Nick stretched under the blanket comfortably. (316)

What is the point of the sentence about the swamp? Would the story be any different without it? And why, if the sentence does add something to the story, is it important that the *swamp* is quiet? Wouldn't it have been more natural to say that the *river* was quiet, or that *everything* was quiet? Why the sudden stress on the swamp?

That the swamp, like the burnt out landscape (and like the river itself) has symbolic force is made almost inescapably clear in "Big Two-Hearted River: II," in which Nick fishes the river. He catches one small trout, which he puts back into the water. Then he hooks an enormous trout. He is unable to land it, but the experience is a very great thrill. He does catch one big trout, but loses another when his line catches in some overhanging branches. Then he catches a second big trout. In the course of all this, the narration creates an association between, on the one hand, *big trout* and, on the other, *depth* and *darkness*. Then Nick has lunch. He has been moving downstream, and has nearly reached the swamp. But rather than enter the swamp he ends his fishing for the day.

Nick did not want to go in there now. He felt a reaction against deep wading with the water deepening up under his armpits, to hook big trout in places impossible to land them. In the swamp the banks were bare, the big cedars came together overhead, the sun did not come through, except in patches; in the fast deep water, in the half light, the fishing would be tragic. In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure. Nick did not want it. He did not want to go down the stream any farther today. (329)

So Nick treks back to camp. "There were plenty of days coming," the story ends, "when he could fish the swamp" (330). That final sentence seems to carry some mysterious resonance, as if the swamp – and fishing the swamp – were meant to have special significance. This feeling is reinforced by the title of the story. The title "Big Two-Hearted River" invites us to draw a distinction between the clear, fast-flowing river itself which Nick initially fishes, and the dark, stagnant, "tragic" swamp which he says he'll fish another day. Sheridan Baker has suggested that the "Big Two-Hearted River is life-and-death itself." For him, "the swamp represents the darkness of death, of unknowing and the unknown." It is "the biggest mystery of life, and... to be a man Nick must face it" (154).

Baker isn't wrong, but these two stories can be read on a number of levels. On one of them, Nick's fishing trip, which requires him to be alone with himself, seems to me to symbolize a kind of self-confrontation. The swamp, in this reading, represents (among other things) the darker side of Nick's own psyche, containing "tragic" fears and wishes (including, perhaps, death wishes) and memories, including memories of trauma. It is, as Baker says, "unknown" and "a mystery," and it is true that "to be a man Nick must face it." But in both "Big Two-Hearted River" stories Nick has stopped short of facing it. At the end of "Big Two-Hearted River: I" Nick has had to "choke" the working of his mind, and in order to sleep has had to kill a mosquito (presumably come from the swamp) that could not in fact have bitten him. At the end of "Big Two-Hearted River: II" he stops short of going into the

swamp because it would be too “tragic,” although the swamp is precisely where his morning’s activity has been leading him.

If the swamp represents the darker, hidden, essentially unconscious side of Nick’s psyche, then the river would seem to represent the more conscious workings of his sensibility: flowing, complex, strong, and, at times, profound. The fish that Nick is out to catch stand, as I’ve been implying, for memories and feelings of his own. Catching them means that he has mastered them. “Big Two-Hearted River: II” implies that while he can retrieve and master important memories and feelings from the more accessible regions of his psyche, he is not yet ready to confront those from the deeper, darker, and more “tragic” regions. Now, the last thing I want to do is read these stories as simple allegories. Though the text tells us that Nick is a writer, fishing is not simply to be equated with writing. On the contrary, we have been given an explicit signal that on a literal level one of the purposes of Nick’s fishing trip is to allow him to *escape* from writing. Near the beginning of “Big Two-Hearted River: I” he feels that “he had left everything behind, the need for thinking, *the need to write*, other needs” (308, emphasis added). Nevertheless, on a symbolic level Nick’s fishing evokes an attempt at retrieving and mastering memories and feelings so as to turn them into works of literature. What I am suggesting is that because of the underlying conceptual metaphor, THE MIND IS A BODY OF WATER, the act of fishing is so congruent with that of writing that, for Nick, the two are inevitably, though perhaps unconsciously, associated. It is this close but unstated parallel between fishing and writing (and the self-confrontation that is inseparable from writing) that gives to the description of fishing in “Big Two-Hearted River: II” its overtones of mysterious, almost numinous significance.

This quasi-numinous identification of fishing with writing, though also found in *The Old Man and the Sea*, is not limited to Hemingway. It is also present, I think, in Wordsworth’s poem “Resolution and Independence.” In examining this poem, I will not be discussing the kind of nearly metaphysical significance that water can take on in Wordsworth, as seen, for example, in certain very well-known passages from *The Prelude*. I do want to point out, however, that if there is any metaphysical aspect to the water symbolism of “Resolution and Independence,” it can be viewed as perfectly complementary to the metaphor that I am discussing: THE MIND IS A BODY OF WATER.

“Resolution and Independence” is the poem where Wordsworth, walking on a moor one fine joyous morning, is inexplicably overcome by a fit of depression. He thinks of Chatterton and Burns, whom he later calls “mighty Poets in their misery dead” (123) and famously concludes, “We Poets in our youth begin in gladness; / But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness” (48-49). Then, at the edge of a pond, he encounters the leech-gatherer. Very poor and “bent double” (73) with age – “The oldest Man he seem’d that ever wore gray hairs” (56) – the leech-gatherer is presented as a wonder of nature. Wordsworth compares him to a huge boulder of unknown origin sitting mysteriously on the peak of a mountain and to “a Sea-beast crawl’d forth, which on a shelf / Of rock or sand repositeth, there to sun itself” (69-70). The leech-gatherer is, moreover, endowed – like a poet – with a remarkable gift of expression. He seems “not all alive nor dead, / Nor all asleep” (71-72) but when addressed he replies – with a fire about his eyes” (98)² – in particularly stately fashion, in “Choice word, and measured speech; above the reach / Of ordinary men” (102-03). Wordsworth perceives him as a kind of prophet-like vision bearing a message: “Like one whom I had met with in a dream; / Or like a Man from some far region sent; / To give me human strength, and strong admonishment” (117-19). The leech-gatherer’s message has to do with the qualities named in the poem’s title: resolution and independence. He says

... that, gathering Leeches, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the Ponds where they abide.

² So reads the original version of the poem. Wordsworth later softened the phrase to “his yet-vivid eyes.”

“Once I could meet with them on every side;
But they have dwindled by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.” (128-33).

Wordsworth, still beset by despondent thoughts, concludes

I could have laughed myself to scorn, to find
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.
“God,” said I, “be my help and stay secure;
I’ll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor.” (144-47)

Critics have wondered how the poem manages to make the figure of the old man carry so much weight – how it is that his words about himself should speak so directly and powerfully to Wordsworth. There are multiple answers to those questions. But I would like to propose an additional one of my own. The poem is based, obviously, on the contrast between the resolute leech-gatherer and the despondent Wordsworth. But no contrast is possible without some kind of similarity or parallelism between the two figures. In addition to the obvious similarities there is one, I think, that Wordsworth does not state and probably does not even consciously perceive. You have no doubt worked out what it is. If retrieving subaqueous creatures, like leeches, symbolizes the work of the writer in going into his own psyche and finding there material or inspiration to sustain his own poetic creation, then Wordsworth must in some deep sense *identify* with the leech-gatherer. And if that is so, the leech-gatherer has perhaps revealed the underlying cause of Wordsworth’s despondent thoughts. For the old man, it has become harder and harder to find leeches, which have “dwindled” with the passage of time. His situation thus mirrors that of the poet for whom, the first flush of youth having passed, inspiration comes with greater and greater difficulty. Indeed, we know that at the time he wrote this poem Wordsworth was concerned with the waning of that inner responsiveness to nature which had served as the inspiration for so much of his poetry. The collection in which “Resolution and Independence” appears, the 1807 collection called *Poems in Two Volumes*, concludes with the Immortality Ode, a poem that progresses from a lament that “The things which I have seen I now can see no more” (9) to a final resolution that

Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind[.] (180-83)

My point, then, is a pretty simple one. In both the Hemingway stories and the Wordsworth poem, the act of “fishing” carries a heavy symbolic weight. All three works appear to be about fishing (or leech-gathering), and they *are*, primarily, about fishing. But in them, via the conceptual metaphor THE MIND IS A BODY OF WATER, the act of fishing is invested, tacitly, with a further and psychologically momentous significance. This unstated attribution of meaning is what gives to all three works their particular aura of mysterious, unstated import.

