The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: A Defense and an Elaboration

Charles M. T. Hanly

To cite this article: Charles M. T. Hanly (1986) Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: A Defense and an Elaboration, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 55:1, 1-22, DOI: 10.1080/21674086.1986.11927128

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1986.11927128

Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LV, 1986

PSYCHOANALYTIC AESTHETICS: A DEFENSE AND AN ELABORATION

BY CHARLES M. T. HANLY, PH.D.

Psychoanalysis provides a middle ground that synthesizes opposing views in aesthetics. The opposition in question is between those who would assign primary importance to form in art and those who would assign it to content. Psychoanalysis can offer a psychological elaboration of the aesthetics of catharsis first set out by Aristotle. And it is in this tradition that psychoanalytic theory should be placed. Although Freud emphasized the thematic, emotional, and pleasure yielding aspects of the aesthetic experience, an elucidation of the aesthetics of form is inherent in and consistent with the basic findings of psychoanalysis

INTRODUCTION: FORM AND CONTENT IN ART

An antithesis between the estimations of the relative value of form and that of content has been the source of one of the perennial controversies in aesthetics. Bell (1914), for example, has placed paramount importance upon form as the crucial factor in aesthetic experience:

> . . . he who contemplates a work of art, inhabit[s] a world with an intense and peculiar significance of its own; that significance is unrelated to the significance of life. In this world the emotions of life find no place. It is a world with emotions of its own (pp. 26-27).

and again,

> . . . if a representative form has value, it is as form, not as representation. The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For to appre-

> ciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of esthetic exultation (p. 25).

Among other aestheticians who have subscribed to this view are Carpenter (1921), Parker (1924), and R. Fry (1924). Tolstoy (1896), on the other hand, devalued form and sought to limit the idea of great art to stories (descriptive painting and plastic representations, by extension) that could arouse strong feelings in simple, unsophisticated people.

> Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them (p. 51).

Similar views have been advocated by Véron (1878) and Hirn (1900). An ostensibly intermediate position which allows for an equal value for form and content in aesthetic experience has been advocated by N. Frye (1957). Yet Frye's critical theory ends in an aestheticism insofar as it severs art from experience and nature and removes it to a self-contained universe of its own where, like the Epicurean gods, it can be admired but where it cannot cause any more trouble. The referent of a word in a poem is not some person's experience of life or nature but a word in some other poem. The content of poetry has, in a sense, been formalized and contained within the bounds of a self-referential language. An alternative intermediate position would be one in which form and content were each assigned appropriate values and also linked to their sources and functions in individual experience and in the quest for a happier and truer life. We would like to know where psychoanalysis is properly located among these alternatives.

At first blush, it would appear that Freud's ideas in aesthetic experience must classify him with Tolstoy in favor of an aesthetics of the arousal of primitive affect irrespective of the means. It is true that although Freud had a highly educated

passion for literature and the arts, he placed no greater value than did Tolstoy on a "refined sensibility" or on art for art's sake. And although Freud's (1907) analysis of the dream structure of Jensen's *Gradiva* is complex and sophisticated, the story itself is more romantically complicated than profound. The novel is not by any means what one would call great literature. Freud's study of the novel is more interesting than the work itself. Moreover, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (Freud, 1908) does advance the view that the enjoyment of art arises primarily out of the vicarious gratification of otherwise repressed affects. If form, style, and structure are assigned a role in this, it is only as a purely formal pleasure that charms the repressive agencies of the ego and puts them off their guard, so that the waking ego, in broad daylight, can experience the pleasure of tasting the forbidden fruit of its unconscious life. The formal beauty of art is the siren's song which lulls the anxiously guarding ego into a more tolerant experience of its own impulse and affect life. But the core of the aesthetic experience is the pleasure experienced in the vicarious gratification of suitably disguised impulses and affects which may be ugly, perverse, destructive, dangerous, immoral, and infantile in themselves and, hence, not enjoyable in any other form.

Rose (1980) has recently criticized Freud's aesthetics on this very score. He attacks Freud for reducing "form and beauty to resistance and defense—form sugar-coats an offensive content, bribing the critical powers with aesthetic pleasure—and detouring the normal sexual aims into voyeurism or exhibitionism" (p. 7). In this, Rose thinks that there is a devaluation of art: "art becomes trivialized as a diversion with the inner structure of perversion" (p. 8). This criticism is a common one.

TRAGEDY: A CASE IN POINT

Two questions are posed by this criticism. One, did Freud, despite his own cultivated appreciation of literature and art, nevertheless, as a psychoanalyst, advocate an essentially philistine

aesthetics which lacks any criteria for differentiating what is great from what is pedestrian in art? Two, does psychoanalysis actually entail such an aesthetics? The first is a historical question that, in the end, is not of fundamental concern. The second is a theoretical question of first importance for the field of applied psychoanalysis. Our primary concern will be with the second question. If some light can be shed on the first one as we proceed with the second, so much the better.

One can mitigate the force of the criticism from two directions. The cathartic function of aesthetic experience was not an idea that Freud invented in order to create a bridgehead for psychoanalysis in the field of aesthetics. It is one that can be traced among poets and artists. It was first formulated by Aristotle (*Poetics*). Plato (*Republic*, X) advocated the suppression of all of the great literature of ancient Greece: the works of Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Among his reasons for doing so was his moral fear that the descriptions of sexual lust and aggressive violence on the part of gods and heroes would inflame similar latent impulses in their audience, resulting in disharmony of soul and its consequences: individual, familial, and social disorder. The poet must "moralize his song" on behalf of idealized representations of gods and heroes whose conduct would manifest the virtues of justice, wisdom, courage, and temperance. The truth must be sacrificed to moral propaganda. Yet Plato had misgivings. His conclusion must have contradicted his own aesthetic preferences. He may have wondered about the intensity of his own fear of the drives —a fear that informs the argument. His own creative imagination (Hanly, 1977) must have protested against its indictment. In any case, Plato asked for a vindication of poetry and art that he could not himself discover.

Aristotle's *Poetics* can be seen as a response to Plato's petition. Aristotle thought that tragedy provides for a catharsis of feelings which preserves and strengthens the civilized personality by discharging emotions that could otherwise lead to destructive aggressive or wrongful sexual conduct. The catharsis

of tragedy protects, rather than enervates, the life of reason and morality. There is an obscurity concerning the emotions selected by Aristotle for this cathartic remedy. They are pity and fear. This obscurity may result from the fact that Aristotle did not understand the unconscious thoughts and affects aroused and, in a qualified sense, gratified (abreacted) by tragedy. It is these unconscious thoughts and affects that terminate in a conscious feeling of pity for the tragic hero who suffers a calamity and in a fear lest we ourselves suffer a like calamity. These conscious feelings of pity and fear are released in us by an unconscious identification with the tragic hero that arises from the activation of our own repressed memories and fantasies. The catharsis is of these unconscious drive constellations rather than of the pity and fear. The capacity for pity is extended and strengthened in the process, not purged, and thus it promotes tolerance and generosity of feeling. The capacity for moral resignation is enlivened by the fearful realization of the consequences that flow from the pursuit of inappropriate wants. In these ways the effect that tragedy has upon us is both humanizing and civilizing.

Aesthetic experience is, on account of its cathartic effect, similar to dreams in the homeostatic function that it performs. But it accomplishes two things that dreams cannot. Aesthetic experience is public and general, whereas dream experience is private and individual. Hence aesthetic experience is able to correct the depressing and isolating feeling of being an outsider, a criminal, a pariah or outcast among one's fellow human beings. Aesthetic experience provides for a certain preconscious or conscious realization: "If I identify with Oedipus in his crimes and suffering, so does my brother, father, friend, neighbor"; "If my life and character have been carved out of a conflicted human nature, it is a human nature which belongs to others as well as to me." In this awareness there is, for the individual, a salutary realism; the superego is encouraged to be more tolerant.

This aspect of aesthetic experience has its source in the public nature of the experience itself. It is nurtured, that is, by the

creative genius of the artist who is able to transform thoughts and memories of his own into characters, scenes, and actions which acquire an objectivity that enables them to arouse an intense interest in many people (Freud, 1908). Part of the great artist's genius is his capacity to select from his own experience and from his intuitive knowledge of the lives of others the derivatives of those psychic conflicts that form our common humanity. The artist expresses what Johnson (1765) called "general human nature" in his art.

Aesthetic experience thus helps to liberate us from an alienating subjectivity (Arlow, 1986). Psychoanalysis has been criticized for degrading art by its preoccupation with content. The issue involved can also be clarified by a reflection on the controversy between Plato and Aristotle. Plato attacked art for being merely an imitation of an imitation of reality. Art, in Plato's view, was both epistemically and ontologically a degraded object, lacking both intelligibility and reality. In reply, Aristotle set out a concept of poetic truth. A knowledge of the reality of the human condition can be given expression by the poet as a consequence of his ability and entitlement as artist (unlike, for example, the historian) to disregard the accidental and adventitious in human affairs in order to focus our attention on what is essential and fundamental.

Aesthetic form is the vehicle through which this "focus" is achieved. Aristotle considered *Oedipus Rex* to be the most perfect of the tragedies. Aristotle's choice of this play was no doubt based, in part, on the beauty with which it realizes the unities of time, place, and action, thought by Aristotle to be necessary to formal excellence in drama; at the same time, his choice must have been based upon the fact that the play expresses something fundamental and universal in the human condition. As Aristotle already implicitly realized in *Poetics*, the efficacy of tragedy for psychic recreation is dependent upon its themes. In this there is no trivialization of art.

The themes of the extant Greek tragedies concern the calamities that arise in family life, in the exercise of power, and in the

relations to the gods. In all of these themes there is evident, either directly or indirectly, the struggle with the fatefulness of the instincts, circumstance, or nature. We might attempt to interpret Aristotle's definition of tragedy—"an imitation . . . of action and life, of happiness and misfortune"—empirically (a procedure of which he would have approved), in terms of the great ancient and modern plays. We would then be impressed by the extent to which the actions thus imitated in the tragedies are those that lead to repetitions in one form or another of the dreaded calamities of early life which give permanent shape to our most profound anxieties: the loss of the object, the loss of the love of the object, castration, the loss of self-approval. These are also the calamities that must move us to pity and fear. Of the extant plays, those in which these themes are central exert a perennial fascination: the plays concerning the house of Atreus, Oedipus and his children, Alcestes, Medea, Hippolytus. The same holds true of the tragedies of Shakespeare and Racine. In the great modern novels of Dostoevsky, Dickens, Hardy, Lawrence, Balzac, Stendhal, Mann, and Faulkner, conflicts of family life in their various derivatives and complications are explored again and again. Over many centuries writers have shared in the struggle to find expression for what is most operative and least expressible in the lives of men and women, ancient and modern.

Psychoanalysis has helped us to understand how these themes exercise such an influence upon our imaginations and why their expression in literature plays such an important part in the search for self-understanding. Psychoanalysis provides for a clear differentiation between great art and lesser art in terms of its capacity to focus these essential conflicts. Great art will always concern itself with the forces in human nature which decide the outcome of life whether for good or ill. In this psychoanalytic view, formal excellence consists at least of these five elements: the focus given to the great conflicts of the thematic material; the modulation into intersubjectivity and universality of presentation; a homeostatic balance of thematic disguise and

revelation that is sensitive to levels of anxiety; poetic justice; facility and felicity. Here there is no derogation of art any more than there is a derogation of art by Aristotle in his *Poetics.*

In one sense *Oedipus Tyrannus* is a detective story. The plot concerns the search for the identity of the murderer of Laius. Part of the interest of the play consists in the solving of this mystery. But even the most brilliantly ingenious detective stories, such as Poe's "The Purloined Letter," offer a different and lesser aesthetic experience. Even if we unconsciously identify with the clever criminal and wait with mingled disappointment and relief to be exposed by the yet more brilliant detective (whom we also identify with), and then experience a vicarious expiation of unconscious guilt, an experience of a different order is generated by the realization in the tragedy that the detective is going to make the discovery that he is himself the murderer of his own father. The dilemma of Oedipus goes beyond the dilemmas that artistic ingenuity can create: it is a dilemma of the human condition itself. I, therefore, cannot agree with the criticism that Freud, because of his interest in the content of art (its psychological meaning) "clarified everything concerning art but art itself" (Hacker, 1953, p. 129) or that there is "no distinction between good and bad art" (Langer, 1942, p. 207) inherent in Freud's understanding of artistic meaning. This distinction between great and pedestrian art can be grounded in part on the latter's powerful evocation of meaning and truth, in which a recognition of formal excellence is implicit. It is an error (into which Freud did not fall) to assume, as Hacker does, that "art itself" concerns only form and does not include meaning or content. Freud's concept of the affective significance of art does not involve the naïvely puritanical idea of Tolstoy which would reject Shakespeare in favor of stories that would arouse simple, unconflicted affects and thoughts. The concept of artistic meaning bequeathed by Freud to psychoanalysis is not philistine. It makes an essential contribution to any aesthetic theory that is adequate to its object.

The same fundamental point applies to conceptions of art as

the expression of emotions (e.g., Langer, 1953; Siomopoulos, 1977). But art *would* be trivialized if no distinctions were made concerning the nature of the affects in question and the nature of their objects. Multiple violent deaths are characteristic of Shakespeare's plays, as they are of Jacobean drama. But the effect of death upon our feelings is very different because of the meaning of the lives and deaths of Shakespeare's characters as compared with those of Webster, Turner, Ford, and Middleton. The emotional effect of Jacobean drama is melodramatic; death in Shakespeare's plays is tragic. There are at least two reasons for this difference. Shakespeare connects violent death with the perennial psychic conflicts of life. He presents these conflicts in the characters in such a way as to facilitate our unconscious identifications with them. We are not permitted to be detached, excited, thrilled, fascinated observers; instead, we are drawn into the world of the drama as vicarious participants. Hence, our affective responses, even when humorous, possess a quality of seriousness that is absent from our responses to lesser theater. The source for this deeper affective engagement with the work must be traced to Shakespeare's capacity to give expression in his art to the unconscious fantasies that shape our destinies (Beres and Arlow, 1974).

PRIMARY PROCESS AND CREATIVE SYNTHESIS IN ART

We must not forget the fact that sympathetic critics (Noy, 1979; Trilling, 1945) as well as unsympathetic critics (Pruyser, 1983; Storr, 1972) have argued that Freud failed to fully appreciate the unique contribution of form to aesthetic experience. But before turning to a more direct consideration of form, I would like first to consider the inherence of form in content or, stated differently, the contribution of primary process thought activity to the creation of form. The notion has developed that Freud devalued form because of his early necessary preoccupation with the instinctual unconscious. And although later Freud de-

veloped the psychology of the ego, he did not then use its resources to update psychoanalytic aesthetics (Noy, 1979). But ego psychology has tended to devalue the contribution of primary process thought activity to artistic creativity. There has been a strong emphasis upon the role of secondary narcissism from which the ego is able to draw resources for creative activities through sublimation (Coltrera, 1965; Giovacchini, 1960; Kohut, 1966). At first glance this emphasis is warranted by Freud's (1923) hypothesis that the conversion of object libido into narcissistic libido involved in identification is the first stage in sublimation. If, then, sublimation is the essential factor in artistic creativity (a proposition first put forward by Plato in the *Symposium*), the centrality of narcissism is established. Creativity becomes primarily a function of the ego. But such a view is not tenable for a number of reasons.

The ego, however well stocked with narcissism, could not invent the themes in art that fascinate and affect us. But perhaps it does not need to. It could discover them in the lives of men and women either directly or indirectly in stories, legends, myths, histories, and the tradition of the art. Do not writers, even the greatest of them (e.g., Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Racine), draw upon themes already in existence? Of course they do, but in doing so, they modify and revive them so as to create a fresh version (e.g., Shakespeare reworked the sources of all his plays and as a result gave to them a psychological depth their originals did not have; Wangh [1950] examines this process in relation to *Othello*). There is a metaphysical principle stated by Descartes (1641) to the effect that it takes no less power to maintain nature in existence than to create it in the first place *ex nihilo*—a principle used against the creationist thesis that only a *creatio ex nihilo* is commensurate with infinite power. One might similarly argue that it takes no less creative genius to revive an old story than to invent a new one. In any case, it is to the instincts, their vicissitudes, and their derivatives that one must trace the original thematic material of great literature. Moreover, the ego does not have the resources to synthe-

size scenes and characters so as to give to them that ego-alien, strange verisimilitude which alone can command the willing suspension of disbelief. What the primary process thought activity accomplishes in each one of us in the production of dreams must be available to artists for the creation of works of art. Aesthetic judgment is sensitive to this factor in the greater value that it attaches to Aeschylus' *Oresteia* as compared with O'Neill's trilogy on the same theme. As paradoxical as it may seem, blind primary process thought is better able to create artistic verisimilitude than secondary process thought, even though the latter has fresh perception of real persons and places available to it. An exploration of this paradox would be a digression here. Suffice it to say that great art depends upon primary process synthesis for the simultaneous achievement of verisimilitude and psychic depth (overdetermination). To achieve this richness, images, experiences, stories, indeed, any material that is to be shaped into art, even though it has an external origin, must undertake a sojourn through the id.