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Metamorphoses of Medusa

JOANNE CRAIG (*)

Doubleness and ambiguity are aspects of the myth of Medusa that persist from its classical origins and that are evident in versions of the myth as interpreted by Freud and then successively by three women writers: Louise Bogan, May Sarton, and Hélène Cixous. Gender and specifically the development of feminist thinking determine important differences among these interpretations, culminating in Cixous's complete reversal and repudiation of Freud. Freud, consistent with the classical tradition, looks at Medusa from the point of view of the male beholder, a point of view that the three women writers successively feminize until Cixous's Medusa transforms a female threat whose debilitating weaknesses make heroism possible into the triumphant patron of a feminist millennium.

According to Ovid, Medusa was "once most beautiful in form" (4.794), until Athena turned her into a hideous and terrifying monster to punish her for her fornication with Poseidon in Athena's temple (Ovid 4.798-801). It is of some importance in relation to her later manifestation as a feminist heroine that the episode with Poseidon may have been a rape: the word *vitiassse* (4.798) is ambiguous. Medusa, human and female, and not the male god Poseidon, pays for the sacrilege. Athena transforms the beautiful woman into a scaly monster with snakes for hair (Hamilton 146), and anyone who looks at her becomes another of the stones that mark the approach to her dwelling (Ovid 4.779-81). Eventually the hero Perseus manages to decapitate Medusa by approaching her indirectly, guided by her reflection in Athena's shield, which Athena has given him for his mission (Hamilton 145-46).

Even in her transformation into a monster whose look is lethal, Medusa enjoys associations with both poetry and healing, as well as with beauty. She became pregnant by Poseidon, and at the moment of her death she gave birth to two horses, Chrysaor and Pegasus, the winged horse (Ovid 4.784-86), who endeared himself to the Muses when his stamping hoof brought forth the spring Hippocrene on Mount Helicon, the mountain sacred to them (Graves 1: 253; 75b), and her blood has the power to heal (Bennett 250). Thus Medusa becomes a thoroughly ambivalent figure with the capacity to kill or cure, and the ambivalence persists throughout her metamorphoses in the twentieth century.

Freud picks up on the ambivalence in the myth in his presentation of Medusa as a problem who resolves herself and other problems as well (1922; 1940). He sees Medusa's head first as an overdetermined symbol of castration on the basis of the severed head; the serpentine hair, which, by multiplying

(*) Bishop's University, Department of English, Sherbrooke, Québec, J1M 1Z7, Canada.

symbols of the penis, negates it; and the monster's property of turning beholders to stone, which he associates like decapitation through the castration complex with a male child's first view of female genitals as confirmation of the seriousness of parental threats of castration (18: 273-74). Freud continues:

This symbol of horror is worn upon her dress by the virgin goddess Athene. And rightly so, for thus she becomes a woman who is unapproachable and repels all sexed desires – since she displays the terrifying genitals of the Mother. (18:273-74)

In Freud's reading however the symbol of Medusa deconstructively mitigates its own effects. The multiple serpents replace the penis they have annihilated. The stiffness that accompanies petrification reassures the threatened spectator (18: 273). The display of the female genitals becomes "an apotropaic act. What arouses horror in oneself will produce the same effect upon the enemy against whom one is seeking to defend oneself" (18: 274). The symbol retains an uncanny doubleness.

In the twentieth century literary women have discovered in Medusa a source of empowerment. Scholars have explained the recuperation of Medusa as an attempt on the part of women to transvalue negative stereotypes whether as part of a general effort to counteract "the internalized gynophobia we have come to recognize as part of our patriarchal 'inheritance'" (Elias-Button 204; cf. Bennett 245-46) or more specifically:

Aware that the creative woman has traditionally been considered "unfeminine," even demonic, many women rebel against this stereotype by turning to malevolent goddesses as symbols of their creativity. As the individual seeking wholeness struggles with a shadow figure, so the poet confronts these projections of the "Terrible Mother," transforming them from negative demonic forces to positive, balanced figures. (DeShazer 35-36)

Castration is obviously less of a threat if it is a threat at all for the women who reinterpret Medusa in the twentieth century. Medusa's strength becomes an inspiration, although only gradually and only after a great deal of anxiety and struggle.

Louise Bogan in "Medusa" (4 [1921]), for example, associates the mythological figure with creativity, although not without considerable tentativeness and tension, insofar as the woman poet as a poet identifies herself with the male gender, perhaps all the more so in writing on a classical subject because of the connection of the classical languages, not only with poetry, but with an educational curriculum traditionally restricted to men and boys. The glance of Medusa stops time by producing the preservative stasis of art. The Persean speaker heroically or suicidally approaches Medusa's "house, in a cave of trees," a description that connotes both cozy domesticity and sinister threat, like the witch's house in a fairy tale. As the speaker advances toward her destination, nature is normally mutable: "Everything moved, – a bell hung ready to strike, / Sun and reflection wheeled by" (3-4). After the appearance of "the bare eyes ... / And the hissing hair / Held up at a window, seen through a door" (5-7), the scene changes in its cessation of change. Medusa figures the artist's uncanny power to suspend flux:

The water will always fall, and will not fall,
And the tipped bell make no sound.
The grass will always be growing for hay
Deep on the ground.

And I shall stand here like a shadow
Under the great balanced day,
My eyes on the yellow dust, that was lifting in the wind,
And does not drift away. (14-21)

The infinitives "fall" and the reference to hay, a later stage in the interrupted cycle in which grass becomes flesh and returns to grass, call attention to the contrast between process and stasis, as does the motionless yellow dust that remains lifted by the wind. In Mary De Shazer's reading of the poem the silence makes possible the emergence of the poet's voice: "Although Bogan calls this a 'dead scene,'

life flourishes amid the stasis ('the grass will always be growing for hay / Deep on the ground'), and her description conveys a tentative resolution. ... the poet ... becomes a new Medusa. [She] confronts her goddess as a same-sex equal ... and ... redefines strong silence as creative energy" (63-64). Medusa's gaze becomes the preserving and focusing gaze of art for a poet for whom gender transvalues the monstrosity of female power and whose relatively small body of work (Bennett 247) is characterized by a finicky precision.

Paula Bennett's reading of "Medusa" as an expression of the failures of the poet and of her era is however worth noting. She writes that its "nightmare vision of the terror latent in female power" freezes the speaker:

and everything around her [...]. In its death-like stasis, "Medusa" is a poem that, for all its artistic perfection, seems in retrospect tragically appropriate for a poet of extraordinary gifts who believed only 105 of her poems worthy of permanent record and who appears to have despised the very idea that she might be considered a woman poet. (247; cf. 250, 286n10)

It is significant on the one hand that Bogan chooses the subject of Medusa at all and that she writes about Medusa in a way that opens a woman's perspective on the myth. On the other hand her recuperation of the myth is tentative and incomplete. Although as a poet the speaker assumes some of Medusa's power, it is as if that power, together with the speaker herself, remains sinister. The speaker becomes a privileged observer who pays for her privilege by exclusion.

For May Sarton, Bogan's younger friend and protégée (DeShazer 199-204), the encounter with Medusa in "The Muse as Medusa" (38 [1971]) becomes a liberating encounter with the self. Sarton responds to Bogan's poem by making the stasis associated with Medusa the means by which her speaker achieves movement and fluidity in contrast:

I saw you once, Medusa; we were alone.
I looked you straight in the cold eye, cold.
I was not punished, was not turned to stone -
How to believe the legends I am told?

I came as naked as any little fish,
Prepared to be hooked, gutted, caught;
But I saw you, Medusa, made my wish
And when I left you I was clothed in thought ...

Being allowed, perhaps, to swim my way
Through the great deep and on the rising tide,
Flashing wild streams, as free and rich as they,
Though you had power marshalled on your side. (5-12)

The encounter, rather than petrifying life, restores life where there was stasis before. By a narrative that makes the process more personal, Sarton extends and transforms Bogan's suggestion that silence enables speech:

your silence is my ocean,
And even now it teems with life. You chose
To abdicate by total lack of motion,
But did it work, for nothing really froze?

For Sarton's speaker the woman's face is inseparable from the face of the monster, creativity from petrification. In an apotropaic gesture:

I turn your face around! It is my face.
That frozen rage is what I must explore -

Oh secret, self-enclosed, and ravaged place!
This is the gift I thank Medusa for.

Here as in Bogan's poem exposure and resistance to the silencing force of Medusa result in its appropriation, which becomes the source of artistic power. The confrontation with Medusa "straight in the cold eye, cold," becomes an acknowledgement and acceptance of the speaker's own "frozen rage" that liberates her from it (Cf. DeShazer 36). She sacrifices her past and future power as a legendary monster for the freedom of a little fish.

With Cixous the recuperation of Medusa is complete (1975). Her gaze at Medusa is free of the doubts, inhibitions, and hesitations of Bogan and Sarton. In fact for Cixous the ominous aspects of the mythological Medusa become the epitome of masculine slander. Cixous adopts Medusa as the patron of opposition to "the phallogocentric sublation" (255). Thus her Medusa moves from the inward and private confrontations of Bogan and Sarton into the public sphere. The personal becomes political.

"The Laugh of the Medusa" is a prophetic poem in prose. In the anthology *New French Feminisms*, edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, the essay concludes the final section, titled Utopias. The Utopia of Cixous is one in which women, the repressed force in history and language, finally break through the barriers that constrain us. This emergence is Medusan in its ambivalence: it must simultaneously destroy and create, destroy in order to create:

Since these reflections are taking shape in an area just on the point of being discovered, they necessarily bear the mark of our time – a time during which the new breaks away from the old, and, more precisely, the (feminine) new from the old (*la nouvelle de l'ancien*). Thus, as there are no grounds for establishing a discourse, but rather an arid millennial ground to break, what I say has at least two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project. (245)

The arid millennial ground is of course language, thought, and culture as we have inherited them. The unforeseeable that must be foreseen is the emergence of the feminine as the force hitherto suppressed, which Cixous identifies with the body. Psychoanalysis is a manifestation and symbol of the arid millennial ground, and Cixous proposes men's liberation as a corollary of women's freedom:

As a woman, I've been clouded over by the great shadow of the scepter and been told: idolize it, that which you cannot brandish. But at the same time, man has been handed that grotesque and scarcely enviable destiny (just imagine) of being reduced to a single idol with clay balls. And consumed, as Freud and his followers note, by a fear of being a woman! For, if psychoanalysis was constituted from woman, to repress femininity (and not so successful a repression at that – men have made it clear), its account of masculine sexuality is now hardly refutable; as with all the "human" sciences, it reproduces the masculine view, of which it is one of the effects.

Here we encounter the inevitable man-with-rock, standing erect in his old Freudian realm, in the way that, to take the figure back to the point where linguistics is conceptualizing it "anew," Lacan preserves it in the sanctuary of the phallos (φ) "sheltered" from *castration's lack*! Their "symbolic" exists, it holds power – we, the sowers of disorder, know it only too well. But we are in no way obliged to deposit our lives in their banks of lack, to consider the constitution of the subject in terms of a drama manglingly restaged, to reinstate again and again the religion of the father. Because we don't want that. We don't fawn around the supreme hole. We have no womanly reason to pledge allegiance to the negative. The feminine (as the poets suspected) affirms.... (254-55)

Asserting the power of women, Cixous argues that obsessions irrelevant to women dominate psychoanalysis, as they do the language and culture that produced psychoanalysis and which psychoanalysis epitomizes. Women need not defend themselves against the fear of a lack. Cixous proceeds to introduce Medusa:

The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable. – It is still unexplored only because we’ve been made to believe that it was too dark to be explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack. And we believed. They riveted us between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss. That would be enough to set half the world laughing, except that it’s still going on. For the phallogocentric sublation is with us, and it’s militant, regenerating the old patterns, anchored in the dogma of castration. They haven’t changed a thing; they’ve theorized their desire for reality! Let the priests tremble, we’re going to show them our sexts!

Too bad for them if they fall apart upon discovering that women aren’t men, or that the mother doesn’t have one. But isn’t this fear convenient for them? Wouldn’t the worst be, isn’t the worst, in truth, that women aren’t castrated, that they have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she’s not dead. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing.

Men say that there are two unrepresentable things: death and the feminine sex. That’s because they need femininity to be associated with death; it’s the jitters that give them a hard-on! for themselves! They need to be afraid of us. Look at the trembling Perseuses moving backward toward us, clad in apotrope. What lovely backs! Not another minute to lose. Let’s get out of here. (255)

Clearly Cixous has Freud’s paper in mind here. Myth and history rivet women between the Medusa and the abyss. We represent both the threat of castration and the proof of it as victims. Religion and philosophy, including Freud’s, have neurotically theorized the masculine desire for reality in an effort to give form and substance to a wish.

Cixous’s coinage *sexts* fuses the castrating vision of the mother’s genitals in Freud’s paper with feminist texts, the works of art in which, as Cixous urged earlier in her essay, women have written the body from the body and done so to such an extent that text and sex are inseparable. Her own text “The Laugh of the Medusa” is self-referential, a Medusan text. The priests tremble because every page of the open book assumes Medusa’s terrifying power. As *sext* the words equal the genitals. The beautiful Medusa laughs at the precautions taken by nervous men confronting an imaginary threat: the “trembling Perseuses ... clad in apotrope” come straight from Freud’s paper. They advance backwards toward Medusa, the challenge of the feminine, daring only to look at her reflection in their own shields, rather than, as Cixous advocates, “straight on,” undoing by defying it the costly myth on which their sense of their own importance depends.

Cixous dismisses the woman’s compensation together with the man’s lack: “in the child it’s not the penis that the woman desires, it’s not that famous bit of skin around which every man gravitates” (261), and she asks “Whose degrading do you like better, the father’s or the mother’s?” (263). She concludes: “everything we will be calls us to the unflagging, intoxicating, unappeasable search for love. In one another we will never be lacking” (264). The terrors that Medusa represents arise from the masculine fantasies and illusions of which they are symptoms. For Cixous psychoanalysis, Freudian or Lacanian, is an epitome of all the intellectual and cultural forces that erase and distort the feminine.

These four writers reinterpret classical myth for the twentieth century. They explore and exploit the multivalence of the old stories, which associate Medusa with beauty and monstrosity, petrification and art, death and recovery. For Freud Medusa’s head provides apotropaic reassurance against its threat of castration and so begins to suggest its own recuperation. Bogan’s speaker confronts a powerful female figure directly, rather than in the mirror of a shield, and herself becomes Medusa’s reflection, sharing her esthetic power at the cost of sharing her alienation. Sarton’s speaker also sees herself in Medusa, but chooses creative freedom at the cost of destructive power. As Sarton replies to Bogan, Cixous replies to Freud. Her writing completes the recuperation of Medusa by transforming, transvaluing, and in effect reinventing her. With a long scholarly look back at history, Freud’s paper observes the ability of Medusa’s decapitated head to mitigate its own sinister powers and even to make them available to others. Cixous on the other hand celebrates an intact Medusa, immune to the Persean anxiety about “cap crown, and

everything connected with the head” because “woman couldn’t care less about the fear of decapitation” (259). In her optimistic essay Medusa’s laughing body reflects the human future.

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Thomas Mann's novella *Luischen* [*Little Louise*]: Gender trouble

ASTRID LANGE-KIRCHHEIM (*)

Since the nineteen nineties at least, that is after the publication of Thomas Mann's diaries, every examination of his early novellas has had to face up to the conjecture that they are making ample use of those literary structures, which serve to conceal the topic of same sex love. They seem to represent progressive stages of the author's working through of his personal stigma. It was not before the year 1912 that homosexual love, the love of an aging man towards a boy, was openly made the subject of a narration (that is *Death in Venice*). In the preceding stories the narration of homosexual desire had been taking place under the guise of heterosexuality. As a result the author had to invent intricate techniques of camouflage. According to his own statement, Thomas Mann developed these techniques in his «breakthrough story», *Little Herr Friedemann*, in a way, that entirely satisfied his needs for the first time; that was in 1897: «Since *Little Herr Friedemann* I am suddenly able to find those discrete forms and masks which enable me to present my experiences to the public.»¹

In an earlier paper on Thomas Mann, given at the Conference in Arles in 2004, I based my interpretation of the novella *Little Herr Friedemann* on the following theses:

- that physical deformity – Herr Friedemann's hump – is a stigma that is analogous to the stigma of homosexuality and serves as its signal in the text;
- that the love object, Gerda von Rinnlingen, is represented as a *femme fatale*, who, in the context of the text's covert theme of homosexuality, plays the role of the rejecting male lover;
- that Gerda von Rinnlingen at the same time is constructed as a parallel or female mirror of the protagonist. Her physical complaints mask his suffering; in other words, both suffer from the heterosexual gender order.²

The novella *Luischen* [*Little Louise*], written in 1897, published in 1900, is thematically closely related to *Der kleine Herr Friedemann* [*Little Herr Friedemann*]. The protagonist, Herr Jacoby, the

(*) Deutsches Seminar II, Institut fuer Neuere deutsche Literatur, Albert-Ludwigs-Universitaet Freiburg, Postfach, D-79085 Freiburg, Deutschland. E-mail: astrid.lange-kirchheim@germanistik.uni-freiburg.de

¹ Hans Rudolf Vaget: *Thomas Mann-Kommentar zu saemtlichen Erzaehlungen*, Muenchen: Winkler, 1984, p. 55 (my translation, A. L.-K.). Letter to Grauthoff, 4/6/1897.