Lacan (1966) reminds us that the roots of two of the basic form-generating devices of art are to be found in primary process thought. Condensation is the root of metonymy in both the narrow and the broad sense, just as displacement is the root of simile, metaphor, and symbolism. It is the business of primary process thought activity to generate these formal elements in new constellations of images richly endowed with meaning through many associative connections.

Arlow (1979) has demonstrated the fundamental role of metaphor in the psychoanalytic situation. We daily observe in our analytic work how the ego, exploiting its capacity for expression in language, is able to achieve a remarkable richness and precision of expression because it is subject to the influence of the preverbal synthesis of primary process thinking. The creation of metaphors and similes in art and in life is a contribution of primary process thought activity to the work of the ego.

But the synthetic activity of primary process thought has a further striking and unexpected contribution to make to the

creation and appreciation of art. For although it is a function of the ego to test reality, the instinctual unconscious makes an indispensable contribution to verisimilitude in art. The imagination acting under the aegis of primary process thought is able to create a likeness to the life of real persons and places that it could not achieve if it were guided only by realistic perceptions. The synthesis of primary process thought is guided with an astonishing sureness and aptness of expression by affective meanings which operate unconsciously; whereas the intellectual synthesis of secondary process thought activity is less overdetermined, more rational but less able to evoke a vital impression of reality. This affective synthesis is indispensable to artistic creativity. It allows the universal unconscious themes of conflict and calamity to find implicit yet coherent expression in artistic forms (e.g., in the multiple interconnections of plot, metaphor, and character in a good novel or play).

Consider these lines from *Hamlet:*

> O! most wicked speed, to post
> With such dexterity to incestuous sheets (I, ii, 156-157).

That secondary process thought does not dominate the choice of words is evident from the fact that the sentence is incomplete, and apart from the superficially incongruous allusion to travel by horse, there are the displaced adjectives of "wicked speed" and "incestuous sheets." These implicit metaphors are the handiwork of primary process thought. The choice of words and their combination is guided preconsciously by displacements which enormously enrich their evocative power. The choice of "to post," with its sexual symbolism, adds to the effect. These displacements of the implied metaphors and the symbol avoids both a crude assault on the imagination while conceding nothing to the demands of a superficial, moralistic propriety. The exclamation thus expresses Hamlet's disenchantment, horror, and hurt at his mother's sexuality, which caused her to betray Hamlet's father, and it also hints at the feelings of jealous

rage which then give rise to the incipient melancholia of the next lines:

> It is not nor it cannot come to good;
> But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

The genius of the artist does not reside in the ego. It pervades all three of the great agencies of the mind (Waelder, 1965).

The role of affective synthesis in great music has already been well articulated by Noy (1979). The phenomena of inspiration first discussed by Plato in the *Ion* in terms of divine madness and commonly experienced by artists as the compulsion to create is clearly related to unconscious libidinal sources (Kris, 1952). Artists often feel driven toward the resolution of a problem (knowing that a particular end is inevitable without knowing what it will be), or feel despair that the resolution will not come about. In all of this there is a certain passive receptivity of the ego to a comprehension and an intention that lies beyond its grasp. It was to this affective synthesis of the instinctual unconscious that Freud (1908) was referring when he described how memories come to be organized through common affective significances. "Thus past, present and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them" (p. 148). It is an error to think of form as though it were imposed on an unorganized, raw, thematic and affective material—to assume that content is only Dionysian and form only Apollonian.

Neither must psychoanalysis entirely lay down its arms before the formal aspects of art considered separately and in their own right. As Freud (1908) pointed out, it is the task of the ego to remove enough of what is idiosyncratic in the artist's inspiration to render it accessible to many people. There are two requirements here, however. The artist must be able to tolerate what is universal in himself—that is to say, the calamities all people share. The artist must be able, in his secondary elaboration of these experiences and fantasies, to find in and for them an im-

personal form. This form, in art which transcends entertainment and decoration, must do more than offer a "bribe of pleasure"; it must provide an order that allows the ego to tolerate the exploration of identities and experiences that would otherwise be denied to it. Form promises an alternative to action or repression as a means of mastering anxiety-provoking experiences. To be sure, the connection of play inherent in aesthetic experience and its vicarious nature contribute to this freedom from the superego's restrictions. But the deeper, more powerful forms of aesthetic experience reactivate memories of a time when thought and deed, fantasy and reality, were not yet securely differentiated, both because of the conflicts of that time which are momentous for individual destiny and because the aesthetic experience itself demands a regression to a state of mind in which an appearance can function "as if it were" a reality, i.e., in which there is a willing suspension of disbelief. Artistic form allows us the freedom to explore vicariously experiences that otherwise would be denied to us by repression.

Artistic forms no less than moral rules are part of the cultural inheritance transmitted in the most elementary ways through early identifications. But they are also, like moral rules, a subject for the artist to imitate, study, master, modify, and discard for new ones. The creation of form is not itself free from the struggle to master the powerful affects generated by instinctual life and relations with objects. For this reason artistic form can in a more explicit way, as the "shape of the content," be illuminated by psychoanalysis. Although form can be considered separately in the work of art and in aesthetic experience it is intrinsically related to content. There follow three brief illustrative explorations (Hanly, 1983).

Of Cézanne it has been said that it was the purpose of his work "to join the erring hands of nature" (Bernard, 1920). His landscapes, portraits, and still lifes, with their subtle geometrization of objects, seem to exhibit a deeper law for the organization of nature than ordinary observation is able to detect. Yet, the very formalization of the landscapes suggests a dissatisfac-

tion and unease with the casual permissive untidiness of nature. These qualities are renounced, delicately brushed aside by the gentle vagueness of things and the detached sensuality of their colors. Cézanne's geometric formalization of nature serves as a defense against the provocative, proliferate fecundity of mother nature. Cézanne has caught in subtle chains the primitive earth mother Gaia just as Zeus once chained the Titans. The formal quality of Cézanne's paintings reminds one of the Kantian idea that the mind itself spatializes its experience of nature and thus imposes a formal order on it. Feuer (1970) has shown the relation of this concept of space in Kant's philosophy to his fear of "lawless, uncontrollable sensation" (p. 80). The choice of form in Cézanne is the expression of a defensive struggle.

The exploration of geometry in Cézanne's work created a style that eventually was developed into cubism. Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is generally held to have been a seminal work, after Cézanne, in the development of cubism (Golding, 1959). This painting is still expressive of individual human qualities in its subjects, although the variations in portraiture lean toward African mask disguise, but it is in transition toward an anonymity made possible by the geometrical destruction of objects. On its figures, already partly distorted by the reorganization of their planes into a single two-dimensional surface, via the intermediary of the African mask, there is still expressed a curious blend of exhibitionism and modesty which Picasso either saw in or projected upon the prostitutes of his painting. At the same time the faces are reduced to a striking similarity, and all of them bear a remarkable resemblance (with their wide, surprised eyes) to the self-portrait of the artist from the same period. It would appear that the defenses at work in the cubistic distortions leading Picasso toward the pure spatial anonymity of cubism allowed him an impression in this painting of the feminine identifications out of which part of his own nature was formed. The "mask" of cubistic form facilitated the expression of identifications otherwise repressed.

It is also possible to pursue the relation of psychological de-

fense into the domain of content, something that must remind us once again of the essential unity of content and form in art. There is a defense implicitly at work contributing to the choice of subject, the style of painting, and the treatment of form in the school of impressionism out of which Cézanne himself evolved. The impressionists sought to dissolve form into color and light. They selected themes of pastoral tranquility, high culture, and society, and of prosperous, pleasant bourgeois life. The result was canvasses of beauty, gracefulness, and elegance, but also of astonishing naïvité and even blindness to social reality. Monet's *Gare St. Lazare* illustrates this denial of painful social realities. In the painting the steam rising from the engines dissolves into mist; the glass of the station roof protecting passengers from wind and rain mingles with a foggy morning into a dissolving sunlight and a curious radiance. The station and its trains are cleansed of their grime in a pastoral idealization. The railroad terminal is romanticized. The physical and socioeconomic reality of these objects is romanticized. No trace is found of the human and social realities (which were contemporaneously being painted by Van Gogh in, for example, *The Potato Eaters*) of the mining and the steel fabrication industries that Marx had illuminated and that were preparing the political destruction of the social order which had made impressionism possible. There is to be found in the dissolution of physical objects into color and light, characteristic of the elegant beauty of impressionism, a denial and an idealization of life that suppressed painful social realities. What appears in art as a strictly formal and technical innovation may nevertheless yield to psychoanalytic interpretation. The denial of harsh social realities in the impressionist portrait of life is matched by a denial of the intrapsychic conflicts that find expression in the work of Van Gogh, along with his greater social realism. This conclusion agrees with Devereux's (1970) point of view that the structure of the work of art replicates the organization of the psyche. In the visual arts as well as in literature one finds the multifaceted relations between the primary agencies of the human mind—

the competing demands of the superego, the ego, and the id which strive for harmonization in its formation.

ART AND ADAPTATION

I want to conclude this study of the relation between form and content in psychoanalytic aesthetics by returning once more to the instructive relationship that Freud drew between the play of children and the play of artists in artistic creation. It was once my privilege to observe the spontaneous creation of a game by three small boys who were children of three of my neighbors. They chanced to have something in common—the birth of a new baby sister or brother. It was this common circumstance that had become the shared motivation for their invention. They lived in adjacent row houses joined by a walk leading down a step to a common cement patio. In their game they had transformed the step into a dock; the patio had become a sea. They were solemnly and diligently undertaking voyages by boat with much huffing and puffing, revving of engines, blaring of whistles, and shouting of orders. The purpose of their voyages was soon apparent. The boys were taking turns at being captain and crew. Their cargo was a bundle of cloth. When the ship had sailed a sufficient distance into the sea, the cargo would be flung into the patio by one crew member with the cry, "Baby overboard!" The ship would be rapidly brought about, and the other crew member would plunge to the rescue. After valiantly plunging about, he would triumphantly return the baby to the safety of the boat, which would then be returned to port and to safety by the captain.

The boys had invented the game and designed its rules under the dictates of a shared need to rid themselves of their unwanted sibling (the privilege of the first crew member), then to appease their fear of the loss of the love of their mothers (heroism of the second crew member), and finally to be an observer of the conflict (the captain). The nature of the aggression was ingeniously varied by each boy according to whether his hos-

tility or his anxiety had the upper hand as the fateful moment approached: sometimes the baby was flung overboard, sometimes it seemed to be accidentally dropped by a busy seaman, at other times a stealthy hand would make the baby bounce about in the seaman's arms from which it would tumble out as a result of its own naughtiness. The game was repeated over and over again during the course of an afternoon with a remarkable concentration and attention to detail commensurate with the seriousness of the business at hand. The boys took turns at playing the different roles.

It has been asserted that art seeks to change the appearance of the world, whereas science by means of technology seeks to alter it to make it safer, more convenient and habitable. Freud (1933) seems to adhere to this view when he states that art "does not seek to be anything but an illusion" (p. 160). But although this statement is true in itself, it is also seriously incomplete. For art, in order to achieve its effect, must be able to get us to treat its illusion as "true" for the time being. What is omitted by the distinction between art and science as Freud drew it is the recognition that the play of children and the creation of art, while not enlisted in the task of changing the world to make it better serve ourselves, may be enlisted in the work of changing ourselves in order to make us better able to serve ourselves and the world. There is something more than the simple, vicarious discharge of otherwise undischargeable impulses in the play of the children. To be sure, discharge and improved homeostasis are present. But there is also the exercise of defense mechanisms and the building up of psychic structure by means of trial identifications and the search for pathways for sublimations, all of which are part of the ongoing struggle for maturation (Freud, 1920; Winnicott, 1953). Freud tended to overlook, in his theoretical formulations, this second aspect of play and of art. Consequently, he tended to treat aesthetic experience in an Aristotelian way, as only catharsis—as repetition but never as remembering or as working through. Yet there is no inherent reason for circumscribing psychoanalytic aesthetics in this way.

In fact, Freud (1908) pointed out the maturational strivings in the play of children, but because of the economic focus of his argument, he did not emphasize the equivalent of this function in adult aesthetic experience. This aspect of art was, nevertheless, perfectly familiar to Freud for he recognized that the truth of the most fateful conflicts of childhood was revealed in an ancient tragedy from which he derived its name. It was to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that Freud (1900) turned to illustrate the oedipus complex in *The Interpretation of Dreams.* The unification of form and content in great art, which arouses our admiration, corresponds to a quest for psychic integration in creator and appreciator.

But to emphasize this aspect of play, of form, of mastery and integration, to the neglect of the need for the affective synthesis provided only by primary process thinking, involves an equal and opposite imbalance and a loss of insight into both the travail of creation and its appreciation (Winnicott, 1971). The experience of great art can yield both insight and an adaptive inner reconciliation to the reality of self, others and world. The affects which signal this reconciliation, in addition to Aristotle's pity and fear, are sadness, remorse, rue, resignation, foregiveness, tolerance, forbearance, patience. Play, form, mastery, and integration must of necessity not only take drive life into account, it must be aided and abetted by them.

It is true that in "The Creative Writer and Day-Dreaming" Freud (1908) did not introduce distinctions between types of identification involved in aesthetic experience which could have allowed him to have formulated a more adequate criterion of artistic excellence than simply romantic wish fulfillment. It is also true that Freud had not yet explicitly investigated the complexities of identificatory processes and their relation to drives. By exploiting his later work (Freud, 1923), we can say that there are two different types of identification that may engage us in the enjoyment of a work of art. There is an identification with what we would like to be but are not. This is typical of the romantic, wish-fulfilling heroes and heroines of Freud's (1908)

rather egotistical wish-fulfillment theory and as exemplified by the characters of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. In them can be found elements of the ideal ego (Hanly, 1983) as well as of relatively unconflicted drive demands. Danger does not lead to calamity; it recedes, giving way to triumph and safety or, at least, to the promise of tranquil gratification and success.

There is also an identification in art with what we are but do not wish to be, with what we were but still wish we had not been, or, at the least, with what we might have been and still fear we could be. These are the sombre bonds we establish with the heroes and heroines of tragedy. In them are to be found elements of the ideal ego (Hanly, 1983) in conflict with powerful drive demands that result in calamity—destruction and death. Between these polarities are to be found the range of works of art from romance and comedy to tragedy, excluding only the purely decorative which yields merely a pleasure of the purely formal kind. Within individual works of literature we find characters from various points along this spectrum. For example, in *King Lear* Cordelia represents an ideal of womanliness, while Kent represents an ideal of masculine loyalty, whereas Goneril, Regan, and Edmund represent female and male evil. It is not only in the modern psychological novel that the conflicting tendencies of the ego of the artist—the clash of drive demands and ego ideals—come to be represented in characters and plots.

I have argued that there is nothing in psychoanalytic theory that requires it to devalue form for the sake of content in art. Form no less than content may be clarified by means of psychoanalytic study. The view that there is an intrinsic relation between form and content which, after all, is the dominant view of aestheticians and critics (as it is the implicit sense of our primary pre-reflective engagement with art when we allow ourselves to become lost in its enjoyment) is also the point of view proper to psychoanalytic aesthetics. The integrity of form and content in art needs to be understood in the light of what we have learned about all three agencies of the psyche. This integrity cannot, for example, be understood adequately in terms of either ego func-

tions alone or of primary process alone. When viewed from a multifaceted perspective, the function of art can be recognized to include not only catharsis but also, as in the play of children, the quest for maturation, reparation, restoration, and psychic integration.

REFERENCES

ARLOW, J. A. (1986). The poet as prophet: a psychoanalytic perspective. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 55:53-68.

BELL, C. (1914). *Art.* New York: Stokes.

BERES, D. & ARLOW, J. A. (1974). Fantasy and identification in empathy. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 43:26-50.

BERNARD, E. (1920), *La méthode de Cézanne.* Paris: Mercure de France.

CARPENTER, R. (1921). *The Aesthetic Basis of Greek Art of the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.* Revised edition. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1962.

COLTRERA, J. T. (1965). On the creation of beauty and thought: the unique as vicissitude. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 13:634-703.

DESCARTES, R. (1641). Meditations on first philosophy. In *Philosophical Works of Descartes, Vol. 1*, trans. E. S. Haldane & G. R. T. Ross. New York: Dover, 1955, pp. 133-199.

DEVEREUX, G. (1970). The structure of psychic in Aristotle's *Poetics.* In *Psychoanalysis and Philosophy*, ed. C. Hanly & M. Lazerowitz. New York: Int. Univ. Press, pp. 46-75.

FEUER, L. S. (1970). Lawless sensations and categorical defenses: the unconscious sources of Kant's philosophy. In *Psychoanalysis and Philosophy*, ed. C. Hanly & M. Lazerowitz. New York: Int. Univ. Press, pp. 76-123.

FREUD, S. (1900). The interpretation of dreams. *S.E.*, 4/5.

——— (1907). Delusions and dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva. S.E.*, 9.

——— (1908). Creative writers and day-dreaming. *S.E.*, 9.