² Astrid Lange-Kirchheim (2006): «Gender Trouble in Thomas Mann's Early Novella *Der kleine Herr Friedemann* [*Little Herr Friedemann*]». *Proceedings of the Twenty-first International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis*, Arles, France, 2004, Lisbon: Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, pp. 63-69.

counsellor-at-law, also has a stigma. Like little Herr Friedemann's hump, his corpulence is a physical deformity. In this text the character stigmatised is the husband. The love object, in this case his wife, is like Gerda von Rinnlingen a *femme fatale*, an exotic beauty called Amra. The fatal ostracism of the homosexual is played out within the frame of a relationship triangle. Amra takes a lover, the composer Alfred Lutner, and with his help arranges a party. Acquaintances and friends participating in the festivity contribute to the entertainment with a variety of performances. Amra more or less forces her obese husband to take the stage as a chanteuse, to dress in a baby-dress of red silk and sing to her lover's music. In this role he realises that his wife has not only publicly exposed him as a cuckold. By means of the transvestite costume, she has also divulged the secret of his homosexuality. As a result he collapses on the stage and dies.

The strict division of the novella into five chapters corresponds with the five-act structure of a tragedy. Like Oedipus, the deceived husband is made to see and to know. This formal allusion to classical tragedy together with the fact that the fatal unmasking of the protagonist occurs in the public domain – and not as in *Little Herr Friedemann* in private – accentuates to a much greater extent the social dimension of the process of exclusion. In my analysis I will attempt to show how the strategies by which heteronormativity is imposed are made visible in the text.

One of these strategies is the institution of marriage. The marriage between Christian and Amra Jacoby is regarded by the narrator as one of those «adventurous combinations of contrary qualities» «the origin of which not even the most practised literary imagination could possibly conceive.» They do, however, occur with sufficient regularity to be suitable «as the basis for the mathematical composition of a farce.»³ The coupling of the beautiful woman with the ugly man corresponds on the one hand with the polarisation of sexual stereotypes, on the other with the binary construction of gender. The implicit hierarchy in the relationship is responsible for the instability of the arrangement. The woman is required to function as a complement. According to Georg Simmel, this is her responsibility as a woman (1911), but it is a role she can refuse to comply with. Simmel points metaphorically to the risk of insurrection when he defines the relation of the sexes as one of «master and slave».⁴ Seen from this perspective, Amra is, as the narrator indicates, indeed a «perilous woman» (174). The narrator can give no reason «why precisely Amra should have married Counsellor-at-law Jacoby». But he, «on his part, loved her, and that with a love so passionate as is surely seldom found in people of his physique, and yet his love was humble and timid in accordance with the rest of his nature» (177). For the lawyer the marriage with Amra seems to be a matter of survival. His declarations of love, delivered weeping and on his knees, culminate in the desperate plea that she will never betray or deceive him. He tries to make it clear to her that even if she can't love him, his love for her is still something worthwhile, something for which she should be at least a little grateful to him. In retrospect, one could conclude that the collusion in the marriage benefits both characters – Amra, the beautiful, sensual wife, camouflages her husband's lack of masculinity, in other words his homosexuality. He for his part guarantees her honour and reputation. The narrator makes a particular point of emphasising her sultana-like «vegetative and lazy voluptuousness» (174) and indirectly questions her standing as «a moral woman» (179).

With the theatre comparison in the first paragraph the narrator introduces the central metaphor of the text and anticipates its conclusion, the festivity that reaches a climax in a series of performances on an improvised stage. The party begins as a farce and ends as a tragedy, in a scandal with fatal

³ All quotations from *Little Louise* (page numbers in brackets) are taken from the following collection: Thomas Mann: *Children and Fools*. Translated from the German by Herman George Scheffauer, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928, pp. 173-200, here p. 173. For the German text see Heinrich Detering et al. (Eds.): *Thomas Mann. Grosse kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Werke – Briefe – Tagebuecher*. Vol. 2,1: *Fruehe Erzaehlungen 1893-1912*, ed. by Terence J. Reed, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2004, pp. 160-180.

⁴ Simmel, Georg: «Das Relative und das Absolute im Geschlechter-Problem». In Georg Simmel, *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie. Philosophische Kultur*, ed. by Ruediger Kramme and Otthein Rammstedt, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996 (= *Georg Simmel. Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 14, pp. 219-255).

consequences for the person scandalised, the counsellor-at-law, Christian Jacoby. Here the festival, defined by Freud as the celebratory violation of a prohibition,⁵ loses its primary function as an illusion or ritual. Here the observer's distance is removed. The hero on the stage is excluded by his fellow players and also – as it were in a second scene – by the public. As a result, he is no longer a symbolic, fictional victim, but becomes a real one.

Although Amra, a woman, has the initial idea for the «most original party», it is organised by a committee that, with one exception, consists «wholly of gentlemen» (182f.). The party is thus a reflection of patriarchal society and the generational and gender differences that determine it. It is the younger of the gentlemen, who, following barrister Witznagel's lead, demand «something startling», a «clou» as the chief feature and climax of the party (186). They are not satisfied with the suggestion of the father figure, the court actor, Herr Hildebrandt, that the party conclude with his representation of famous men: he has in mind a «startlingly realistic» (195) portrayal of Goethe, Bismarck and Napoleon. Instead, it is Amra, the wife, who conceives the clou and in so doing places herself at the head of the fraternal horde that challenges the rule of the father. Moreover, she is described here as an artist, which also underlines her subversive role.

Central terms in Mann's story, particularly in its last two chapters (in act IV and V of the tragedy, so to speak), are «Mr» and «gentlemen»⁶ – the party and its preparation are all in male hands. Herr Hildebrandt, the actor, equipped with a respectable dark suit and a Caesarean head, demonstrates the dominant hierarchy's claim to power and demands obedience to phallic-mon(arch)istic norms. At the same time, this claim to power is ironically undermined 1) by the *exaggerated* use of the address «Meine Herrschaften» which, like the generic terms «Mensch» («man» or «person») or «man» («one») in German, renders women invisible, and 2) by Herr Hildebrandt's wife. A singer in «a riding-costume» with a «Brünhilde voice» (184, 189), she is the phallic woman who subverts the asymmetrical gender order. Her contribution to the festivity is the «delightful» English song «That's Maria!» which she delivers in a phallic performance accompanied by the regular prodding of a long cane (195). Her husband intimates that it is a song of particular appeal to the male audience, describing it as «a bit piquant, but of most uncommon effectiveness» (185).

The song «Luischen» [«Little Louise»], the clou and climax of the party, is conceived by Amra and composed by her lover, Alfred Lütner. The married couple, the Hildebrandts, mirrors the other married couple, the Jacobys. Both cross the gender borders, both violate the norm of heterosexuality. Frau Hildebrandt's masculinity makes of their marriage a phallic alliance, Christian Jacoby's effeminacy makes of his a feminine one. As female homosexuality is less offensive, it is the effeminate man who is punished for his transgression with a body that is «monstrous» and «formless» (175). This calls to mind the proverb «Clothes make the Man» which is provocatively transformed by Thomas Mann into «Bodies make the Man». In showing that the body is judged in terms of gender performance, he anticipates the work of Judith Butler. The elephant, Christian Jacoby, is literally «a body that matters» and as such an affront to the symbolic order. In its endless feminine undulations that lack masculine (self-) discipline, his body *un-makes* the man.

Expressed in terms of gender theory, the novella *Luischen* [Little Louise] creates a space of hypervirile masculinity which is constantly undermined by its opposite, by both homophile and homophobic tendencies. Witznagel, the name of the young barrister decorated by duelling-scars, is its signifier (the phallus as the object of a joke).⁷ Phallogocentrism produces the discontent in culture, which is projected outwards and vents itself in the selection of a scapegoat. In the manner in which Counsellor-at-law Jacoby, who is after all a representative of law and order, is forced to break a taboo, is forced to perform the role of the effeminate man, «malice» and «politeness» mix and become indistinguishable (189). With the request

⁵ Sigmund Freud [1912–13]: «Totem and Tabu», *S.E.*, vol. 13, p. 140.