——— (1920). Beyond the pleasure principle. *S.E.*, 18.

——— (1923). The ego and the id. *S.E.*, 19.

——— (1933). New introductory lectures on psycho-analysis. *S.E.*, 22.

FRY, R. (1924). *The Artist and Psycho-Analysis.* London: Hogarth.

FRYE, N. (1957). *Anatomy of Criticism.* Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

GIOVACCHINI, P. L. (1960). On scientific creativity. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 8:407-426.

GOLDING, J. (1959). *Cubism: A History and an Analysis 1907-1914.* Revised edition. Boston: Boston Book and Art Shop, 1968.

HACKER, F. J. (1943). On artistic production. In *Explorations in Psychoanalysis*, edited by R. Lindner. New York: Julian, pp. 128-138.

HANLY, C. (1977). An unconscious irony in Plato's *Republic. Psychoanal. Q.*, 46:116-147.

——— (1983). Creativity: a psychoanalytic perspective. *Canadian Art Therapy Assn. Journal*, 1:25-32.

——— (1984). Ego ideal and ideal ego. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 65:253-261.

HIRN, Y. (1900). *The Origins of Art: A Psychological and Sociological Inquiry.* London: Macmillan.

JOHNSON, S. (1765). Preface to Shakespeare. In: *Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems and Selected Prose*, ed. H. Bronson, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971.

KOHUT, H. (1966). Forms and transformations of narcissism. In *The Search for the Self. Selected Writings of Heinz Kohut, 1950-1978*, Vol. 1, ed. P. H. Ornstein, New York: Int. Univ. Press, 1978, pp. 427-440.

KRIS, E. (1952). *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art.* New York: Int. Univ. Press.

LACAN, J. (1966). *Écrits. Le champ freudien.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

LANGER, S. (1942). *Philosophy in a New Key.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.

——— (1953). *Feeling and Form.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

NOY, P. (1979). Form creation in art: an ego-psychological approach to creativity. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 48:229-256.

PARKER, D. H. (1924). *The Analysis of Art.* New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

PRUYSER, P. W. (1983). *The Play of Imagination. Toward a Psychoanalysis of Culture.* New York: Int. Univ. Press.

ROSE, G. J. (1980). *The Power of Form. A Psychoanalytic Approach to Aesthetic Form. Psychol. Issues*, Monogr. 49. New York: Int. Univ. Press.

SIOMOPOULOS, G. (1977). Poetry as affective communication. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 46:499-513.

STORR, A. (1972). *The Dynamics of Creation.* London: Secker & Warburg.

TOLSTOY, L. (1896). *What is Art? and Essays on Art*, translated by Aylmer Maude. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1925.

TRILLING, L. (1945). *The Liberal Imagination.* New York: Viking.

VÉRON, E. (1878). *Aesthetics.* Translated by W. H. Armstrong. London: Library of Contemporary Science, 1879.

WAELDER, R. (1965). *Psychoanalytic Avenues to Art: The Freud Anniversary Lecture Series.* New York: Int. Univ. Press.

WANGH, M. (1950). Othello: the tragedy of Iago. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 19:202-212.

WINNICOTT, D. W. (1953). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. A study of the first not-me possession. In: *Collected Papers. Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis.* New York: Basic Books, 1958, pp. 229-242.

——— (1971). *Playing and Reality.* New York: Basic Books.

27 Whitney Ave.
Toronto, Ont. M4W 2A7
Canada

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Twenty-Five Years and Thirty Days

Norman N. Holland

To cite this article: Norman N. Holland (1986) Twenty-Five Years and Thirty Days, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 55:1, 23-52, DOI: 10.1080/21674086.1986.11927129

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1986.11927129

Published online: 20 Nov 2017.

Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LV, 1986

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AND THIRTY DAYS

BY NORMAN N. HOLLAND, PH.D.

One can imagine the history of psychoanalytic literary criticism (like psychoanalysis itself) as three phases, each enlarging and including the previous one: a classical phase that studied the oedipal conflicts of literary figures; an ego psychology that addressed literary structures; now, a psychology of the self that uses associations to unfold and deepen one's relations to literature. Psychoanalytic criticism used to be disdained in literary circles, but has become highly fashionable, for today other kinds of criticism also use associations. They do not acknowledge the critic's self or countertransference, however, and their psychoanalysis is not the clinician's.

1985 makes just a quarter of a century since I began training to apply psychoanalysis to literary criticism. Hence I can conveniently perch on this anniversary and consider where psychoanalytic literary theory was and where it is now. I do not want to write a formal essay—that Schwartz and Willbern (1982) have admirably done. I want to reminisce.

Twenty-five years ago, I had begun a career of writing and teaching literary criticism, which I define as making statements about literature or statements, prompted by literature, about society, history, the human condition, or psychology. Because I was interested in laughter and comedy, I had decided to try psychoanalytic criticism, that is, using psychoanalytic psychology to make those statements.

Twenty-five years ago, though, psychoanalysis moped on the fringes of respectable academic scholarship and criticism. It had been only ten years before, in 1950, that Leonard and Eleanor Manheim, then at City College of New York, had managed to get the Modern Language Association, my 35,000-

member guild, to try a Division of Literature and Psychology. Psychoanalytic critics were few, and many of those languished at marginal institutions. The Manheims edited the group's mimeographed newsletter and mini-journal, *Literature and Psychology*, out of their living room. Journal editors were averse, hence publication was difficult. Psychoanalytic criticism lent itself all too well to parodies.

In 1960, orthodox literary critics and scholars joked about interpretations in a strange jargon, bizarre symbolisms, and unbelievable complexes. Some psychoanalytic writers about literature, notably Kenneth Burke, Leon Edel, Erik Erikson, and Lionel Trilling, did translate the heavy-handed language into a more graceful prose and did make a human sense of the symbolism or the complexes. Yet I remember, when Erikson was at Harvard, advisers from the English Department energetically *dis*couraging students from taking his seminars.

I can guess at an explanation. In 1960 the "New Criticism" headed the table of literary studies. A "New" critic or teacher was to put aside biography, historical background, evaluation, everything else, really, and certainly psychology, until the critic had closely examined the words-on-the-page themselves. The all-powerful text divided the literary transaction into author, text, and reader. The author created the text, to be sure, and the text caused the reader's experience, but firm boundaries between them made three separable parts in the literary transaction.

Considering the author led at best to biography, which was (however and ahem) "not criticism." At worst, considering an author led to the "intentional fallacy," a misguided displacement of effort: trying to determine what the words said, not from the words themselves, but from some extrinsic source like letters or biography. Conversely, considering the reader led to the "affective fallacy," studying the effect of a text instead of what one should properly attend to, the language itself.

Regular literary critics were saying, concentrate on the way

the words come together to form an aesthetic unity and complexity. Psychoanalysis, however, does not talk about words, but about persons. Psychoanalytic critics wanted to read *through* texts toward the "real" persons they represented. "Real" meant mostly oedipal themes and conflicts, and language did not count as much as lifelikeness. The psychoanalytic critic would diagnose a character as obsessional or paranoid or homosexual, and this diagnosis became a paraphrase, something to be substituted (heresy!) for the actual wording of the text. A great deal of good work was done in this vein and still is, for example, the remarkable character studies of Bernard Paris (1974). The orthodox literary critic, however, was and is likely to demur: But what is literature if not words and the special choice of words? What about literary form?

In the first few years I was thinking about literature-and-psychology, I used to use one particular poem as an important test case:

> Thirty days hath September,
> April, June, and November,
> And all the rest have thirty-one
> Save February . . .

And at that point I mumble to myself something like, "which has twenty-eight until leap year when it has twenty-nine."

Is that even literature? If it looks like a duck, if it walks like a duck. . . . If the text runs halfway across the page like a poem, if it scans like a poem, if it rhymes like a poem—surely it *is* a poem, and poems are a subset of literature.

Further, this poem has, in the test of value honored by no less magisterial a critic than Samuel Johnson, outlived its century. You can find a half dozen versions in English and Latin of "Thirty Days," both in England and America from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries (Bartlett, 1855; Northall, 1892; Apperson, 1929; Cohen and Cohen, 1960; Stevenson, 1967). It would be fun to quote them but space-con-

suming. You get the idea. This is a poem of questionable merit but so popular it is probably the only sixteenth-century poem you know by heart.

Can we say anything psychoanalytic about it? When I was first teaching psychoanalytic literary criticism, in the early 1960's, I would ask my students, what can psychoanalysis say about literary form? And I would hand out "Thirty Days," which I took to be a pure form. My yellowed teaching notes, however, just say, "No symbolism—let's go on." Can we do more now?

"Now." Twenty-five years later, I face quite a different hierarchy. Psychoanalytic literary criticism, far from being the poor relation at the refectory table, finds itself seated above the salt. These days, if you are a literary theorist, you brand yourself passé if you cannot talk easily of Freud and Lacan, perhaps Winnicott, or conceivably Kohut or Kernberg (but not Kris or Hartmann or Erikson or Laing—they are as grandly "over" as the Beatles).

What happened? I think of psychoanalytic literary criticism, indeed psychoanalysis itself, as passing through three stages, each building on, enlarging, and including the one before it (Holland, 1978, 1983).

The first of these historical stages dates from Freud's discovery of latent and manifest content in symptoms, dreams, jokes, and "Freudian slips." As he found latencies in many other mental activities, he posited a general explanation, the conflict between "conscious" and "unconscious," thought of as systems, even locations in the brain.

"First-phase" psychoanalysis elicits from a literary work features of the oedipus complex and the phallic and anal stages. The analysis will uncover (and the critic's metaphors will often be those of digging out something secret) the latent or unconscious "content" of the text, some oedipal theme in the author or in a character, read as though the character were a real person.

As far back as 1936, Anna Freud criticized this kind of symbolic decoding for neglecting ego processes (pp. 16-17). She

thus pointed toward psychoanalysis' and psychoanalytic literary theory's second phase. The literary text imitates Freud's post-1923 id-ego-superego mind. By regression in the service of the ego, an author puts satisfying fantasies ("unconscious content") in a text. The text has literary forms, like metonymy and metaphor, which act for both author and reader like defenses or adaptations. They temper and transform fantasy content into ethical themes that meet the claims of ego and superego. "The" reader is thus able to satisfy the multiple functioning of his own ego, superego, and id by transforming the various elements in any given literary work from fantasy through defense toward meaning.

Many admirable theorists applied ego psychology to literature: Ella Freeman Sharpe (1950), Ernst Kris (1952), Simon Lesser (1957), Robert Waelder (1965), Robert Rogers (1978), and most recently Gilbert Rose (1980). I would today list my own 1968 book, *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, among the ego-psychological studies of literary texts, although nominally it talks about reader response.

Response was still something one could safely assume. A text does something to or, more exactly, for its reader. It is a dream dreamed for us. The reader incorporates the process embodied in the poem, varying it according to his (usually "his") own psychological patterns. In the tradition of the New Criticism, however, the variations were not important. What counted was the text and the psychological transformation it seemed to embody.

Once we psychoanalytic critics could use the language of defenses to talk about formal elements, our horizons expanded. We could understand literary forms, like the complicated internal and end rhymes of "Thirty Days," as a displacement of deeper issues to language. The more complex these formal devices, the greater must be the defensive activity. Hence, alongside the mimetic study of realistic characters, psychoanalytic critics became able to talk about caricatures and "flat" characters. In general, we began to analyze and teach not only works "with real people in them" but lyric poems, non-fiction prose,

and even "absurd" theater. By talking about themes instead of complexes, psychoanalytic criticism became less removed from the conventional concerns of the discipline and, although never encouraged, more acceptable to "straight" literary critics.

Why are we not still in this second phase, then? The picture of the literary transaction psychoanalysis had developed by the mid-1970s was a neat and powerful one, but something was missing. We were not able to say anything about "Thirty Days."

In my classes in the 1960s, we used to conclude that one could talk about any poem as a model of a psyche, in which its fairly strong and elaborate form was the literary analogy to psychological defense (Holland, 1968, Chapters 4-5). To read the form as a defense, though, one had to know what the poem was, so to speak, defending against. One had to consider the "fantasy content" of the poem.

What if the poem has no fantasy content? What could the psychoanalytic critic say about a sonata? About a Jackson Pollock? That is why I thought "Thirty Days" so important a test case. I can see in it no "unconscious content," no fantasy, nothing for its form to defend against.

In those days Hartmann (1959) and Arlow (1959) were assuring us that psychoanalysis was a general, scientific psychology. It ought to be able, then, to address *any* human activity, surely therefore a poem that every English-speaking person knows. But the second-phase, ego-psychological account of the literary transaction let me down.

Even so, I do not think the inadequacy of psychoanalytic criticism to account for "Thirty days hath September" gave a big push for change. Several developments in literary thinking as well as in psychoanalysis combined to nudge psychoanalytic literary theory (and, indeed, psychoanalysis itself) toward a third phase.

Literary critics were becoming interested in audience response. An early book by Louise Rosenblatt pointed the way (1938). Simon Lesser's *Fiction and the Unconscious* (1957) talked about readers but not directly, via the text. We were still dealing

with a posited "the" reader. Then came my own 1968 book looking toward readers, *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, and Stanley Fish's influential paper of 1970, "Affective Stylistics." Meanwhile, *Rezeptionsästhetik*, the study of a work of literature through the ways its historical audiences responded, was becoming *the* dominant mode of literary criticism in the German-speaking countries (Iser, 1974, 1978; Segers, 1975). Literary criticism was considering something completely new, the *relation* between reader and text.

Even more, however, I think the fundamental change in psychoanalytic literary criticism came from the clinical psychoanalysts' increasing interest in what we called during my training (1959-1966), "self-object differentiation," the child's creation of an identity by separating from the symbiotic unity of mother and child. In my own thinking, I include as authors of this theory: Freud (in the first chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents*), Melanie Klein, Erik Erikson for concepts like basic trust and psychosocial mutuality, D. W. Winnicott and other English object-relations theorists, Heinz Lichtenstein for his concept of identity and the identity principle, and Jacques Lacan for the *stade du miroir*.

Self-object differentiation has emerged as basic, so far as I can tell, to all contemporary psychoanalytic thinking. That is what I mean when I speak of the third phase of psychoanalysis, a psychology of the self that incorporates while enlarging ego psychology: object-relations theory in England, Lacan and his followers in France, and Kohut and Kernberg in the United States. Freud's *intra*psychic picture of the mind has evolved into an *inter*psychic model, in which humans are always in relation to objects, hence decentered, never alone. We exist in a "potential space." We are, in short, "postmodern" (Holland, 1983).

In this phase, as Murray Schwartz's (1975) well-known article asked, "Where is literature?" A text is no longer a thing in and of itself with a "fantasy content" that the author's drives "put there." The sharp trisecting of the literary transaction into author, text, and reader blurs. Instead, the reality we are de-

scribing consists of the *relations* between authors and their creations (sublimation, compensation, reparation) and the *relations* between readers and what they read.

Those who had been engaged in biography (or what could now be called biographical criticism) began to write about what the author was doing to and for the author by means of the text. I am thinking, for example, of the too-little-known French critic Charles Mauron (1964), Leon Edel (1982), or Justin Kaplan (1980), to mention just three outstanding literary biographers.

When I and a few others began to consider actual readers, eliciting their free associations to poems and stories, we assumed a "normal," ego-psychological response by "the" reader. Real readers did, we found, respond in the transformational way described by the second phase. They did convert fantasies through formal defenses toward themes, but we were surprised at how variously they did so. They used the raw materials of the poem and the techniques they shared with other readers: lower-level techniques for recognizing letters and words and higher-level techniques (like those we taught in literature classes) for searching, interpreting, or judging a text. Hence responses looked somewhat alike, because of the shared text and techniques, but they varied far too much to assume a single "fantasy content" or even a shared "formal defense." I could account for the wide difference in readings only by saying they were governed by widely different personal needs and defenses (Holland, 1975).

This conclusion led to an even more disturbing realization. We critics also had needs and defenses. We were not explorers "objectively" discovering features of a text "out there" with "real" boundaries and meaning. What we were describing as facts stemmed from our own critical activity. In getting at meaning, we would share some professional maneuvers, but each of us interpreted differently—and was bound to.

In particular, we were of different sexes, a fact most critics in the second phase of psychoanalytic literary theory (I among them) neglected. We assumed a "the" reading—the male

critic's. Hence, one particularly important current in contemporary literary thought, both reinforcing and reinforced by the reader-response movement, is feminist psychoanalytic criticism.

Although at first that might seem a contradiction in terms, it has proved a particularly rich combination of commitments. As one fine collection opens: "Feminist criticism . . . begins with an individual reader . . . who brings to the plays her own experience, concerns, questions" (Lenz, Greene, and Neely, 1980, p. 3). Psychoanalysis and feminist criticism mesh because psychoanalysis can talk about that individual reader better than any other intellectual discipline can.

The psychoanalytic critic of 1985, then, finds it particularly crucial to put in the foreground not only the critic's intellectual concerns and questions but also his or her emotional experiences, gender, free associations, and sociopolitical beliefs. Today's psychoanalytic critic turns away from the mere text of "Thirty Days" to Mrs. Guiney.

Mrs. Guiney said, I want you to memorize how many days each month has, so when you need to know you won't have to stop and recite that silly rhyme. Yes, ma'am. Now, though, I can admit—indeed, exult—that I never did. I never learned the days in the months, never had occasion to, really, until many years later when I got involved with investments, financial reports, and interest payments. So even now, every once in a while, I have to recite it to myself. January? "Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November." Thirty-one, then. Dear Mrs. Guiney, I got round you. Dear Mrs. Guiney, I failed you.

She was a blue-eyed white-haired termagant who kept twenty or so of us seventh- and eighth-grade boys very much in line. She taught us arithmetic and penmanship, and she taught us with a vengeance. Woe the witless lad whose homework was late. The hapless preteen who snickered or talked in class was likely to end up standing in the corner. And she could be wonderfully funny. Up goes a hand. "Mrs. Guiney, what shall I do with this homework you just handed back?" "FRAME IT AND

MAIL IT TO THE KAISER!!" she shouted, as we all guffawed at her shamefaced questioner.

She played favorites unblushingly. I was lucky enough to be one of her pets, but poor Bruce Gelb could never seem to win a good word from her, even though his handwriting and arithmetic were surely no worse than mine. Underneath all her severity and shouting, though, there was real warmth. I think she shed some of that warmth on me, although my penmanship has never come up to her standards.

I remember her with real affection, as I do another fierce blue-eyed, white-haired lady, my wife's aunt, who encouraged me, financially and otherwise, to get psychoanalytic training. She was a fierce one, too, and I was always a little afraid of her. Finally I begin to think of my grandmother, whose insulin shots and foot baths repelled an eight-year-old me, for whom I felt a sort of distasteful respect, tinged with fear . . .

Enough. Let me stop and, in the manner of analytic work (as I do it anyway), try to hear what I am saying. Elderly, strong, aggressive women of whom I was a little afraid, but who favored me. What might those themes have to do with "Thirty Days"? The way I find out is to thread them back through the poem and see what kind of feedback I get.

Being singled out, distinguished, favored—surely I read much in this poem about making distinctions. Thirty days or thirty-one. Leap year or ordinary year. Named months and unnamed. The special complexity of February. Scanned lines and unscanned. The first, firm rhymes as opposed to the unremembered ending.

There are no women in this poem, though, unless one can think of months or perhaps time as Woman. More particularly, however, my associations ran to women who were initially threatening, but who favored me, even loved me. Distinctions, then, led to my being favored as a promising boy or young man by an older woman of whom I was a little afraid.

The women in my associations were all old and are now dead, while I, in my associations, was a boy or young man. I am not

now. If that is the case—and now association is merging into interpretation—I can hear in that crucial rhyme on "-ember" a double assertion: the importance of having or being a bright, glowing "ember" or a "member" and the "embers" I associate with the dying of a fire or the dying of a year in September and November and December.

I draw then, from this not very emotional poem, something very emotional indeed: the primal human distinctions of infant from (aggressive) mother, the separation of male boy from female mother, and the parceling out of goodies to that favored boy: love, psychoanalytic training, fame, long life. Does the poem promise that making distinctions and divisions will favor me specifically as an ambitious and threatened male? I have been doing that in this very essay, looking for your assent and approval with my divisions of the critical process, psychoanalysis, and psychoanalytic criticism.

"Thirty Days" promises me, not necessarily you or any other reader. Nevertheless, when I transact the poem that way—and that is the verb I customarily use for this kind of "poem opening," *transact*—I make myself more intensely aware of some features undeniably "in" the poem: thirty versus thirty-one, named versus unnamed, -ember and non-ember months, or leap and non-leap years. They are "in" the poem differently for me than for you, however, because in transacting "Thirty Days" I read these features in relation to myself and myself in relation to these features. I could not do otherwise, could I? So, too, when I transact the poem, I discover features less undeniably "in" the poem: the favor of older women, an ember/member, or my investments, and I can sum up these observations as a theme of possession or holding on. Were I writing second-phase criticism, I would talk about these themes, too, as "in" the poem. In third-phase, transactive criticism, however, I read this theme as my way of organizing the poem. *"Transacting" treats the poem and me as parts of a single process.*

Third-phase associations, threaded back through the poem, thus make second-phase readings possible. They can even en-

able first-phase interpretations of "Thirty Days" as picturing the psychology of real persons beyond the poem. The other months have something: they are named or they have thirty-one instead of thirty days. Poor February is a victim, smaller than all the rest, unable definitely to have or not have, yet *the* most special of all, a phallic victim-hero like Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.

Yet it is not clear that I could arrive at such first- and second-phase readings from looking only at the poem, without associations, nor is it clear that I could support these readings solely by evidence from the text. The process of interpretation rests on my associations, even if, as is the custom in first- and second-phase readings, I speak of impersonally discovering things "in" the poem.

First- and second-phase theory put the content and dynamics of the poem "out there," separated from the human being "in here" who makes the "fantasy content" a fantasy and the "form-as-defense" a defense. In that respect, first- and second-phase psychoanalytic criticism used the same paradigm as the regular criticism of their day, the "New" or "formalist" criticism that flourished in America from, let us say, the 1940's through the 1960's.

Happily, we can compare these hints at first- or second-phase readings with at least an ironic New Criticism of this poem. Theodore Spencer, whose brief, brilliant career as a literary historian and critic spanned the 1930's and 1940's, set out to burlesque what he took to be the pretentiousness of much New Criticism. He announced in 1943 he would "explain what we may describe as [the] fundamental *dynamic*" of "Thirty days hath September":

> The lonely "February," . . . the solitary and maladjusted individual who is obviously the hero and crucial figure of the poem, is not condemned to the routine which his fellows, in their different ways, must forever obey. Like Hamlet, he has a capacity for change.
>
> But . . . in spite of all his variety . . . "February" cannot quite

> accomplish (and in this his tragedy consists) the *quantitative* value of the society in which circumstances have put him. No matter how often he may alternate from twenty-eight to twenty-nine . . . he can never achieve the bourgeois, if anonymous, security of "thirty-one," nor equal the more modest and aristocratic assurance of "thirty" (p. 818).

Now, I do not want to make myself the over-serious butt of Spencer's ridicule, but I detect slight similarities between his reading and mine, slight similarities therefore between an interpretation by a "New" critic of the 1940's or 1950's and by this psychoanalytic critic of today.

What, then, about the relation today between a psychoanalytic critic and other kinds of literary critics? How would a Derridian or Lacanian theorist approach "Thirty Days"?

I don't know any such readings of this poem, and I myself do Lacanian and deconstructive criticism too haltingly to provide one. Accordingly, I wrote to a half dozen of my colleagues, enclosing the version of "Thirty Days" from *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. "Could you sketch out some idea of how you think a poststructuralist reading might go? [Or Lacanian or Derridian —I varied my phrasing according to my estimate of my colleague's critical posture.] Please, nothing elaborate or time-consuming (unless the problem intrigues you). But what kind of method or evidence would you, as a wise and skilled postmodernist [or Lacanian or Derridian or poststructuralist] use?" My colleagues very generously responded, indeed, so generously that I can quote only small fractions of their total responses.

I am thus in a position to compare Holland's psychoanalytic and Theodore Spencer's New Critical readings of "Thirty Days" with a Lacanian approach to the poem by a colleague whom I will call (pseudonymously) Professor Adrian Ade. He was as dismayed as a classical psychoanalytic critic would be: "There is a lack of subjective and/or personal material to psychoanalyze." He suggests, however, one Lacanian possibility: reading through the grid of the three psychic registers: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real.

"The Real of the poem refers to the periodicity of the Earth's annual revolution around the sun." The great problem of the calendar is to reconcile the lunar reckoning of religious festivals and the solar year. This "projection of the sacred onto the Real for religious purposes is actually an Imaginary process, and the construction of calendars to meet this imperative is a Symbolic-order interpretation of the Imaginary and the Real."

The Imaginary register can lead to the missing subjective element:

> The role of February in the poem is interesting. . . . February is separated from the other eleven months and stands alone. Now separation, not language *per se* (as is sometimes erroneously stated), is really the bottom line in Lacanian teaching. It is the infant's separation from the illusory symbiotic bond of union with the (m)Other at around 18 months (due to the castrating effect of the intervening law of the Name-of-the-Father) that both gives rise to absence or lack in the first place, and creates the need for the substitutive referential system of language to compensate for that lack thereafter. . . . February 29th is both *fort* and *da*.

Ade's analysis proceeds by a mapping of Lacanian theory onto the text, just as classical first- and second-phase psychoanalytic criticism mapped the psychoanalytic theory of those days and just as an American analyst of today might map onto the poem theory from Kohut or Kernberg. Ade finds elements in the poem that correspond to familiar psychoanalytic themes: castration, the *fort-da* game, and mother-child or self-object differentiation (which corresponds to my own reading of the poem as about "distinctions").

At the same time, however, Ade feels free, through Lacanian theory, to follow out "arbitrary" conventions: "If we separate the 'twenty-eight days clear' (l. 5) into two 'clear' halves, we get 14 times 2. February 14, interestingly enough, is St. Valentine's Day . . . the only date in the calendar that celebrates love relationships in this way, since (m)Other's or Mothers' Day cannot be said strictly to fall in this category." Ade's wife, also a pro-

fessor and Lacanian, added "the very interesting and true observation that it is in leap years (i.e., when February has its peculiar 29th day) that women are, exceptionally, permitted to propose marriage to a man. In Lacanian terms, one could say that February's love-cum-relationship specialness succeeds in subverting or at least inverting the Symbolic Order."

I see again the freedom characteristic of "third-phase" psychoanalytic criticism. Both the Ades show, as I did, an easy willingness to "go away from" the poem. In this, however, as in all Lacanian criticism I have read, the associations tend to be abstract, intellectual, cultural, or etymological rather than personal. If they are "free associations," they do not lead to the Ades' work or family like, say, Freud's associations to his dreams.

If this be a Lacanian approach, how would today's "straight" (i.e., non-psychoanalytic) literary critics proceed? "Poststructuralist," "postmodern," or "deconstructive" theories eschew the idea of determinate forms or structures "in" the poem. Ben Bee, a distinguished (but here pseudonymous) translator of the works of Jacques Derrida, suggests:

> A question too of the feminine: Juno and Aphrodite are named [June, April], and the festival of purification, *februa*. Numbers and women, all within a question of money, *kalends* as the day the interest is due.
>
> A question of knowledge: "And all the rest": seven (or eight, until the fourth line) months must be remembered. The named within its *un*named and unable to be saturated contexts (the Gregorian calendar, the other months, the reference of day to night, year and calendar as the "rhythm" of time).

In this sketch of an approach, Bee relies on the etymology of both the important and the seemingly unimportant words, as does most Derridian criticism I have read. He would bring in other texts (something Spencer would have been loath to do). He would let one word in the text evoke its opposite. He adopts certain stylistic traits, avoiding, for example, subject-object sen-

tences. (They would "privilege" subjects and objects in a philosophical sense.) Instead he writes without verbs ("A question of") or in passive verbs without subjects ("must be remembered," "are defined by"). All this would deconstruct (undo the usual hierarchies in) the text.

Bee associates just as much as Ade and I did overtly (and Spencer covertly), but a clinician might say his associations are not quite "free." He privileges some: etymology, references to people like Derrida or Genet, anything smacking of trick or paradox.

Pseudonymous Cecil Cee has written a versatile and witty Derridian critical study and offers a second approach. Like Bee, he stressed that this poem is a "mnemonic device." "It reminds me," he says, of other poems he knows "by heart."

Drawing on Derrida's readings of a line in Nietzsche, then of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, both leading him into various other associations, Cee proposes:

> The poem could be read in terms of the history of time . . . and the different dating systems (a term which further leads to the practice of computer dating and the semantic fields of love relations [here, Cee pointed to his earlier "by heart"]), Stonehenge, Mayan calendars, Roman syntheses of pagan and Christian calendars, Chinese and Jewish calendars, French revolution. The importance of time in the psychoanalytic cure might be noted . . . Lacan's experiments with the short session; the interminability of the cure . . .

Cee does not say that he would free associate, but he does say that the text becomes an occasion for the free creation of a "further text of [the reader's] own." That is what interpretation or criticism would be in the deconstructive mode.

My third deconstructionist says he would not approach the poem at all. Daniel Dee, a highly intelligent critic of films, fiction, and literary criticism, wrote:

> I don't think that anyone *can* propose a "postmodernist reading" of this or any other poem. I would argue that post-

> modernism as an event issues from the advent of the mechanically reproducible image whose volatility/mobility (what Derrida . . . calls "iterability," the fundamental property of all signs) diffuses and scatters fixed meanings. Postmodernism's basic tactic of appropriation . . . demonstrates repeatedly that *any* text or single sign can be lifted from *any* context and pressed into service in another context. . . . One can imagine other uses of these lines, other contexts into which they might be inserted (contexts in which they might become sinister, as the "Ten Little Indians" poem becomes in the Agatha Christie story): what if they were to be recited by a madman? After all, we thought we knew what a Campbell Soup can meant until Warhol "moved" that sign into a different context.

In Dee's sketch, the Campbell Soup can means, and iterability implies that signs diffuse and scatter meanings. This poem can be "pressed into service," "might be inserted"—his passives leave open the question of who does the pressing and inserting. Once the lines are inserted, who finds them sinister? Or is it, as in Dee's phrasing, that they simply "become" sinister? Such wordings say to me that something that deeply interests me, Who does what in the reading transaction?, is not a live issue to Dee. Do readers make meaning or do poems mean? Neither Bee nor Cee nor Dee asks the question.

My fourth respondent, Eli Ede, is an energetic man who resists categorization. "Thirty Days" reminded him of a cocky, Cockney, locker-room ballad from his rugby playing days:

Chorus:	We're off to see the Wild West Show . . .
Voice:	And in this cage, Lad-ies and Gentlemen, we 'ave the multi-spotted Leo-pard.
Female Voice:	The multi-spotted Leopard?
Voice:	Yes, the multi-spotted Leo-pard. This strange and wondrous hanimal 'as one spot for every day of the year, making three 'undred and sixty-five spots in hall.

Female Voice
(Oxford accent): But what about a leap-year?

Voice: 'Enry, lift hup the hanimal's tail and show the lady the twenty-ninth of February.

"I shan't look at the work but at the outwork, not at the poem but at its frame. . . . Moving, then, from center to margin, let me investigate the request surrounding the object of analysis." Ede segues into a dialogue analyzing my motives, and its being a dialogue is, I presume, part of his approach. "[Norm] is intellectually curious." "He has consciously identified a group of theorists whose solidarity is disturbing." (True.) He says his own associations (the bawdy ballad, a Guy Fawkes Day rhyme) are "filled with apprehensions about women, religious bigotry, and physicality" and even "aggression, envy, and cynicism." He concludes that "Norm is getting exactly what he wants. . . . Material for his article," while his own motive is "To impress Norm. Touché."

Although Ede's sketch differs in style, content, and theory from Bee's or Cee's, it shares certain features with theirs. He moves "away from" the poem (here, from text to pre-text, margin, outwork, or *parergon*). He privileges etymologically, philosophically, or literarily erudite associations (Brecht, Barthes, Derrida, Flaubert, Socrates). He resists commitment to a single point of view (the dialogue form).

What is different about Ede's response is the frank, even harsh, acknowledgment of his own motives and his exploration of mine in a quasi-political comment on the typos and format of the letter in which I quoted a "Thirty Days" and asked him to respond. Ede's response, by its very difference from the others, highlights the issue I find crucial to them all: What is the position of the reader-writer? Ede locates meaning in the context—in that, he is different from the others. However, he does not deal with the possibility that he, the reader, makes the meanings he attributes to that context—in that, too, he is like the others.

In this respect, one can contrast a response volunteered by

Fred Fay, a graduate student specializing in literature-and-psychology and well versed in both postmodern and third-phase psychoanalytic criticism. Fay is in much the same position I was in when I chose psychoanalysis twenty-five years ago, but he faces an altogether different intellectual (and economic!) environment. Postmodern and reader-response methods are as natural to him as formalist or New Critical thought was to me in 1960.

Following those two close but divergent methods, he divided his response in two. In the first—

> I remember very clearly the rainy day in Southern California when I realized, at the age of twelve and in the sixth grade, that there was something I *should* know but didn't, and it had something to do with months and their numbers of days, with being able to correctly identify the number of days in each month, and with, therefore, *being correct.*

After his embarrassment at not knowing, "Someone recited the 'thirty days' mnemonic, and . . . I sensed that something had happened between the teacher, Mr. Kern, and myself that wouldn't have happened if I had known the right answer and that had made me feel uncomfortable and self-conscious. . . . I can still remember being aware that something had changed, that something was different."

Fay divided his answer between that kind of reminiscence and an intellectual analysis of "cognitive reduction," "referential meaning," and "grammatical mood," which ends:

> Herein lies the peremptory aspect of the poem when read in light of the imperative: the months have their number of days because they have been declared to have their number of days. . . . I see the poem as embodying the issues of authority and obedience which are present in much learning, in the interpersonal context of much learning.