⁶ In German «Herr(en)» and «Herrschaften».

⁷ The German «Witz» means «wit» and «joke», «Nagel» means «nail».

– «Christian, I propose that at the close you appear as a chanteuse in a baby-dress of red silk and dance something for us» (187) – Jacoby's wife, in front of the whole organising committee, delivers her husband up for execution. In the literal transformation of this abhorred in- and subhuman colossus from a human being into an animal – into a dancing bear – lies, in the text's own words, the «social significance» of the party «in honour of the newly-brewed spring beer» (182, 195). It is the grotesque transposition of the stories of Easter and of sacrifice – Christian Jacoby is both Oedipus and Christ.

He is the object of a kind of mobbing, which in psychotraumatology is considered to be a type of collective trauma defence. Using double bind messages – hence the mixing of «malice» and «politeness» (189) – the collective forces the victim to carry out the actions that its members deem «necessary».⁸ In the process they draw on Jacoby's own self-loathing. Even the narrator joins in and is himself guilty of «blaming the victim»: «No spectacle is more unlovely than that of a man who despises himself, but who nevertheless out of cowardice and vanity would like to be amiable and to please; and, in my opinion, it was not otherwise with the counsellor-at-law, who went too far in his almost grovelling self-deprecation, so that he was utterly unable to keep the necessary amount of personal dignity» (176). By blaming the victim the accuser attempts to protect himself from his own fear of becoming a victim of trauma, of himself being ostracised.

The performance «Little Louise. Song and Dance. Music by Alfred Lütner» (195) as the chief and closing act of the festivity is a masquerade in a number of ways. It is a masquerade in the sense that it is an unmasking. The protagonist's eyes are opened. His own performance has for him the effect of a revelation, an unveiling, the suddenness of which is compared with the rending of a curtain. It is also a masquerade in the sense that it is a gender performance. The transvestite gender travesty works by detaching the gender qualities that seem to be specific to femininity and masculinity and by giving them the status of signs. Gender identity is thus shown to be a construction. Ultimately it is possible to use transvestism, as Marjorie Garber does, as the name for the signification process of culture itself, as a metaphor for the symbolic order. Accordingly, all culture is transvestism.⁹

The medium of the unmasking is the music. The unveiling is the effect of a sudden change of key. The expected transition from C-sharp major to F-sharp major does not occur; instead there is a sudden turn and the key changes to F major. This «interpolation» follows on the «long drawn out» second syllable of «Lu-is-chen» (198) transforming the three-syllabled feminine form of the German diminutive into the two-syllabled masculine Lou-is. The sudden (musical) turn from C-sharp major to F-major symbolises the switch from feminine to masculine, or from heterosexual to homosexual. It is no longer «Little Louise from down the alley» who, in the silly refrain that Jacoby is to sing, «charms the heart of every man,» but Little Louis.

To polka and to waltz I rally,
And dance them as no other can;/
Little Louise from down our alley,
Who charms the heart of every man (198).¹⁰

The counsellor-at-law, a «pathetic figure» (197), naïve in his compliance with the dominant gender order, is forced to follow the melody and in so doing to out himself. Stressing the two syllables of «Lou-is» is one of those «original» effects that, according to the narrator, qualify the otherwise insignificant

⁸ Amra manipulates and coerces her husband by means of the following reproach: «You refused in discourteous terms to support the entertainment by your cooperation, which everybody considered necessary» (190).

⁹ Marjorie Garber: *Vested Interests. Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety*, New York/London: Routledge, 1991.

¹⁰ Note the German version: «Den Walzertanz und auch die Polke / Hat keine noch, wie ich, vollführt; / Ich bin Luischen aus dem Volke, / Die manches Männerherz gerührt ... ». *Thomas Mann. Grosse kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe*, vol. 2,1, p. 178.

composer, Alfred Lutner, as an artist (181). There is a significant difference between the expected modulation from C-sharp major to F-sharp major, which would have resulted in a small upward shift from six sharps to seven, and the actual modulation to F major, which involves a downward movement to a key with one flat. If the music is understood as a metaphor here, then the distance from C-sharp major to F major can be seen to signify the difference between masculine and feminine and the discrepancy in their status. Sharps elevate individual notes in the tonic key by a semi-tone; flats lower or, as the name suggests, flatten them. And this is exactly what happens to the figure of Christian Jacoby. The ‹stout man› (174) is literally flattened so that he collapses and dies, ‹making the boards rattle› (200) as he crashes to the floor.

The fatal humiliation is not the result of the realisation that he has been deceived by his wife and her lover, the love-pair, as the narrator for reasons of decorum seems to suggest. It is caused by the wife's betrayal of her husband, her public exposure of the animal (the dog, the elephant, the bear) in him i.e. the sodomist. Around 1900 sodomy was a common term for homosexuality. The horror this performance of effeminacy and beastliness arouses in the public is comparable with that evoked by classical tragedy. It is the horror and fear of the return of chaos, disorder, the repressed, which at the turn of the century is identified and stigmatised as homosexuality. The function of the taboo of homosexuality is to secure the stability of the heterosexual gender order. That is the reason why the representation of *this Oedipus*' suffering requires the camouflage of the cuckolded husband, or of the ludicrous transvestite.

Thomas Mann's stigma-management in his novella *Luischen* [*Little Louise*] is not only evident in the parallel drawn between the exclusion of the homosexual and the exclusion of the female from the symbolic/masculine order. The story contains other exclusions, those that are based on race or ethnicity. The performances for the Spring festival include Negro dances that are described in terms that are culturally devaluing: ‹and, behold, there stood a number of hideous Negroes, in screaming costumes and with blood-red lips, who gnashed their teeth and raised a barbaric howl...› (195). Moreover, both protagonists, and some of the other characters, are shown to be of Jewish descent. Counsellor-at-law Jacoby conceals his origin with a ‹Christian› name, which is meant to override the signal effect of his surname Jacoby. The first name of his wife, Amra, is an artificial creation¹¹ whose exotic oriental ring camouflages the Jewishness of the Hebrew name, Anna, which, however, remains audible. It is the physical stereotype of the nose, ‹in profile [...] a bit too large and fleshy› (174) that clearly identifies her as a Jew. The already evident exclusion of both married partners – as a homosexual and as a woman – from the phallogocentric order is doubled by the stereotypical equivalence: ‹am I a Jew – I am a woman›.¹² In Counsellor-at-law Jacoby this produces a ‹grovelling self-deprecation› (176), self-contempt and an excessively humble and timorous submissiveness that corresponds with Jewish self-hatred. His wife Amra's reaction to her abasement is, in contrast, projected outwards as ‹sensual malice› (178), a ‹mocking tone› (179) and as ‹avid slyness› (174). Finally, the singing, mincing transvestite Jacoby can also be interpreted as a metaphor for the outsider figure of the artist, represented here pejoratively by the narrator as the ‹small artist› (180).

If one were to generalise the narrator's derisive comment about the other artist in the story, the ‹petty mime› (180) Alfred Lutner, one could say that none of those characters in the novella, who are stigmatised, succeeds in being ‹unhappy in a respectable manner› (180). The narrated events show, however, that the reactions to social and cultural exclusion – and the strategies of exclusion include not only the gender discourse but also the language the narrator uses – become (self-)destructive. In Amra, the beautiful Jewess torments the ugly Jew till he dies. A degree of destruction is reached that

¹¹ The name Amra is ‹composed of the initial letters of› Anna, Marguerite, Rose, Amalie (173).

¹² For further evidence of this stereotypical equation see Otto Weininger [1903]: *Geschlecht und Charakter. Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung*, Muenchen 1980, pp. 409, 429. See also Heinrich Detering: *Juden, Frauen, Literaten. Zu einer Denkfigur beim jungen Thomas Mann*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2005.

exceeds and cancels not only ethical, but also aesthetic demands: the counsellor-at-law is executed by means of a play within a play. It is thus an act of narrative justice in the novella that an editor with a typically Jewish name, Doctor Wiesensprung, is permitted to deliver a lecture at the festivity on the topic «Spring beer and its social significance» (195), and that a young physician, «a small Jewish gentleman with serious face and black, pointed beard» (200), is given the task of diagnosing Jacoby's death and uttering the text's menacing last word: «Aus», that is «All over»: an exit and an end in many respects.