In this way, through free association (in its classical psychoanalytic sense), Fay arrives at a political reading that might suit Ede or many deconstructionists. He also associates freely from per-

sonal reminiscence to intellectual analysis to general themes that passionately concern him in his thinking in general: "I see the poem as embodying. . . ." Unlike the "straight" postmodernists, this psychoanalytic reader makes his own role in the reading overt and decisive.

All these approaches differ strikingly from the tactics of twenty-five years ago. Psychoanalytic critics would either have thrown up their hands for lack of a character or author to probe, or they would have treated the poem as a self-contained structure, transforming fantasy content or playing aesthetically like Freud's jests, free of fantasy. Non-psychoanalytic critics would have approached it as a structure meaningful in itself, separate from themselves as subjects, to be closely and sensitively examined as an aesthetic object "out there." Today, however, these seven critics—without exception!—freely move away from the poem as a self-contained structure.

That is one axis along which we could contrast old and new, psychoanalytic and non-psychoanalytic criticism. For me, though, the crucial divider is, How does this criticism deal with the "I" in the act of reading? How do different critics acknowledge the person in the literary (and many other) transactions?

Psychoanalytic and non-psychoanalytic critics alike open the poem outward. Both use something akin to free association, although the non-psychoanalytic interpreters limit themselves to an impersonal or extrapersonal "free play of signifiers": highly intellectual references to etymology, Nietzsche, Heidegger, or language about language. By contrast, Fay and I, two of the three psychoanalytic critics, arrive at memories of personally important persons or events or themes. Our associations could arouse strong feelings: sexuality, the family, aging, coercive authority, having and not having. Postmodern psychoanalytic criticism looks more like Freud's analyses of his own dreams than his analyses of Ibsen, Dostoevsky, or Shakespeare.

Are there any limits around the postmodern critic's associations to the text? Not unless you think there are limits to free

association. Is there, then, any such thing as a misreading? Only in the sense of a "wrong" free association.

Yet there are similarities between readings. Theodore Spencer's associations personify February much as my own did, as a striving male. Don't we have to assume the poem determines at least part of Spencer's and my responses, making them similar? No. There is a different model for the relation between Spencer's and Holland's readings that works better.

The poem "out there" is the same for everyone with normal eyes and senses. Moreover, the poem, if we think of it as just six lines of print, is the same for everyone who reads English. We convert that print to letters, words, sounds, images, ideas, or sentences *through a hierarchy of feedback processes in which higher or more complex processes use lower or less complex processes.*

The model is far from obscure. It is widely used by those who teach reading to young children (Grant, 1985; Meek, 1983; Meek, Warlow, and Barton, 1977; Smith, 1982). That is what learning to read consists of: learning to generate and apply in a feedback the right guesses for reading English.

We try out certain features as letters. We try out combinations of shapes as words. We try out meanings (Smith and Holmes, 1971). And the text responds to our questions more or less uniformly. At the simpler levels of reading everyone who reads English tries out more or less the same guesses on the text, and we all get more or less the same feedback from the text.

As the unities we wish to achieve become larger, more complex, and less tangible, however, the more our guesses vary. They vary from one culture to another—one reads Hebrew letters and lines differently from English. They vary from one community of interpreters to another within a given culture (Fish, 1980)—postmodernists read differently from New Critics. And they vary from one person to another within a given interpretive community (Holland, 1985)—I read differently from Fred Fay although we are reading in almost exactly

the same way. Our guesses in these higher-level feedbacks vary more and more, and we hear the text's responses more and more variously, because, finally, the self (or, I prefer, *identity*) that governs that hierarchy of feedback processes from the top down is completely individual (Holland, 1985).

That is why the similarities between Spencer's reading of "Thirty Days" and mine do not come from a core of "content" that is undeniably "there," that we both share, and that constrained us to certain responses to which we each added our personal variations. What similarities he and I discover "in" the poem come from reading the same thing only if we read it in similar ways.

"Thirty Days" is the same, Spencer's and Holland's processes are similar, but the individual identities governing the processes are different. Those two different identities try out different guesses on the text and hear differently the way the text reinforces or defeats the various hypotheses they try out. Hence the poem as experienced, parodied, interpreted, even described, will be, in every instance, different. Even if Spencer and Holland used the same interpretive strategies (as Fay and Holland did), they would apply them differently, individually.

An account of reading that usefully relates our largely different yet vaguely similar readings would shift from the product, the poem or its interpretation, to the processes by which Spencer and Holland derived their different interpretations from the one text. Hence, criticism in the 1980's leads naturally to talk about free associations and about persons. A psychoanalytic reading becomes more like a clinical interpretation—Is it accepted by the other reader?—than like a statement about an unresponding text.

I would now understand your interpretation of "Thirty Days" as *your* way of constituting and realizing your experience of the poem. You may think you are telling me "how it really is," but I who am enmeshed in this newer paradigm hear you telling me how it is *to you.*

This is not to say that all readings are equally valid or that

there is no more right and wrong reading. You share methods and criteria with other readers, and we can judge (by yet another feedback process) whether your reading used them either well or badly. Those criteria or your evidence might seem right or wrong to me. I might bring forward other evidence. Ultimately, though, whether I accept your reading depends on whether it is sharable or not, fulfilling or unfulfilling, realizing —for my identity.

Criticism, whether psychoanalytic or non-psychoanalytic, ceases to be a statement of "the truth about" the literary work and becomes a personal and interpersonal act. When you tell me how you interpret this poem, you are probably hoping I will confirm your sense of how it is, for that will strengthen your sense of yourself. Your experience is not so much right or wrong as more or less fulfilling, more or less sharable—for both of us. We acknowledge, accept, and use the difference in individual readers to create a continuing critical colloquy rather than a consensus around some supposedly final or "correct" interpretation. (For recent examples of this "process" criticism, see Kann [1979]; Sprengnether [1980, 1985].)

Necessarily, then, these new, associative modes of criticism include and never exclude critical maneuvers. They admit Bee's or Cee's most far-fetched associations as well as all the familiar moves of first- and second-phase psychoanalytic criticism.

Because we have changed profoundly the paradigm that underlies criticism, however, we hear first- and second-phase psychoanalytic criticism differently now. We hear these earlier forms of criticism within a larger model of perception: an identity governing feedbacks. We would now understand an analysis of Hamlet's oedipus complex, Dostoevsky's impulses to father-murder, or "Dover Beach" 's primal scene fantasy, as particular readers' ways of re-creating a text. Other readers might or might not share that way of re-creation. An article demonstrating Kernberg's I-object-affect configurations in *King Lear* would "prove" neither the correctness of Kernberg's theories

nor the correctness of such a reading of *Lear*. It would show that someone "can make sense of" *Lear* (or Kernberg) by this tactic.

Nevertheless, in our sample, psychoanalytic and non-psychoanalytic critics did read in systematically different ways. Holland, Ade, and Fay, having associated, returned to the poem. They threaded their associations and interpretations back through the text and thereby evoked further associations and themes from the poem. By contrast, the non-psychoanalytic critics moved away from the poem and stayed away.

For the psychoanalytic critics—this psychoanalytic critic, anyway—that aftertext of associations serves to open up and articulate the relationship between the critic and the first text. I could pass my associations about older women through "Thirty Days," using the aftertext to complicate and deepen my relationship with the original mnemonic. For the poststructuralist critics, the aftertext is an end in itself, a quasi-poem to stand alongside the original. Cee says of his procedure, "A reader-scriptor might generate a further text of his/her own," and Bee, Cee, Dee, and Ede did just that.

The new associative mode and the model of identities governing feedbacks do not make one technique right, one wrong. I do think, however, today's different critical persuasions would explain that aftertext differently. Psychoanalytic critics would look to the readers' transactions of "Thirty Days." Poststructural critics write at least some of the time as though "Thirty Days" emitted its own aftertext, the poem giving off meanings the way a lamp radiates light, and readers have nothing to do with it. As Bee and Dee put it, the text "diffuses and scatters fixed meanings." Ede's text contains and implies. Cee's has "significance."

Both Cee and Ede, however, also acknowledge their own participation in the poem's act of meaning, and Ade, the Lacanian, goes both ways in speaking of his own role as a creative reader. "While the association [Valentine's Day] may be over-ingenious on my part, the idea does impose itself irresistibly once we have

opened up this line of inquiry." He himself provides the aftertext but then the aftertext imposes itself.

In short, for all the striking similarity among these seven critics, particularly contrasted with the New Critics of Theodore Spencer's day and dogma, one clear and important distinction remains. Psychoanalytic and non-psychoanalytic critics differ in the commitment with which they acknowledge the participation of an I (reader, author, or critic) in the transaction of literature.

The New Critics of Spencer's era left out that I, saying the poem produced its own response. Oftentimes, the most avant-garde critics of today are still saying that. Much contemporary literary thought rests on the pretransformational linguistics of Saussure in which a signifier imposes a signified willy-nilly on the mind of a hearer (like Valentine's Day on Ade). Critics can talk about the free play of language or the linkage of signifier and signified imposing itself on "the" reader. Along this axis, Lacanian critics resemble the old New Critics more than other psychoanalytic critics do. Lacanians and deconstructionists and New Critics are equally, to use the proper term, *formalist.*

The New Critic, Theodore Spencer, saw an objective poem "out there" and "in here" a subjective (fallible) reader of that poem. Critics like Bee or Cee also see a poem out there and a reader in here. They concede that dichotomy (ultimately, they are conceding "subjectivity" versus "objectivity"), but, unlike Spencer, they refuse to situate the reading "in" either one.

Psychoanalysis has always offered ways of describing the I. Hence, to the psychoanalytic critic of today, at least, the dichotomy of subject and object looks like a false division. We *transact* poems. We are not objective *or* subjective, but always, inevitably both. The real question is not Which? but How?

To answer How?, psychoanalysis admits an information-processing description of the I. That is, we test the world by actions and hypotheses that the world then rewards or defeats. We "transact" poems. I relate to an object "out there," as I test that object and it feeds results back to me. The I ARCs, that is, it is

an agency, a representation, and a consequence. The I as agency acts out into the world, but the I is also the cumulating consequence, the embodied memory, of the way the world reacts and feeds back results from that I's actions on the world. Finally, the I is someone's representation of an I, my representation of Ade, Bee, Cee, Dee, Ede, or Fay or my representation of my own I.

An ARC-self is, to be sure, "systematically elusive." Nevertheless, from a feminist or political point of view it can be an idle, even pernicious, fiction to maintain that what I call free associations come "from the poem." The impersonal free play of signifiers ignores personal interests, indeed, all real persons.

One widely read professor of literature has proclaimed, "My language is not mine, just as my unconscious is not mine." He seems to be saying, because others also use English, I do not own my own speech. I am passive. I am not responsible. I am ruled by others. I cancel myself out—but I keep on intellectualizing. Psychoanalysis, properly used, yields stronger ways of dealing with the relation of self and other or subject and object. Yes, others own English but I own it too—like the air I breathe, the credit I spend, or the ideas I believe. We are responsible, as Freud said (1925), even for our dreams.

Literary people have taken to psychoanalysis enthusiastically but oddly. To the psychoanalyst whose work and training point him toward real people in real situations, transference and countertransference make up daily experience. Not so the literary psychoanalyst. He is likely to refer his enterprise to the "Freudian system," a philosophy quite removed from couch or clinic.

I am, of course, making once more the old claim that those who misstate psychoanalysis are expressing resistance. To insist on an I which is the mere product of cultural signifers or an I which is not one but two or many or an I which cannot be spoken of or no I at all are common poststructuralist stances. I think I am seeing an emotional resistance to what psychoanalysis has to say about the I.

The situation is especially problematic for Lacanian criticism. The Lacanian I dissolves into ever-receding sequences of meaningless signifiers. In discussing literary texts, Lacanians have yet to make the crucial move that marks third-phase psychoanalysis from second- or first-phase: they have not yet acknowledged that we do things to texts instead of texts doing things to us or doing things all on their own. In Lacan's own comments on Poe's "Purloined Letter" (1966) or *Hamlet* (1959), he casts himself as a lecturer pointing out (to those too obtuse to have seen it for themselves) what is undeniably "there." Any equally clever observer would see the same. Lacan's own reading, interpreting I is nowhere in the discussion, but, really of course, everywhere.

Yes, I believe this blanking out of the reading I (even when done by Jacques Lacan) is a form of resistance, but it is a far subtler and more complex resistance than the easy dismissals of a quarter century ago. It is one that offers more hope. Now we know that any perception, even Lacan's, even scientific perception, involves an I. Science tests hypotheses, but we understand its hypotheses differently. In the subject-object framework, when the world was simply object or other or "out there," we thought the hypothesis was: Is the world so-and-so? Now, we recognize that the hypothesis is: Can I make sense of the world by thinking of it as so-and-so?

What is finally at issue, then, in today's psychoanalytic criticism is not the statements we make about the text, but the claims we will allow about such statements. You might, for example, say of this long essay (now mercifully drawing to a close), "This essay is really about time." You could point to the title, to the "fortuitous" choice of "Thirty Days," to my own sense of anniversary, and to my associations to people and events long gone. If you were to say, this essay is "really" about whether I will master time or time will master me, I would readily agree to the idea.

But not the phrasing. You cannot claim the essay is "really" about time or "really" about anything at all. The hypothesis you are testing is not, This essay is such-and-such, but, I can make

sense of this text by thinking of it in such-and-such a way. To be accurate, say, "You and I can make sense of this essay by considering a theme, time, that cuts across its nominal topic. If we consider time and the mastery of time, we see the essay in a different light, with a different shape. Indeed, we *may* be seeing processes in the writing of it of which the author was unconscious."

And clinical psychoanalysis? Doesn't the same argument apply? Patient and therapist are together building a text (Green, 1975, p. 12). Patient and therapist can read that text, from their separate points of view, so as to make sense of the patient's life or the therapist's countertransference. Psychoanalysis is one kind of literary criticism.

With that outrageous claim as conclusion and beginning, let me atone with a final association. When I hear "thirty days," I think not only of Mrs. Guiney, but also of a judge pronouncing sentence for some minor infraction like disturbing the peace. Am I disturbing the peace?

When we talk about how we read poems and stories, we are really talking about how we know anything. The I who reads is at the center even of science, and psychoanalysis is the science of that I. Thus psychoanalysis, which a quarter century ago was marginal even to so humanistic an activity as literary criticism, now finds itself the science which talks about what it is to do all other arts and sciences. You and I are committing no minor disturbance of the peace here, but a major imperialism.

REFERENCES

Apperson, G. L. (1929). *English Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases: A Historical Dictionary.* London/Toronto: J.M. Dent.

Arlow, J. A. (1959). Psychoanalysis as scientific method. In *Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method, and Philosophy. A Symposium*, ed. S. Hook. New York: Int. Univ. Press, pp. 202-211.

Bartlett, J., Compiler (1855). *Familiar Quotations: A Collection of Passages, Phrases, and Proverbs Traced to Their Sources in Ancient and Modern Literature.* 13th and Centennial Edition. Boston: Little, Brown, 1955.

COHEN, J. M. & COHEN, M. J., Compilers (1960). *The Penguin Dictionary of Quotations.* London: Allen Lane.

EDEL, L. (1982). *Stuff of Sleep and Dreams: Experiments in Literary Psychology.* New York: Harper & Row.

FISH, S. E. (1970). Literature in the reader: affective stylistics. *New Literary History*, 2:123-162.

——— (1980). *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities.* Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard Univ. Press.

FREUD, A. (1936). *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence.* New York: Int. Univ. Press, 1946.

FREUD, S. (1923). The ego and the id. *S.E.*, 19.

——— (1925). Some additional notes on dream-interpretation as a whole. *S.E.*, 19.

——— (1930). Civilization and its discontents. *S.E.*, 21.

GRANT, A. N. (1985). *Young Readers Reading.* Melbourne: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

GREEN, A. (1975). The analyst, symbolization and absence in the analytic setting (on changes in analytic practice and analytic experience). *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 56:1-22.

HARTMANN, H. (1959). Psychoanalysis as a scientific theory. In *Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method, and Philosophy. A Symposium*, ed. S. Hook. New York: Int. Univ. Press, pp. 3-37.

HOLLAND, N. N. (1968). *The Dynamics of Literary Response.* New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

——— (1975). *5 Readers Reading.* New Haven/London: Yale Univ. Press.

——— (1978). Literary interpretation and three phases of psychoanalysis. In *Psychoanalysis, Creativity, and Literature. A French-American Inquiry*, ed. A. Roland. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, pp. 233-247.

——— (1983). Postmodern psychoanalysis. In *Innovation/Renovation: New Perspectives on the Humanities*, ed. I. Hassan & S. Hassan. Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, pp. 291-309.

——— (1985). *The I.* New Haven/London: Yale Univ. Press.

ISER, W. (1974). *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.

——— (1978). *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.

KANN, D. J. (1979). "Rip Van Winkle": Wheels within wheels. *Amer. Imago*, 36:178-196.

KAPLAN, J. (1980). *Walt Whitman. A Life.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

KRIS, E. (1952). *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art.* New York: Int. Univ. Press.

LACAN, J. (1959). Desire and the interpretation of desire in *Hamlet.* Ed. J.-A. Miller. Trans. J. Hulbert. In *Psychoanalysis and Literature: The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, ed. S. Felman. *Yale French Studies*, 55/56:11-52, 1977.

——— (1966). Seminar on "The Purloined Letter." Trans. J. Mehlman. *Yale French Studies*, 48:39-72, 1972.

LENZ, C. R. S., GREENE, G. & NEELY, C. T., Editors (1980). *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare.* Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press.

LESSER, S. (1957). *Fiction and the Unconscious.* Boston: Beacon Press.

MAURON, CHARLES (1964). Appendice A. *Psychocritique du genre comique*. Paris: José Corti.

MEEK, M. (1983). *Achieving Literacy: Longitudinal Studies of Adolescents Learning To Read*. London/Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

——— WARLOW, A. & BARTON, G., Editors (1977). *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading*. New York: Atheneum, 1978.

NORTHALL, G. F., Compiler (1892). *English Folk-Rhymes: A Collection of Traditional Verses Relating to Places and Persons, Customs, Superstitions, etc.* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Truebner.

PARIS, B. J. (1974). *A Psychological Approach to Fiction: Studies in Thackeray, Stendhal, George Eliot, Dostoevsky, and Conrad*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.

ROGERS, R. (1978). *Metaphor: A Psychoanalytic View*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

ROSE, G. J. (1980). *The Power of Form. A Psychoanalytic Approach to Aesthetic Form. Psychol. Issues*, Monogr. 49. New York: Int. Univ. Press.

ROSENBLATT, L. W. (1938). *Literature as Exploration*. Third Edition. New York: Noble & Noble, 1976.

SCHWARTZ, M. (1975). Where is literature? *College English*, 36:756-765.

——— & WILLBERN, D. (1982). Literature and psychology. In *Interrelations of Literature*, ed. J.-P. Barricelli & J. Gibaldi. New York: Modern Language Association.

SEGERS, R. T. (1975). Readers, text and author: some implications of *Rezeptionsästhetik. Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 24:15-23.

SHARPE, E. F. (1950). *Collected Papers on Psycho-Analysis*. London: Hogarth.

SMITH, F. (1982). *Understanding Reading: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and Learning to Read*. Third Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

——— & HOLMES, D. C. (1971). The independence of letter, word, and meaning identification in reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 6:394-415.

SPENCER, T. (1943). How to criticize a poem (in the manner of certain contemporary critics). *The New Republic*, 109:816-818.

SPRENGNETHER, M. (1980). Re-reading *The Secret Garden*. *College English*, 41:894-902.

——— (1985). Ghost-writing: a meditation on literary criticism as narrative. In *The Psychoanalytic Study of Literature*, ed. J. Reppen & M. Charney. New York: Int. Univ. Press, pp. 37-49.

STEVENSON, B., Compiler (1967). *The Home Book of Quotations: Classical and Modern*. Tenth edition. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.

WAELDER, R. (1965). *Psychoanalytic Avenues to Art. The Freud Anniversary Lecture Series*. New York: Int. Univ. Press.

Institute for Psychological Study of the Arts
GPA 4008, University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32611

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

The Poet as Prophet: A Psychoanalytic Perspective

Jacob A. Arlow

To cite this article: Jacob A. Arlow (1986) The Poet as Prophet: A Psychoanalytic Perspective, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 55:1, 53-68, DOI: 10.1080/21674086.1986.11927130

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1986.11927130

Published online: 20 Nov 2017.

Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LV, 1986

THE POET AS PROPHET: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

BY JACOB A. ARLOW, M.D.

The poet spins a public fantasy, created from his own private daydreams and speaking to the unconscious fantasies of his audience. He presents a socially acceptable form of expression of forbidden wishes and conflicts. A process of mutual exculpation is set up between the poet and his audience. For a special group the work of the poet may also make possible the alleviation of pathogenic anxieties. An examination of the play, The Beard, *indicates how an artist may intuit and articulate changes in sexual morality. The poet rebels against the constraints of society, thereby helping his audience to rebel without guilt. He may be the herald of a changing morality, and even more, his art may become an instrument for such change.*

In a previous communication entitled "The Consecration of the Prophet" (Arlow, 1951), I offered some psychoanalytic perspectives on the character type of the prophet. In many cultures the prophet, the person who purports to speak in the name of God, is an object of awe and fascination. He is accorded special status and, during his lifetime, may be revered or reviled by those affected by his message. In Western tradition, the image of the prophet stems primarily from the eloquent literary testament of the thoughts and acts of the Hebrew and Christian prophets recorded in the Bible. Whether or not these documents are historically authentic, it cannot be disputed that the prophets and their teachings have exerted a profound influence on successive

This is a slightly different version of an essay which was presented as the third lecture in the Wiegand Foundation Lecture Series on "Irrationality in Western Society," at the University of Toronto, November 10, 1982.

generations reared in the Judeo-Christian tradition, who enshrined the prophets as their heroes, canonized their writings, and accepted their words as the revelation of God's will.

In retrospect, it appears that the prophet's vision proved an apt solution to the moral and national problems that his people faced at critical moments in history. It is intriguing to contemplate how the prophet was able to transcend the comprehension of his contemporaries and to perceive the direction that his listeners, present or future, would ultimately pursue. This latter development is most significant, for it is when the people finally accept the vision of the prophet that his message is affirmed. The people install him in the office of collective ego ideal; the image of the prophet and his teachings influence the moral structure of the members of the society. By selecting the prophet and/or his teachings as the collective ego ideal, the group achieves unity and cohesion. Accordingly, the prophet symbolizes a stage in the evolution of the moral conscience of the people. Only the historical test of mass acceptance and the course of history itself validate the truth of the prophet's vision. The true prophet may be said to be the one who correctly divines and expresses the emergent, but still inarticulate, dreams and aspirations of his people.

With time, however, the concept of the prophet has become secularized and divorced from its original meaning of spokesman for God, or of a religious teacher claiming to be divinely inspired. Webster (1962) gives a third definition of the word prophet: "a spokesman for some cause, group movement, etc."—a definition that is incomplete and not quite accurate. A spokesman or leader of a group is perceived as a prophet when he possesses certain distinguishing characteristics, such as unswerving conviction that his cause is correct, intense missionary zeal and charismatic leadership.[1]

[1] What serves to create the sense of charisma about such persons is their unwavering certainty of the justice of their cause and of the infallibility of their program. They do not seek nor do they require proof of their views. They exude an aura of

Prophetic character types exist in every age—the religious, social and political prophets, the true and false prophets, the prophets of good, and the prophets of evil.

The poet—and here I use the term in its widest meaning to include the significant creators in the literary mode—may also serve as a spokesman and at times become a leader. Like the prophet, he may play a role in changing morality, although he functions in a very different way. In this presentation, I propose to apply psychoanalytic concepts in order to examine the bridge between creativity in the poet and the social role of his art. From clinical observations in the psychoanalytic setting, Freud (1908a, 1908b), Abraham (1909), Rank (1932), Jones (1951), Sachs (1942), and many others have demonstrated how literary creations have one root of origin in the private daydreams and secret fantasies of the individual. They found such conscious fantasies to be derivatives of unconscious fantasies embodying basic childhood wishes—aggressive, sexual, and grandiose in nature—primitive and forbidden impulses giving rise to intrapsychic conflict. The presence of such unconcious fantasies is inferred from the dynamic effect they exert upon conscious mental functioning. They represent and express different compromises that the ego has effected in its attempt to resolve the aforementioned intrapsychic conflicts. After the oedipal phase, the mental life of each individual is characterized by a set of basic unconscious fantasies which are characteristic of and idiosyncratic for him (Arlow, 1969). The persistent pressure of these fantasies represents a dynamic obligation upon the mind, a thrust toward action and gratification which inevitably exacerbates conflicts in the individual as well as conflicts with the human environment. Fundamentally, progressive mental development consists of finding useful and adaptive compromise formations in order to resolve these conflicts. Every attempt at resolving intrapsychic conflicts, successful or unsuccessful, rep-

---

omnipotence and omniscience, which proves fascinating and overwhelming to those who are confused, uncertain, and insecure, to the mass of potential disciples or followers in search of a leader (Freud, 1921; Olden, 1941).

resents some form of compromise formation among the various conflictual elements in the mind.

The influence of these compromise formations on the behavior and character of each individual is what gives a sense of consistency and coherence to each personality. This is true whether we are dealing with a real live person or a personality created in some work of fiction.

In a large measure, the individual's fantasy life represents a secret rebellion against the need to grow up and to renounce the gratification of his drives. It is a rebellion against realistic demands and therefore, in a very specific sense, a rebellion against society and certain of the strictures which civilization imposes upon the individual. The world of private daydreams bespeaks a protest against the need to renounce the self-centered, antisocial, pleasure-seeking wishes of childhood (Freud, 1930). Freud (1911) compared the world of fantasy to a preserve of nature in its original form, an area set apart and untouched by the progress of civilization—in terms of the individual, by the process of maturation and development. One could conjecture that human beings could not really bear the strictures that civilized life imposes upon the drives if it were not for their ability to abrogate these prohibitions in various ways—in dreams by night, in daydreams during waking hours, and through communal participation in art, literature, religion, and similar activities (Arlow, 1961).

There are many pathways out of the conflicts mentioned above. Some lead to normal development, others to unresolved conflict and neurotic illness. Artistic creation represents an integration of conflicting tendencies into a compromise formation that is adaptive and enriching. According to Sachs (1942), an individual may modify his private daydream wishes into what he feels is a more acceptable form, both to him and to his environment. By being able to share his modified daydreams with a trusted friend, whose own psychology resonates a comparable fantasy, he engages a participant who can be expected to be receptive and sympathetic. The advantages of the shared

daydream are numerous. Ordinarily, dreams and daydreams are private, usually guilt-laden experiences, frequently characterized by shame. They separate the individual from the group. The shared fantasy, on the other hand, is a step toward socialization and group formation.

As Sachs formulated it, what the poet does is to transform his private daydreams into a creation which is compatible with the ideals of the community, capable of giving pleasure and conveying at the same time a disguised, transformed expression of forbidden wishes that other members of the community share in common with the poet. The poet presents his audience with a preformed fantasy, onto which the members of the audience may project their own unconscious fantasy wishes and elaborate them in keeping with their own psychological needs. Lionel Trilling is reported to have said, "People don't read books; books read people," suggesting that the literary form is an invitation and an opportunity for the individual to find in the external world a projected representation of his own unformed and unexpressed conflicts and wishes. What enhances this trend in the individual is the element of ambiguity that characterizes artistic creations (Kris and Kaplan, 1948). Through aesthetic ambiguity the artist invites the members of his audience to become co-creators, utilizing their own idiosyncratic versions of his vision.

By giving vitality, even in disguised and derivative form, to some forbidden, primitive fantasy, the poet puts his work in opposition to that part of the mind which conveys the prohibitions and demands of society, the structure in the mind technically known as the superego. Accordingly, at some point in its evolution, the literary effort represents some rebellion against the superego. For some period of time—sometimes longer, sometimes shorter—every serious literary creation, however surreptitiously, takes exception to the strictures imposed on the self-centered pursuit of gratification. This is a theme articulated with special clarity by poets of the romantic tradition.

As is well known, the various characters in a novel may repre-

sent the author or express his point of view, and the principal characters are the ones with whom the members of the audience are invited to identify. In fantasy, we share their adventures and misfortunes, their gratifications and punishments. Through this identification with characters in works of fiction, the individual members of the audience obtain vicarious gratification of secondary, that is, disguised, expressions of the basic impulses that are ordinarily forbidden and repressed. The members of the audience, the readers of a work of fiction, as it were, constitute a group, sharing with each other disguised indulgence in forbidden wishes. Accordingly, a process of mutual exculpation is set into motion between the poet and his audience. By participating in and enjoying the work of art, the audience relieves the poet of the guilt he may feel, which is connected with his private fantasies, fantasies now finding disguised expression in his creative efforts. The audience, on the other hand, enjoys the derivative product of these guilt-laden wishes, and by accepting and praising the product, they relieve the poet-author of self-reproach. But the members of the audience also exculpate each other in the knowledge that they have all participated, however transiently, in the pleasure of a daydream they share in common. Everybody's guilt, as Sachs (1942) said, is nobody's guilt.

In this spirit of mutual identification, the members of the audience form a temporary, unorganized group, united on the basis of enjoyment of a common wish, of expressions of a modified unconscious fantasy which they share in common (Freud, 1921). The poet, like a prophet, is the spokesman for his group. He gives word and form to the group's emerging but unarticulated wishes. The poet is the community's daydreamer. He spins the public fantasy.

All other elements being equal, how broad an appeal the writer's efforts will have will depend on the extent to which the themes he deals with resonate with comparable conflicts and fantasies in the general population. Some themes are universal. They evolve out of the universal biological and social dimen-

sions of human experience. Other themes are more limited, having an appeal to a very special audience with specific needs. However, as conditions within a society change, needs and conflicts change with them, and the size of the potential group for whom the poet may become the spokesman varies in proportion. Under certain circumstances, for a special group the poet may come to fulfill a role in addition to that mentioned above, namely, the role of affording disguised gratification for conflictual wishes and of alleviating guilt feelings. His work may serve as a vehicle for a fantasy that may be used to alleviate pathogenic anxieties. The more general the anxieties, the more widely will the writer's efforts be appreciated. In his creative work, the poet himself may be, in fact usually is, quite unaware of the deeper sources of his concern. At this point I would like to consider in some detail a striking example of this process, one which, at the same time, is related to how sexual morality has changed in the past generation. This example will also illustrate how the efforts of the poet may adumbrate and help bring about changes in the general attitude toward certain aspects of sexual morality.

In 1965, at the Actors' Workshop in San Francisco, there was presented a production by Michael McClure, entitled *The Beard.* There were fewer than six performances before the police intervened. I quote from the *Evergreen Review* (see McClure, 1967), which has since published the play in its entirety. "Despite the efforts of the director, the author and the actors, the Workshop establishment impeded in every possible way a performance of the play, including forbidding the presence of newspaper reviewers." Two of the performances were tape-recorded by the San Francisco Police Department, and the two principals were arrested and charged with obscenity, conspiracy to commit a felony, and with lewd and dissolute conduct in a public place. The play was defended by the American Civil Liberties Union and by distinguished members of the academic and theatrical community, to the end that, after five months of litigation, the ACLU persuaded the San Francisco Superior

Court that the charges were inappropriate and the case was dropped.

As mentioned, the play was entitled *The Beard.* It had two characters; a woman portraying Jean Harlow and a man portraying Billy the Kid. The stage directions call for Harlow and Billy the Kid to "wear small beards of torn white tissue paper." The setting is in eternity, in the hereafter, the two principals confined with each other in a small room. The action has the sense of ritual; the dialogue has the quality of litany. Billy the Kid wants Harlow to sit on his lap and play with his genital. Harlow scoffs at him and concentrates only on how beautiful she is. Toward Harlow, Billy has only contempt. He is uniformly disparaging, referring to her as feces or a bag of meat, and addressing her by the less elegant four-letter word for the female genital. She, on the other hand, consistently demeans his masculinity. She calls attention to his long hair and asserts that he really wants to be a girl. She returns the four-letter-word epithet. In time, the characters change roles and even switch lines, mouthing each others' repetitive litanies. Billy persists in his requests. He wants her to lick his shiny black boots. He wants to kiss her feet. He bites her toes and tears her stocking. Tauntingly, he tries to catch a glimpse of her genital. He demands, and finally succeeds in getting, Harlow's underpants. Finally, Harlow succumbs and the play ends as Billy begins to perform cunnilingus on her.

While the play is entitled *The Beard* and the author's directions call for both characters to wear paper beards, beards do not figure in the play at all. As a matter of fact, the word "beard" appears not once in the body of the play. This anomaly seemed to excite little or no comment from the critics or the members of the audience, and when I raised the subject with the eminent director-actor who directed the New York production of the play, he dismissed the question as unworthy of consideration. In what follows I will offer some analytic insights into the problem.

To psychoanalysts, the elements that move the play along fall

into a familiar and recognizable pattern. Licking the shiny boots, kissing the foot, tearing the stocking, biting the toe, glimpsing vaguely and indecisively the female genital and finally holding in possession the underpants of the woman, all point to fetishism. Beginning with Freud, psychoanalysts (Freud, 1927; Fenichel, 1930; Bak, 1953; Greenacre, 1955) have been able to demonstrate repeatedly from rich clinical data that the fetish unconsciously represents the female phallus.

In effect, the fetish serves a defensive function. It alleviates castration anxiety through the mechanism of denial in fantasy. In order to overcome castration anxiety and thus make some form of heterosexual experience possible, the fetishist in his unconscious fantasy endows the woman with a phallus. In many men the fantasy of a female phallus is sufficient to alleviate the anxiety. In the case of the fetishistic perversion, however, this unconscious fantasy proves insufficient to the task. For the fetishistic pervert, during sexual encounters something concrete, something tangible, is required to represent the fantasied phallus. In some cases the fetish must actually be held rather than viewed or imagined.