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A psychoanalytic approach towards *The Doll's House*

NIHAN KAYA (*)

The plot of *The Doll's House* is centered around a doll's house that is sent to the children of the Burnell family, by an old lady, after staying with the family as a guest. The "perfect, perfect little house!" (p. 27) is welcome by these three little girls who receive the present, with enormous joy and excitement. However, the difference in the way characters approach the house, subtly builds the inner structure of the story that can be pictured by psychic oppositions.

The clear-cut distinction between the child and adult lives is anticipated from the beginning of the story, when Aunt Beryl, the only adult character of the story, doesn't let the house inside the house due to the smell she claims it has.

For, really, the smell of paint coming from that doll's house ("Sweet of old Mrs Hay, of course; most sweet and generous!") – but the smell of paint was quite enough to make anyone seriously ill, in Aunt Beryl's opinion. Even before the sacking was taken off.

The *toy house* belongs to the world of children, a less serious one, so it should be moved away from the *real house*, in which, the rule of the adult reigns. For some reason, Aunt Beryl has an assumption that it smells, even if there is no other clue in the rest of the story, that might suggest it really has that smell. The adult aunt perceives the house as if it has destructive impacts and feels scared to be made ill by the house. Her adult dislike of the child-world object is mixed with her insincere remark about Mrs Hay, which gives another sense of the two-facedness of adult-life.

What makes a sensation about the doll's house among children is that it looks like 'a *real house*'. "It [is] too marvellous; it [is] too much for them" (p. 27); because they are only unimportant *children*, whereas the house has "real windows" (p. 27), papered rooms, as if it is one of the serious houses of the adult. Besides resembling an *actual house*, the doll's house offers an opportunity to gaze into all rooms within it, at one and the same moment. "That is the way for a house to open! Why don't all houses open like that? How much more exciting than peering through the slit of a door into a mean little hall with a hat-stand and two umbrellas!" (p. 27). What the children actually want to peer at, is the adult life that they are not really allowed in. Houses, as well as the world, are places that are possessed by

(*) Deniryolu Cad., N° 102, Kaya Glyin, Izmit / Kocaeli, Turkey. E-mail: kaya_nihan@hotmail.com

adults, and children can take part in it to a limited degree, in so far as they act within the rules of adults. Bedrooms and bathrooms of parents remain as *forbidden* areas that arouse curiosity, anger and fear (against the possibility of punishment in case they break the law) of children. Therefore, they are fascinated by the idea of being the *possessor* and *law-maker* of the toy-house where parents are excluded.

Even if the story is narrated by a third person speaker, we view it from the eyes of the youngest of the sisters, Kezia, throughout the whole chain of events. “What Kezia [likes] more than anything, what she [likes] frightfully, [is] the lamp... an exquisite little amber lamp with a white globe” (p. 28) in the doll’s house. The circle has always been considered as the perfect shape and the symbol of the divine and eternity because of its symmetry. It has no end, side or corner. The Greek scholar Proclus (410-485) claims that it is the first, simplest and the most perfect form. The perfect shape of the lamp combines with the roundness of the breast, the womb and the globe of the Earth in Kezia’s mind and suggests a purity that can never be achieved. The impossibility of this utopic symbiosis with the Mother Nature, the world, the womb makes Kezia even more conscious of her smallness, powerlessness and separateness. The lamp is “even filled all ready for lighting, though of course, you [can’t] light it. But there [is] something inside that [looks] like oil and [moves] when you [shake] it” (p. 28). Kezia is suffering from being the youngest in the family; she projects her unpleasant feeling of being too *small* and *helpless* into the “exquisite little” lamp, which is only a minute detail of the doll’s house, that nobody else is aware of. *Of course*, you *can’t* light the lamp; it is small, is only a toy, is not real and functional. But, it has something inside, that makes it look as if it can be lighted. So, the lamp has the potential to be lighted, though it can’t really be so, like Kezia who has the potential to grow up into an adult, latent within her smallness (like the oil of the lamp), but she doesn’t have the power and authority of the adult at her present stage. The lamp is “all ready for lighting”, like Kezia who is all ready for growing, though she lacks the capacity to function as an adult, for the very same reason.

The father and mother dolls, who sprawled very stiff as though they had fainted in the drawing-room, and their two little children asleep upstairs, were really too big for the doll’s house. They didn’t look as though they belonged. But the lamp was perfect. It seemed to smile at Kezia, to say, “I live here.” The lamp was real.

Kezia transfers her feelings about her family onto the dolls. The doll family seems too *big* for the toy house, they do not *belong* to it. Kezia feels that the other members of her family are too *big* for her *small* child-life, which is transferred into the doll’s house where every element of adult-life exists in a miniaturized and non-functional form. The parents and their two children, equated to Kezia’s own parents and two elder sisters, fail to fit into that small life of Kezia. They don’t *belong* to the toy-house, just as Kezia doesn’t belong to their adult-world. Kezia’s absent self as one of the children in the doll family is projected into the ‘little’ lamp instead, which fits ‘perfect’. It is Kezia’s own self living in the lamp; that’s why she has the false assumption that it is *real, living, smiling at her*. Idea of *stiff* parents *sleeping*, as if they have *fainted* reveals Kezia’s feeling that her parents are dead, inside. They fail to respond Kezia emotionally or to adapt to any inner need of Kezia. Some sense of lack of understanding, affection and attention prevails the air. Kezia’s parents are strangely missing during the story; they have no physical effect on the flow of events, even if they exist silently in everything the child characters think or do. Some strong sense of neglect hangs up in their unspoken absence and this neglect appears in emotional as well as in physical terms in Kezia’s world. She projects her need of emotional communication onto the lamp which she believes smiles at her, after, unlike the doll parents, *fitting* it perfectly into the *toy-house*, which is as small as to *fit* into her *little* world. Kezia tries to reintroject the breast, with all its warmth, through the lamp. Anything *big* implies rules emptied of love and affection. Kezia seeks these elements in *small* items. Small items, being under the control of Kezia, helps her to reverse her situation of being controlled by her parents.

In the story, there is no hint that the girls ever play with the house. They “burn” to “boast about their doll’s house” (p. 28) to everyone at school, and to take them in turns to their house “not to stay to tea, of course, or to come traipsing through the house. But just to stand quietly in the courtyard while Isabel [points] out the beauties, and Lottie and Kezia [looks] pleased...” (p. 28). The house becomes

an object of showing-off. It stands for the *good object* or the *ego ideal* (Freud, 1914) of the three girls. They mark the difference between them and feel that they possess the good-object, whereas the others lack it, while showing it to those who don't have it. Feelings of *possession* and power are concretized in the body of the doll's house. The house is something to show, not to play with; because they are scared of any harm that may come to it. It is actually their internal world that they are trying to protect through the doll's house, into which they have projected the big ideals (ego-ideals) of their *small* lives. The doll's house is a sort of *transitional object* (Winnicott, 1951) which represents both worlds of the internal and the external, of the child and the adult.

It is Isabel who dominates the procedure of this important showing-off event, as she is the *eldest* of the three girls. Lottie and Kezia unwillingly comply with the rules she sets, because they "[know] too well the powers that [go] with being eldest" (p. 28). All ideas that are associated with the adult-world and authority are transferred to Isabel. "Isabel [is] bossy, but she [is] always right" (p. 28). This statement, which is implied to be made from the point of view of Kezia, indicates her ambivalent response to the figure of authority, in the body of her elder sister, Isabel. The remark about Isabel's *rightness*, juxtaposed with her not-really-liked bossiness, points out Kezia's feeling of being *wrong*, as well as her sense of guilt.

Kezia's conflict with Isabel and the others about the doll's house appears as none of them becomes aware of the the lamp Kezia feels so fascinated by. When Isabel finishes with her demonstration of the house which includes telling about the items it includes, Kezia breaks in screaming "[She's] forgotten the lamp"! Then, Isabel, in agreement, adds the description of the "teeny little lamp"; however, Kezia "[thinks] Isabel [isn't] making half enough of the little lamp. But nobody [pays] any attention" (p. 30).

Kezia's all efforts to make the others notice the *tiny* lamp remain fruitless. Actually, it is Kezia's own *little* self, identified with the lamp, that *can't* take the attention of the *bigger* others. The lamp, *forgotten*, symbolizes her need for love and attention in a *big* world of adults.