What determines the item the fetishist selects to represent the female phallus? According to several authors (Freud, 1927; Lewin, 1950; Fenichel, 1945), the fetish is selected on the basis of some contiguous visual impression, which preceded or followed immediately upon the original traumatic confrontation with the female genital. "The garter, girdle or some other item of women's underclothes close to or actually covering the genital lend themselves as distracting perceptions. Upon these the frightened viewer may concentrate in order to look away. . . . Displacing his gaze upward, the future fetishist may come upon the breast or the bra. Looking downward, he finds the heel or the shoe. The perception of the fetish thus becomes a screen obscuring the truth or concealing it completely" (Arlow, 1971, p. 324). It is not only that the future fetishist looks away from the frightening perception of the female genital. His gaze fixes on a substitute, reassuring perception, a perception that serves

the purpose of eliminating in fantasy the anatomical differences between the two sexes.

In the play we are considering, the author endows both principals, male and female, with an unquestionably male sexual element, a beard. Apparently, the more common, usual fetishistic objects that actually appear in the text proved insufficient for the purpose of alleviating anxiety, and an unambiguously male secondary sex characteristic, the beard, was introduced as an ever-present, distracting, reassuring perception, despite the fact that it remained unmentioned throughout the dialogue.[2]

In place of a private fantasy, or a fetishistic interest, or an obligatory action, the author presents, to at least some members of the audience, a derivative of the reassuring, anxiety-dispelling unconscious fantasy of a female phallus. For this group, which may be small or large, the author was a groundbreaking spokesman, and those who rallied to his cause, in the name of free speech, were helping expand the limits of what could be expressed in public with impunity. There appears to be little doubt that, a generation earlier, the play would have been shut down and the principals connected with it prosecuted. Today, a generation later, deviations from the more conventional expressions of heterosexual behavior are openly discussed and are largely tolerated. Thus, we may say that in a certain sense the author of this play functioned as a prophet. He divined correctly, and, through his play, gave expression to emerging attitudes of the public toward certain manifestations of sexual morality. He intuited the change, articulated it, and thus, to an extent, became an instrument of its realization.

This is not to say that the author of *The Beard* was the sole

[2] Abend (1985) has called attention to the fact that the term "beard" is a commonly accepted slang word for the female companion of a homosexual man, i.e., a person who is used as a disguise for underlying defective masculinity. This idea would be quite consistent with the thesis presented above and would represent an illustration of Fenichel's (1936) concept of the girl as phallus and Lewin's (1933) idea of the whole body as penis. In other words, the woman herself becomes the equivalent of a fetishistic object.

harbinger and spokesman for the new attitude toward sexual behavior, that is, a more liberal approach to what had previously been considered perverse, illegal, and unmentionable. During the 1960's, there were many who spoke out in the same spirit, undoubtedly reflecting the general re-examination of political, religious, and racial morality taking place at the time. What is striking about this particular example is the hidden appeal it contains, of an unconcious fantasy whose purpose is to alleviate anxieties from childhood, anxieties unknown to most of the viewers and perhaps even to the author himself. Thus, while the play entertained, titillated, or amused, at the same time, for members of the audience, it had a reassuring, quasi-therapeutic effect. For them it constituted a gratifying, albeit perverse, unconscious fantasy shared in common. And, whether they knew it or not, the author was their prophet.

In no sense does this presentation seek to diminish the importance of the pleasure that accrues from the response to the skillful use the poet makes of the wide range of available aesthetic devices. This presentation emphasizes a different dimension. It seeks to call attention to the pleasure that eventuates from the presentation of disguised symbolic satisfaction of an unconcious fantasy whose primary purpose is to alleviate castration anxiety. Such representations are ordinarily restrained by the accepted morality of society.

In this regard, the poet operates in a very special area. He functions in that transitional zone between wishes whose gratifications represent banality and wishes that are unthinkably forbidden. The poet helps his audience transcend or transgress the customary limitations of the imagination. In rebellion against the constraints imposed upon the pleasure principle, the poet seeks to expand the domain of what may be enjoyable but is not yet permissible. The eminent film critic, Vincent Canby, approached this situation from a somewhat different angle when he said,

> To a certain extent, all societies are repressive, though some are obviously more repressive than others, and it's the nature

> of some artists, including film-makers, that their art is shaped and given point by the limitations that an imperfect society imposes on them. This is not to argue on behalf of repression —political, economic, religious, social or sexual—but to acknowledge the possibly dread fact that much of what we sometimes hail as artistic achievement might never have come into being without such repressions. Remove restrictions that have the force of a kind of artistic discipline, and the explosive energies inside some artists become defused (*New York Times*, Sunday, November 15, 1981, p. 23).

Literary traditions vary; they change as the goals and the moral standards of the community change. In the past, in general the conflicts evoked by a work of art were resolved in conformity with the mores of the community. Thus, the poignancy between what could be and what has to be was resolved in favor of the latter and led many observers, e.g., Waelder (1965, 1968), to regard tragedy as the highest form of literary creation. For the community, the work of the poet serves the same function the successful dream does for the individual. Whatever conflicts the poet may have evoked in his work of art, he disposes of them in terms that do not disturb the ethical sleep of the community. But, as we know, this is not always true.

Thus, the poet, like the prophet, takes his place among the movers and shakers of the world. This was well appreciated by the poet, O'Shaughnessy, when he wrote in his "Ode: We Are the Music Makers" (1923):

> We, in the ages lying,
> In the buried past of the earth,
> Built Nineveh with our sighing,
> And Babel itself with our mirth;
> And o'erthrew them with prophesying
> To the old of the new world's worth;
> For each age is a dream that is dying,
> Or one that is coming to birth.

He thus put the poet and the prophet in the same category and

considered their function as identical in regard to expanding the aspirations and daring of mankind.

A clear trend may be discerned for the United States and much of the Western world in recent years. The mores of earlier times have been challenged and modified. This is, of course, a historic process, a recurrent phenomenon in the course of human affairs, one that is characterized by alternating periods of suppression or expression of some of the more primitive, i.e., more infantile, aspects of the human psyche. In retrospect, it appears that the harbinger for the current transformation was already apparent in the changing character of aesthetic creation. Both the form and the content, in many respects, swerved sharply away from traditional modes of expression. A distinct literature grew up discarding the customary formulations. Writers began to celebrate the anti-hero, usually an ignoble character, egocentric and sensual, a stranger to remorse or renunciation, who went unpunished when he violated the established taboos of society. As an ego-ideal object for identification, the anti-hero displaced the noble, tragic man. In this process, literary creations extend the limits of what may be conceived without having to feel guilty. For example, cannibalism and incest, themes that formerly were hidden under the heavy cloak of taboo or were tied down in literary tradition to tragic resolution, are currently the subject of light-hearted, comic treatment. In certain parts of the Western world, serious consideration is being given to legalizing incest between consenting adults, a taboo that has generally been regarded as a basic element of civilized society. Thus, what was formerly unthinkable became not only thinkable, but expressible and a prologue to what can become permissible.

At this point the role of the poet goes beyond the spinning of the public fantasy; he begins to herald a changing morality. When the poet's avant-garde private fantasy life resonates with the perceptions of a changing morality, his art may become an instrument for such a change. This element qualifies him to serve as the author of a dynamic daydream fated to be shared in

common by the members of the community. His aesthetic gifts enable the poet to articulate in appropriate shape and content the still obscure, but nevertheless emerging vision of the mass. It is at this juncture that the role of the poet begins to converge with that of the prophet. But while the mechanisms underlying their appeal may be similar, their goals begin to diverge. Like the poet, the prophet articulates and gives form to a vision latent in the minds of his potential followers. His vision may encompass a universal theme or may be more limited in scope and appeal. The message may be directed to all mankind or to a very select group. However, the group that forms around the poet and his daydream ordinarily holds together for a very short time, usually the duration of the mass participation in his work. And from the poet, as a rule, no call emerges for a program of practical action or for a change in the individual's moral aspirations, outlook, or behavior. Generally, this holds true, except when the poet attempts to assume at the same time the role of prophet or political leader, a turn of events not unknown in the history of human affairs.

The prophet, on the other hand, holds himself above his followers. Since he is not plagued by guilt or doubt, he does not need their good judgment to exculpate guilt. He is self-validating by virtue of being certain of the authenticity of his vision. The sense of perfect assurance, representing the victory over doubt and ambivalence, is an essential feature of the appeal of the prophet. It fosters the illusion of omnipotence and omniscience, and creates in susceptible persons a readiness to follow. By comparison, the role of the poet is modest indeed. No comparably heavy burden of anticipation is foisted upon him.

In promulgating their message, both the poet and the prophet make use of aesthetic devices in order to move their audience. For the message to be effective, it has to transcend the level of the rational and the cognitive. To evoke the latent fantasy in the face of the omnipresent internal resistance, the message must be couched in an indirect, metaphoric fashion, one that will enable each individual to contribute to the message

representations from his own imagery and will encourage the mobilization of the dynamic vitality of his own daydreams. The medium must be moving.

As a rule, the poet functions to extend the domain of the pleasure principle. However, if he projects the limits of this expansion too abruptly or beyond what the moral sensibility of the community is in a position to accept, he creates a nightmare. Other members of the community may call it an obscenity. Nightmares are failed dreams, in which the defense mechanisms of the mind, ordinarily used to disguise and distort disturbing, primitive impulses, have proved inadequate to the task of preserving the dreamer's sleep. Many films, novels, and plays seem to have been put together in such a way as to convey a nightmarish quality. It is perhaps a reflection of the tension of our times. Nonetheless, it should be noted that it is possible to live with nightmares, to become inured to the terrors they arouse, and finally to accept them as unpleasant but undeniable components of one's mental life, of the order of one's experience, of the changed nature of the world we live in. How such matters may be judged depends on the vantage point of the observer and the interests of the particular group. Whether for good or evil, for better or worse, the avant-garde poet poses before the community moral questions awaiting resolution, some challenge to the notion of the bounds the community has set on the operation of the pleasure principle. As Freud (1930) pointed out, this process represents an inescapable dimension of the experience of civilization. The conflict is recurrent, as it is endless, and the poet takes his place alongside the prophet as one of the mediators in this conflict between the individual and his society, between civilization and its discontents.

REFERENCES

ABEND, S. M. (1985). Personal communication.

ABRAHAM, K. (1909). Dreams and myths: a study in folk-psychology. In *Clinical Papers and Essays in Psychoanalysis*. New York: Basic Books, 1955, pp. 153-209.

ARLOW, J. A. (1951). The consecration of the prophet. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 20:374-397.

——— (1961). Ego psychology and the study of mythology. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 9:371-393.
——— (1969). Unconscious fantasy and disturbances of conscious experience. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 38:1-27.
——— (1971). Character perversion. In *Currents in Psychoanalysis*, ed. I. M. Marcus. New York: Int. Univ. Press, pp. 317-336.
BAK, R. C. (1953). Fetishism. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 1:285-298.
FENICHEL, O. (1930). The psychology of transvestitism. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 11:211-227.
——— (1936). The symbolic equation: girl = phallus. In *Collected Papers of Otto Fenichel*. Second Series. New York: Norton, 1954, pp. 3-18.
——— (1945). *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*. New York: Norton.
FREUD, S. (1908a). Creative writers and day-dreaming. *S. E.*, 9.
——— (1908b). Hysterical fantasies and their relation to bisexuality. *S. E.*, 9.
——— (1911). Formulation regarding the two principles of mental functioning. *S.E.*, 12.
——— (1921). Group psychology and the analysis of the ego. *S.E.*, 18.
——— (1927). Fetishism. *S.E.*, 21.
——— (1930). Civilization and its discontents. *S.E.*, 21.
GREENACRE, P. (1955). Further considerations regarding fetishism. *Psychoanal. Study Child*, 10:187-194.
JONES, E. (1951). *Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis. Vol. 1*. London: Hogarth.
KRIS, E. & KAPLAN, A. (1948). Aesthetic ambiguity. In *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*. New York: Int. Univ. Press, 1952, pp. 243-264.
LEWIN, B. D. (1933). The body as phallus. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 2:24-47.
——— (1950). *The Psychoanalysis of Elation*. New York: Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 1961.
MCCLURE, M. (1967). The beard. *Evergreen Review*, October, 49:64-79.
OLDEN, C. (1941). About the fascinating effect of the narcissistic personality. *Amer. Imago*, 2:347-356.
O'SHAUGHNESSY, A. (1923). Ode: we are the music makers. In *Modern American and British Poetry*. New York: Harcourt Brace, p. 44.
RANK, O. (1932). *Art and the Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development*. New York: Tudor Publishing.
SACHS, H. (1942). *The Creative Unconscious. Studies in the Psychoanalysis of Art*. Cambridge, Mass.: Sci-Art Publ.
WAELDER, R. (1965). *Psychoanalytic Avenues to Art: The Freud Anniversary Lecture Series*. New York: Int. Univ. Press.
——— (1968). Psychoanalysis and moral values. *Bull. Phila. Assn. Psychoanal.*, 18: 25-26.
Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language. Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1962.

94 Wildwood Rd.
Great Neck, NY 11024

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

A Dream, A Sonnet, and a Ballad: THE Path to Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"

Francis Baudry

To cite this article: Francis Baudry (1986) A Dream, A Sonnet, and a Ballad: THE Path to Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 55:1, 69-98, DOI: 10.1080/21674086.1986.11927131

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1986.11927131

Published online: 20 Nov 2017.

Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LV, 1986

A DREAM, A SONNET, AND A BALLAD: THE PATH TO KEATS'S "LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI"

BY FRANCIS BAUDRY, M.D.

This paper explores the relationship between Keats's ballad, "La Belle Dame sans Merci," and some of its precursors, including one of the poet's dreams and a sonnet titled "On a Dream." The process of creativity is examined.

> Here are the poems, they will explain themselves as all poems should do—without comment
>
> Keats, February 12, 1819, in letter to his brother and sister-in-law

INTRODUCTION

While researching the background of one of the greatest ballads in the English language, "La Belle Dame sans Merci" by John Keats, I uncovered a remarkable sequence of texts which help us to reconstruct certain intermediary steps in the process of creativity and writing.

A personal journal which the English poet Keats kept as a lengthy letter to his brother and sister-in-law, over a period of several months, includes a report of a dream and shortly thereafter a sonnet entitled "On a Dream," and then a poem which has been called the most beautiful ballad in the English language, "La Belle Dame sans Merci." The ballad includes a dream in its content. My interest was aroused in this sequence by the fact that a dream appears to be a "seed" in three different

aspects of John Keats's literary output within a very brief period of time. A dream is mentioned in the correspondence; then the same manifest dream is barely transformed as the last lines of a sonnet titled "On a Dream," and finally, a few days later, the great ballad, "La Belle Dame sans Merci," includes a literary dream.

I will consider the flow of material from correspondence to dream, to sonnet, and to ballad as though it were an extended analytic hour. One of my hypotheses is that the sequence—dream, sonnet, ballad—allows for the gradual expression of warded-off depressive affects as though the poems were an "interpretation" of the dream—with the difference that the poet may not have listened to or even been interested in the content of the interpretation. This approach to the poems permits us to make certain hypotheses which would not be possible if the poems were simply considered as separate texts unrelated to each other or to elements in the author's life.

I will first try to reconstruct the meaning of the dream experience from information about it in the journal and from its subsequent fate in the poems. The study of meaning will include how the dream is used (its function) in each different fragment —correspondence, sonnet, ballad.

Second, the detailed description of the transformation which the dream experience undergoes as it is incorporated into the poetry will provide a microscopic view of the evolution of the creative process. I will try to show how the various aspects of the dream—its affect, imagery, and probable latent content—emerge and become clarified as the poet's imagination transforms the raw material into verse. I will suggest that the more successful of several poems allows much freer expression of forbidden, threatening, and painful ideas and feelings. It would be tempting to postulate that this free emergence of unconscious elements is a precondition of all great art. Too defensive a stance leads to stilted or less interesting imagery. This is certainly true in the case of the Keats sonnet which I will consider.

In a final section, I will discuss problems of method and validation in applied analysis.

HISTORY

A very few words about Keats's brief and tragic life are in order. Born on October 31, 1795, he was the oldest of four, followed by George (1797), Tom (1799), and Edward (1801); the latter died in infancy. The youngest, Fanny, was born in 1803. The father died as the result of a fall from a horse when John was only nine. At this point the family was thrown into chaos. The mother, unable to manage the family affairs, quickly succumbed to the pleas of a minor clerk in a banking firm, William Rawlings, marrying him in desperation less than four months after her husband's death. The grandmother, who disapproved of the hasty marriage, took over the care of the children who went to live with her. While in boarding school, at age fifteen, Keats lost his mother to tuberculosis, the dreaded disease that was to fell his brother Tom and himself as well. The grandfather had also died by then. The grandmother gave over the care of the boys to a guardian, Abbey, a suspicious and uneducated man who interrupted John's schooling in 1811, having decided he should learn to support himself. The grandmother died in 1814, leaving the children without a home.