Kezia is unconsciously suffering from the highly incomplete development of her ego, which has been contributing to her dependence. The perfect, endless circle of the lamp suggests a feeling of completeness that Kezia is desperately in need of. The lamp is complete, despite of its smallness; therefore, it becomes the ego-ideal of Kezia. Kezia tries to complete her lacking self by robbing the *fullness* of the lamp.

The *group matrix* (Foulkes, 1964) of the town people is characterized by class distinctions on the fore, besides the age distinctions hidden in the background. The only two who are not asked to come and see the doll's house are "the *little* Kelveys" (p. 31, [my italic]), girls of a washerwoman who is looked down upon because of her social status. Worse still, there is a rumour in the town that the father of the girls is in prison. The *parents* don't let their children even speak to the Kelveys. Parents dislike the idea of sending their children to the same school with these girls, but the Kelveys are strictly kept as outsiders and shunned by everybody at school as well as in other places.

What is going on between the Kelveys and the community is a case of *projective identification* (Klein, 1946) of the community resulting from *cultural narcissism* (Lasch, 1979), as a defense against their own anxiety and guilt. People want to keep the distance between themselves and the Kelveys as far as possible. This pathological narcissism, which shapes the primitive social matrix, arises with the wish to distinguish the self from other objects. The narcissistic identity of the self is secured with the construction of the difference of an other. (For details, see Figlio, "Psychoanalysis, Politics and the Self-awareness of society", 2004, pp. 89-93). Societal boundaries put the emphasis on difference which sustains order as opposed to the Other which is dirty, polluting and dangerous (Clarke, 2003, p. 4). On the other hand, the unruly – in this case, Mr Kelvey, whose absence arouses the *fear* that he *might* be in prison, and who is treated on that assumption – is perceived as a threat against the established security of the society (see Figlio and Richards, "The Containing Matrix of the Social", 2003, pp. 415-417).

This process of projective identification is clearly pictured in the story, represented in the body of the *bits*, that the children were given by the town people. Immediately after saying "the daughters of a washerwoman and a jailbird. Very nice company for other people's children!", Mansfield adds: "And they *looked* it" (my italic).

The truth was they were dressed in “bits” given to [Mrs Kelvey] by the people for whom she worked. Lil, for instance, who was a stout, plain child, with big freckles, came to school in a dress made from a green art-serge tablecloth of the Burnells’, with red plush sleeves from the Logans’ curtains. Her hat, perched on top of her high forehead, was a grown-up woman’s hat, once the property of Miss Lecky, the post-mistress... And her little sister, our Else, wore a long white dress, rather like a nightgown, and a pair of little boy’s boots (p. 29).

The “bits” Lil and Else are dressed with are the old, worn out possessions of the town people that they don’t want to possess anymore. The Kelveys contain the unwanted, inferior parts of these people that they want to get rid of. Disowning these inferior, bad parts by expelling them into the Kelveys helps them to secure the narcissistic purity of their selves. Projection of the bad parts, which is basically a fantasy, finds its physical expression in the *bad* clothes the Kelveys are dressed with, through *containment* (Bion, 1962). The moment these parts, that they used to own, are given, they become old; and the moment these clothes are old (bad), they become disowned and belong to the Kelveys thereafter. So it is the Kelveys, not them, who own these bad dresses/parts. The society are kept pure and they have to ignore the fact that these parts, once, used to belong to them. In order to keep their identity narcissistically pure and secure, they distinguish the Kelveys from the rest of the society. And they hate the Kelveys due to these bad clothes they do have; because they unconsciously know that these parts they hate in the Kelveys were theirs, not the Kelveys’, at the beginning. The Kelveys contain the hatred, anxiety, fear and guilt of the society, as they establish a threat for their narcissistic purity. It is actually their own selves that they hate in the clothes of the Kelveys, but this reality is so horrible to face that they ignore it; the *reality principle* (Freud, 1920) yields to the pleasure of narcissism. They reinforce what they *want* to believe the Kelveys are, by the way they *look*. Despite of their hatred for the Kelveys’ appearance, they continue giving these old possessions to them, so that they wear them in this *unusual* way and that the difference between them is secured. And they want to see them dressed in “bits”, so that the Kelveys won’t be perceived as “whole” or “pure” beings and can be torn into pieces in their minds.

It is also interesting that the physical characteristics of both the Kelveys as well as their dresses are portrayed as out of the standard. Lil is *huge*, whereas our Else is described as “a tiny wishbone of a child” (p. 29). On the one hand, they are physically beyond the *boundaries* of the social norms; and on the other, isn’t it remarkable that the younger of the sisters is constantly called “*our* Else”, by the narrator whose identity is unknown, which might point to an unconscious *knowing* (Bion, 1967) by the society about the destination their unwanted parts have been sent to?

The emphasis of group matrix on social difference is internalized by the children in the story as well. One day, the subject “rather flag”s among children, when they see the Kelveys eating by themselves at the dinner hour, while they are all together, as always. “They [want] to be horrid to them” and one of the girls goes over to the Kelveys “sliding, gliding, dragging one foot, giggling behind her hand” and asks “Is it true you’re going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?”. The girl can’t stand the *defeat*, when Lil “[doesn’t] seem to mind the question at all”, and she “[shoots] forward”:

“Yah, yer father’s in prison!” she hissed spitefully.

This was such a marvellous thing to have said that the little girls rushed away in a body, deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy. Someone found a long rope, and they began skipping. And never did they skip so high, run in and out so fast, or do such daring things as on that morning (p. 31).

The scene reveals a fight of powers and a practise of tyranny celebrated as a group of children who is imposing it upon an *other*, as a result of their previous experience of containment provided by their parents (for a development of the idea of tyranny mentioned here, see Meltzer, “Tyranny”, 1973, pp. 143-150; Figlio and Richards, “The Containing Matrix of the Social”, 2003, pp. 417-419). What makes it so “marvellous” is, going beyond the limits by speaking the taboo out, which is *forbidden* by the adults, the very same people who have taught them the seriousness of this taboo itself and not to speak it out at the same time. The reason for the pleasure that they derive from the cathexis which they experience,

here, is multi-layered: They are discharging the unpleasant energy they have accumulated for so long by trying to repress the unspoken idea which is known to everyone – that their father might have done something *bad* and have been put in prison. Breaking the boundaries imposed by adults for the sake of accentuating the difference, as practised by adults, is so *exciting*. In this way, they are both coming up against their parents and identifying themselves with them, who have been imposing power on children in a similar way. They are overpowered by the horror of a *jailbird* and try to suppress their depressive anxiety by throwing it in the face of the Kelveys in a tyrannical way. The Kelveys contain the fear that they have for their parents as well. From the primitive social matrix that they were born into, they create a new form of *projective communication* (Figlio, “Psychoanalysis, Politics and the Self-awareness of society”, 2004) peculiar to their own *small* community by which they can convert the narcissistic imposition of the adult-community into their own; and they become “a body”, they unite as a *proper* community, while doing that. Anything that resembles an element of the adult-community, is perceived as the *proper*. They are aware that the *society* is *ruled* by the adults. Within the rules of the adult-world they have adapted, they become tyrants who impose the power upon another, instead of victims upon whom the power is imposed. By means of this new projective communication which provides a transitional stage for them to power, they enable themselves to complete their narcissistic purity. Besides, they enjoy defeating the parents with their own weapons, breaking the rule of the Father (see the idea of the Name-of-the-Father or the Law-of-the-Father by Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of the Desire in the Freudian Unconscious”, 1960) with his own rule, and replacing the adult-rule with the child one, at the same time.

It is only Kezia who identifies with the victim instead of the tyrant. She doesn’t draw any distinction in her desire between showing the doll’s house to the Kelveys or to the others. But her attempts to ask the Kelveys to see the house *just for once* are refused without any explanation:

“Mother,” said Kezia, “can’t I ask the Kelveys just once?”

“Certainly not, Kezia.”

“But why not?”

“Run away Kezia; you know quite well why not.” (p. 30).

As the youngest, the ego of Kezia is still so weak that she doesn’t feel *powerful* enough to join in the tyrannical act of the *small* community she is supposed to belong to. She is too small for even this child-community, as she is imposed power by the elder ones within this small-society as well. Besides, being the youngest, she hasn’t completed her process of internalization of the social norms yet. She is ambivalent between her desire and the social rules; she conforms to them just because of her sense of guilt, which is predominated by the pressure of her strong super-ego upon her weak ego.

The last scene of the story takes place in the afternoon of the day the Kelveys are humiliated. There are visitors in the house and Kezia thieves out from the back to the courtyard, unlike her sisters, “who [like] visitors [and go] upstairs to change their pinafores” (p. 31). This dislike of visitors, which is an adult way of socialization, sets forth another example that Kezia doesn’t feel a part of this social adult-world.

While swinging, Kezia notices the Kelveys passing by and after some hesitation, makes up her mind to approach them instead of running away. She says “Hullo” to the astounded Kelveys and invite them to see the doll’s house. The Kelveys, whose super-egos are as dominant as Kezia’s, think they *shouldn’t* come, but can’t resist the temptation to see *the doll’s house*. Finally, following Kezia like “two little stray cats”, they find themselves on the way to *the famous doll’s house*.

Kezia’s first words after opening the house are interrupted by the furious voice of Aunt Beryl, who screams: “How dare you ask the little Kelveys into the courtyard!”. Aunt Beryl “[shooes the Kelveys] out as if they [are] chickens” (p. 32) and slams the doll’s house calling Kezia bitterly “Wicked, disobedient girl!” (p. 33).

We can’t witness the reaction of Kezia, as the scope suddenly turns to Aunt Beryl here:

The afternoon had been awful. A letter had come from Willie Brent, a terrifying, threatening letter, saying if she did not meet him that evening in Pulman’s Bush, he’d come to the front

door and ask the reason why! But now that she had frightened those little rats of Kelveys and given Kezia a good scolding, her heart felt lighter. That ghastly pressure was gone. She went back to the house humming (p. 33).

The projective communication so joyfully actualized by the little girls only a few hours earlier is beautifully interwoven with the projective communication of the adult Aunt Beryl, which is the climax point of the plot as well, within the inner structure of the story. The wild act of the girls is changed into a subtler form of imposition in the adult version here; and the power clashes with the weak Kelveys, and for the first and only time, with Kezia, concretely. However, the content of the projective identification in each case doesn't change; as projective identification is always a manifestation of the subject's own psychotic and schizoid anxieties.

The Kelveys, frightened to death, stop to rest on a drainpipe, when they are well out of sight. They sit silently looking over the hay paddocks, dreamily; and then, our Else, nudging up close to her sister, smiles her rare smile:

"I seen the little lamp," she said softly.
Then both were silent once more" (p. 33).

Notice of Kezia's beloved *little lamp* by the "wishbone of a child" for the first time provides a common place for those two little girls, through which their inner worlds communicate. The *exquisite little lamp* signifies the same meaning in the personal matrix of the two little girls, predominated by a social matrix of power relationships. This psyche concretized in the body of the lamp reveals the psyche of the story as well, as it is only the reader who has the privilege to follow that focus on the lamp, which is carried from Kezia's vision along with the plot, till it is taken over by our Else at the very end. Sad silence of the Kelveys is also the sad silence of the story. The possibility of an *introjective communication* (Figlio, 1998) between the two children is annihilated by the interruption of an adult, which marks the story with a distinct separation line, dividing the purity of the lamp into two. Kezia's feeling is ratified by an outer attack: Purity and integrity are really impossible to achieve. The adult hand of Aunt Beryl that slams the doll's house slams the hopes of purity that used to live in the hearts of the two *little girls*, externalized in a little lamp. Narcissism wins against the utopia of equality. The lamp, which the girls used to have an unconscious phantasy to hold on to, remains shut within the *doll's house* when Aunt Beryl enters the scene.

Mansfield wrote *The Doll's House* in October 1921, fourteen months before her death on 9 January 1923. She was already suffering from tuberculosis which, at that time, meant an irrevocable death sentence. In these closing eighteen months of her life, she wrote ceaselessly, very well aware that she didn't have much time left; and both the amount and quality of the stories she wrote in the last two years of her life surpassed her previous whole-life writings. Her two previous books and other works that she had been writing since her early ages had been unfairly ignored by critics. Mansfield was writing with enormous rage and fury, against both her illness and the critics who had undervalued her; and her rage was being reflected in her stories. She had to work despite of her increasing fatigue; she needed money for her treatment which was remarkably costly.

Mansfield set the physical context of the story in Wellington, Mansfield's hometown in New Zealand, where she spent the first fourteen years of her life, and, even, in her own childhood home, which still exists today. After having studied three years at Queen's College in London, she had rebelled against her father, for being sent back to England, and succedingly, had spent the rest of her life there, in England, from 1908. Her extra-marital affairs which were quite frequent were received with extreme blame and anger by the conservatist people of her time and she stayed as an outsider all her life. It was not only the society, but also her father, the most important person in her life, who denied her. Even her eventual marriage to John Middleton Murry, who had been her prolonged lover, in 1918, didn't give any way to her acceptance. Besides, Murry's flirtations with other women increased her anger after their marriage.

Mansfield was constantly thinking about her relationship with her father towards the end of her life. Immediately after finishing *The Doll's House*, she wrote a long letter to her father begging for his

forgiveness. She was suffering from the conflict between the immense love she felt for her father and his coldness.

As a result of all these influences, Mansfield's imagination turned towards various forms of power relationships in her last years. Accordingly, it went back to her childhood years in her homeland. Mansfield had difficult years in England as a refugee from New Zealand and as a lonely woman who was living in a world of men. The colonizer England as opposed to the colonial New Zealand, active paternalism as opposed to being passive as a woman, destructive death as opposed to life, painful illness as opposed to the longed-for health, authoritative father as opposed to the helpless child, power of critics as opposed to writers, were all mixed in her personal matrix and she was on the side of the oppressed, in each of these oppositions. While feeling the need to defend her self against the strong, she also built her story on the elements derived from the social matrix of her own time, governed by conservatism. She was being tyrannized by a cultural narcissism which was projecting hatred into her in the name of *purity*. These reasons led Mansfield to come to question the content of purity, unconsciously. (for a discussion on purity, see Grunberger, "On Purity", 1989, pp. 89-103)

The blend of all these ideas took her back to a childhood memory when she was given a doll's house. At the time, she was feeling displaced by her mother and grandmother in terms of affection, as all their attention had belonged to a newly born, sick sister of Mansfield, Gwen, who could live for only three months. Her elder sisters had been away when the house was sent, and Mansfield developed a strong sense of *proprietorship* for the house. She says she wanted *badly* to show it to somebody.

Now, Mansfield was writing that story, because she wanted *badly* to show her talent to critics and to the world, through them, before she died. Her talent had been ignored, just as Kezia or the little lamp. Her effort to write was another rebel against the power of death. She was feeling weak in her physical helplessness which was increasing day by day; but, creating stories, as against mortality, stood as a defense against the persecutory anxiety of death and illness for her.

Her feelings had taken Mansfield back to her stage in childhood. Her regression resulted with an act of sublimation (for a discussion of this idea of sublimation, see Kris, 1953) and she transferred her feelings both into the plot or the inner plot of the story and into Kezia. The scope of Kezia was the scope of the story, as well as Mansfield's. Mansfield picked up an object from her childhood – the doll's house – and added the inner elements of her present life into it. The indifference of those who are surrounding her, to her physical and emotional suffering showed itself in Kezia as a need for love and attention. Coldness of her familial, societal and literary environment to Mansfield was transferred to the *stiff*, big dolls in the house. Mansfield's countertransference to these figures which represented authority, found its expression in the form of the hatred towards social snobbery, mental abuse of the child by its parents and the other adults in the story.

Her letters reveal that Mansfield began to feel extremely guilty towards the end of her life; that helps us to understand Kezia's sense of guilt which remains unexplained during the plot. This guilt is reinforced by the pressure of the super-ego, which corresponds to the pressure of the social norms upon Mansfield, besides the pressure of her own super-ego at the time. Mansfield felt that pressure more during her illness, as her physical vulnerability contributed to the weakening of her ego, which contributed to her regression towards childhood, when our egos are much weaker.

Mansfield died on 9 January 1923, poor and infamous, with nobody with her, except her husband, whom she had called to visit her on that very night. Her works began to be appreciated much later after her death. Like Aunt Beryl's hand which slammed the doll's house so abruptly and unexpectedly, her untimely death suddenly put an end to her writing career and shut the round lamp, which symbolizes completeness, inside. That was what she feared and interpreted as the interference of upper powers. That was why she constructed her story upon power relationships, in which one side oppressed the other. Her helplessness towards the inevitable end made her feel persecuted by *authority* and she carried this idea with her in the construction of her story.

However, today, we are still reading Mansfield and writing on her works. Aren't we outside the doll's house, like the Kelveys, who have seen the lamp and continuing the story? The lamp still reaches out to us, though it has remained at the other side of the line that separates us.

Isn't the story going on as we read it now?

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