After spending several unhappy years in apothecary training, John moved into his brother George's house in 1816, but a stable family life was not destined for him. George, who had played both a fraternal and paternal role in the poet's life, married Georgiana Wylie and moved to Kentucky in 1818. There is no doubt that Keats experienced a severe loss at the marriage and departure of his beloved brother and his wife. George had been a stabilizing influence in Keats's life. His marriage had recreated a stable family unit, something Keats had not experienced since the death of his parents. In December 1818, the younger brother, Tom, died of tuberculosis and a few weeks later, shortly before the composition of the poem, Keats developed a sore throat which he correctly diagnosed as an early stage of tuberculosis, the disease that would kill him two years later. During this same period, he first confessed his love to a young woman, Fanny Brawne, a passion that in all likelihood

was never consummated even though Keats became engaged to her for a brief period later in the year 1819. Clearly, Keats had many doubts about the wisdom of such a choice. He was beset by persistent financial problems and was encountering poor reviews. He sensed his failing health, and he worried that he might have to give up writing for Fanny Brawne's sake. He was known to suffer chronically from recurrent mood swings and severe depressions.

DATA

I will now turn to Keats's journal[1] to outline the events preceding the dream. In order to maintain a bond with his beloved brother and sister-in-law, now pregnant, he kept this journal from which he sent them passages. The correspondence serves as the backdrop for the works I will consider in detail and for some others I will mention in passing.

The correspondence to George, often addressed to Georgiana, is full of reminiscences, longings, and open expressions of love, as the following excerpt dated March 12, 1819, shows: "I hope you are both now in that sweet sleep which no two beings deserve more than you do. I much fancy you and please myself in the fancy of speaking a prayer and a blessing over you and your lives. God bless you. I whisper good night in your ears and you will dream of me!" (pp. 73-74).[2] An entry dated April 5 informs us that Keats has found a lock of Georgiana's hair in a letter addressed from Georgiana to George and that he intends to put it in a miniature case of George's. On April 11, Keats discovers a prank which affects him deeply: some love letters written by an alleged Amena Bellefilla addressed to the now deceased Tom turn out to have been written by a common acquaintance, Wells. Keats is furious and swears vengeance.

[1] Page numbers for all quotations from Keats's journal are from Volume 2 of the edition of his letters edited by Rollins (1958).

[2] I mention this entry because of its similarity to the theme of the poem, "The Eve of St. Agnes," which contains the first direct allusion to the "Belle Dame" story.

On April 15, Keats includes in his correspondence a curious bit of writing, an extempore piece entitled "When They Were Come unto the Faeries' Court." Obscure in meaning both comic and nightmarish, this piece deals with the story of a princess lured into fairyland in spite of the warning of her three servants who are three transformed princes. W. Jackson Bate (1963), in his excellent biography of Keats, mentions that the piece could be seen as related to the situation in the strangely beautiful ballad, "La Belle Dame," that Keats was to write five days later. Here is the plot. A fretful princess travels to a fairy court with an ape, a dwarf, and a fool. Finding no one at home, she flies into a rage; the dwarf trembles, the ape stares, the fool does nothing. The princess takes her whip in order to turn on her three attendants, and the dwarf with piteous face begins to rhyme in order to distract her. While the princess is within, her only means of transportation—a mule—manages to get rid of its saddle and escapes. The princess is never seen again. In spite of the comical effect, an eerie sense of warning pervades the piece: after the princess entered the door, "it closed and there was nothing seen but the mule grazing on the herbage green." This anticipates the theme of disappearance in the Belle Dame ballad.

On April 16, having to stay home because of the rain, Keats describes a recent walk with Coleridge and sees fit to list the topics discussed. These include different species of dreams, nightmares, dreams accompanied by a sense of touch, single and double touch, a dream related, a ghost story (p. 89).

The April 16 entry starts out with a passage stressing Keats's wish for revenge against Wells,

> I will hang over his head like a sword by a hair, I will be opium to his vanity. If I cannot injure his interests—he is a rat and he shall have rats bane to his vanity. I will harm him if I possibly can. I have no doubt I shall be able to do so, let us leave him to his misery; alone except when we can throw in a little more (p. 91).

This passage seems to stress Keats's helplessness in the face of Wells's trickery. Then without transition Keats continues:

> The Fifth Canto of Dante pleases me more and more, it is that one in which he meets with Paolo and Francesca—I had *passed many days in rather a low state of mind*, and in the midst of them I dreamt of being in that region of Hell. The dream was one of the most delightful enjoyments I ever had in my life—I floated about the whirling atmosphere as it is described with a beautiful figure to whose lips mine were joined [as] it seemed for an age—and in the midst of all this cold and darkness I was warm—even flowery tree tops sprung up and we rested on them sometimes with the lightness of a cloud till the wind blew us away again—I tried a Sonnet upon it—there are fourteen lines but *nothing of what I felt in it—● that I could dream it every night* (p. 91, italics added).

We do not know the exact date of the dream, save that it was recent. There is little reason to doubt that the dream recorded by Keats was genuine and not made up; it occurs naturally in the context of the passage preceding it and seems an apt commentary on Dante's Fifth Canto—the clear day residue.

The affects aroused by the dream apparently drove the poet to try to capture something of its pleasure by writing a poem on it. "I tried a Sonnet upon it—there are fourteen lines but nothing of what I felt in it." Clearly, an uncontrollable shift in affects intervenes. Here is the sonnet:

ON A DREAM

As Hermes once took to his feathers light,
  When lullèd Argus, baffled, swooned and slept,
So on a Delphic reed, my idle spright
  So played, so charmed, so conquered, so bereft
The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes;
  And, seeing it asleep, so fled away—
Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies,
  Nor unto Tempe where Jove grieved that day;

But to that second circle of sad hell,
  Where in the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw
Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell
  Their sorrows. Pale were the sweet lips I saw,
Pale were the lips I kissed, and fair the form
I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

The sonnet is immediately followed in the correspondence by more personal passages addressed to Georgiana. "I want very much a little of your wit my dear sister. . . . Are there any flowers in bloom like any beautiful heaths—any street full of corset makers? What sort of shoes have you to fit those pretty feet of yours? . . . Do you ride on horseback? What do you have for breakfast, dinner and supper? Without mentioning lunch and bever and wet and snack and a bit to stay one's stomach" (p. 92). In a later section Keats amuses himself by giving directions on how Georgiana could employ her day: "While you are hovering with your dinner in prospect you may do a thousand things—put on a hedge-hog into George's hat—pour a little water in his rifle, soak his boots in a pail of water, cut his jacket round in shreds like a Roman kilt or the back of my grandmother's stays—sow off his buttons" (p. 93). The mood of these remarks, their jocularity, suggests the pranks a young child would like to play on his father—to make a fool out of him and perhaps reverse the roles.

The next day, April 21, Keats writes, "I stopped at Taylor with Woodhouse and passed a quiet sort of pleasant day. I have been very much pleased with the panorama of the ships at the north pole with the icebergs, the mountains, the bears, the walrus, the seals, the penguins and a large whale floating [its] back above water. It is impossible to describe the place" (p. 94). This passage again contains an allusion to floating—a favorite image in Keats's poetry. That evening Keats included in the letter the well-known ballad, "La Belle Dame sans Merci," which ushered in one of his most creative periods, during which he produced odes, sonnets, and a philosophical treatise, "The

Vale of Soul Making." The ballad, to which I now turn, was probably written April 19:

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
  Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
  And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
  So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
  And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
  With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
  Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
  Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
  And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
  And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
  And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
  And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
  A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
  And honey wild, and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
  'I love thee true'.

She took me to her elfin grot,
  And there she wept and sighed full sore,

And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me asleep
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—
The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Thee hath in thrall!'

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

In the correspondence following the ballad, Keats adds an amusing light-hearted commentary on one aspect of the poem, selecting one of the more irrelevant details. "Why four kisses—you will say—why four because I wish to restrain the headlong impetuosity of my muse—she would have fain said score without hurting the rhyme—but we must temper the imagination as the critics say with judgement. I was obliged to choose an even number that both eyes might have fair play: and to speak truly, I think two a piece quite sufficient. Suppose I had said seven, there would have been three and a half a piece—a very awkward affair and well got out on my side" (letter of April 19 to Georgiana Keats, p. 98). This is the same chatty, jocular mood we find right after the sonnet—a distancing from the gloom of the poetry.

There follows in the correspondence a poem titled "A Chorus of Fairies." In the third stanza, titled "Zephyr," we find a reminiscence of the imagery of the dream—perhaps a last lingering.

Zephyr addresses gentle Brema and beckons her to accompany him "over the tops of trees to my fragrant palace where they ever floating are—beneath the cherish of a star called Vesper —who with silver veil hides his brillance pale" (p. 98).

INTERPRETATION

The setting of the works of Keats that I have just described is not typical of most literary texts. In many ways it fulfills the ideal requirements for analytic interpretation. We are in possession of the author's manifest dream, the context in which it occurred, some of his reactions, and the various creative products which he himself relates to it. To have the correspondence, the dream, and the author's comments as data allows us to approximate more closely his intentions and his states of mind.

From the perspective of an analyst, all the written material presented so far—correspondence, dream, comments on the dream, and the several poems—are to be understood as compromise formations. To be sure, poems are more likely to be influenced by issues of form, they will contain more imagery and metaphors, and they will have been subject to more conscious elaboration than the dream. Similarly, the correspondence will be governed by Keats's style and by his sense of what is appropriate. It should nevertheless be seen as a creative product which will contain seeds of conflicts similar to those found in the dream or in the poetry.

I will begin my interpretation with a close examination of the obvious day residue of the dream, Dante's Fifth Canto. Here are excerpts:

> After I had heard my teacher name the olden dames and cavaliers, pity came over me, and I was as if bewildered.
>
> I began: "Poet, willingly would I speak with those two that go together, and seem so light upon the wind."
>
> And he to me: "Thou shalt see when they are nearer to us;

and do thou then entreat them by that love which leads them; and they will come."

Then I turned again to them; and I spoke, and began: Francesca, thy torments make me weep with grief and pity.

But tell me: in the time of the sweet sighs, by what and how love granted you to know the dubious desires?

And she to me: "There is no greater pain than to recall a happy time in wretchedness; and this thy teacher knows.

"But if thou hast such desire to learn the first root of our love, I will do like one who weeps and tells.

"One day, for pastime, we read of Lancelot, how love constrained him; we were alone and without all suspicion.

"Several times that reading urged our eyes to meet, and changed the colour of our faces; but one moment alone it was that overcame us.

"When we read how the fond smile was kissed by such a lover, he, who shall never be divided from me,

"kissed my mouth all trembling: the book, and he who wrote it, was a Galeotto. That day we read in it no farther."

A brief synopsis of the story of Paolo and Francesca as recounted by Dante is relevant to the dream. Francesca was married to a deformed man, Gianciotto of Rimini, and had fallen in love with his brother, Paolo, while reading together the tale of Lancelot. They were discovered by Gianciotto who, in jealous fury, slew them both. The lovers eventually found themselves in the second circle of Hell, reserved for adulterous lovers eternally condemned to swirl about in unending storms.

The relation between the dream and the manifest imagery of the Dante canto is compelling. Dante begins, "Poet, willingly would I speak with those two that go together, and seem so light upon the wind." A bit later, "Then I turned again to them; and I spoke, and began: Francesca, thy torments make me weep with grief and pity." In the latter part of the canto which de-

scribes the kiss, the last two lines are explicit. "When we read how the fond smile was kissed by such a lover, he, who shall never be divided from me, kissed my mouth all trembling. . . . That day we read in it no farther." I am making the assumption that the dreamer borrowed the imagery of the canto because it resonated with or reflected some of his unconscious wishes or fantasies. What do we find in the canto?

Francesca alludes to the book she and Paolo were reading: "One day, for pastime, we read of Lancelot, how love constrained him; we were alone and without all suspicion." The story of Lancelot is doubly relevant. Lancelot is in love with Guinevere, wife of King Arthur, but he does not dare confess his love to the queen. One day when she is smiling at his embarrassment, Galehaut, her friend and confidant, begs Guinevere to grant Lancelot the forgiveness of a kiss, and the queen kisses Lancelot. Thus, it does not seem farfetched to assume that Galehaut played the kind of role for Guinevere and her knight that the story of Lancelot played for Francesca and Paolo. More important, the Fifth Canto and the written text of the dream and journal may have played such a part for Keats and Georgiana in Keats's fantasy. There is considerable evidence for this in the imagery of the dream, directly borrowed, as it were, from Dante, and in the details in Keats's correspondence referring to Georgiana. The kiss in the dream could then express both the forbidden impulse and its forgiveness—as the queen's kiss is granted in forgiveness. It is likely, then, that the reading of Dante stimulated in the poet the wish to seduce his sister-in-law as Paolo had seduced Francesca; the consequence of the seduction, represented as a kiss, is a sojourn in hell which reawakens in Keats thoughts of the death of his loved ones and associated depressive affect and mourning.[3]

[3] I shall not concern myself in this paper with the deeper meanings of the dream, including the nature of the wish expressed toward Georgiana, now pregnant. There are additional complexities; for example, there is some evidence that Keats has also identified both with Francesca, thus expressing longings for his brother, and with the jealous husband who murders the guilty lovers. The further day residue of rage at Wells who wrote the fake love letters to Tom must also be kept in mind.

Pederson-Krag (1951) has referred to the identification of Keats with Francesca and to the poet's guilty love for Georgiana. I would endorse her comment that Keats was, on some level, attempting to seduce his sister-in-law in his correspondence. On the simplest level one could imagine one of the core dream thoughts to be, "If only I could be kissed by Georgiana the way Francesca was kissed by Paolo, I would find it an ecstasy and would be willing to sojourn in Dante's second circle of Hell."

Although I have so far focused on the erotic aspects, there is another implication of the Dante canto: its location is hell, and so the role of death has to be considered. We do not know why the canto "pleases" Keats "more and more," but it is conceivable that the poet is primarily concerned about death and illness and thus may be mourning both his brother, buried four months previously, and his mother, felled by tuberculosis. Keats may have had a premonition that he would join them in the not too distant future. The theme of love may be a defense against the anticipation of death, or there may be various complicated relationships between the two—for example, "Since I will soon die, I might as well enjoy myself," or "Why worry about death? I will be reunited with my mother." There are several plausible hypotheses which we cannot effectively prove or disprove because of the paucity of evidence.

I will now turn to the function of the dream for Keats and as used by him in the correspondence with George and Georgiana. This will preface a similar examination of the function of the dream in the sonnet and in the ballad. On a simple level, we can postulate that one function of the dream is to minimize Keats's unhappiness and foreboding of death ("it is not true") and to present as fulfilled certain wishes both current and infantile. But what of the fate of the warded-off affects? They reveal themselves ever so briefly in the manifest content—"in the midst of all this cold and darkness"—and are replaced by their opposites in the line, "O that I could dream it every night." What about the function of the dream in the letter, the first creative product? I have already suggested that the dream

serves as a veiled (or not so veiled) hint of Keats's guilty attachment to Georgiana. It allows a clear expression of his wish in such a way that it does not take an objectionable form. The dream, as it is used in the correspondence then, is a solution to a conflict arising in Keats's relation to George and Georgiana. Keats can use the manifest dream as a carrier of his secret (or not so secret) longings, expressed with sufficient ambiguity to free him from taking direct responsibility for the affects that are revealed. He may have also used the sharing of the dream and what we see as its day residue to communicate, in an ambiguous manner, his concerns about death to those he loved the most. This use of the dream may be quite secondary to the conflicts which ended up in dream form, or to the purpose of the dream.

Next, I will turn to the sonnet, "On a Dream." Keats was right to be dissatisfied with it. It has a contrived quality. The manifest, barely altered dream is appended in the last six lines, and the first eight lines, full of mythological allusions, are largely intellectual and stilted. A reader with no knowledge of the occurrence of the dream would have no way of understanding the title or of appreciating that the last six lines are the almost literal representation of the poet's personal experience. As we are in possession of the day residue, however, a closer examination of the symbolism and allusions contained in the first eight lines will enrich the examination of the fate of the original dream. I will consider these as modified associations.

The first line, "As Hermes once took to his feathers light," clearly mirrors the sensations of floating and flying in the dream. The next line, "When lullèd Argus, baffled, swooned and slept," is explained by Pederson-Krag (1951) as follows: "The hundred eyed Argus servant by Juno was guarding Io from Jove's attention when Hermes, Jove's messenger, played so sweetly to him that all his hundred eyes closed at once, at which point Hermes murdered him" (p. 275). Keats makes an analogy between Hermes and his own spirit which, unlike Jove, is not interested in Io. Note the implied negation which recurs more forcefully in the next two lines: Keats's idle spright fled

away, "Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies" (Ida was the mountain where the page Ganymede had been raped by Jove), "Nor unto Tempe where Jove grieved that day" (Tempe was the valley in which Apollo was frustrated by the transformation of Daphne, daughter of a river God; fleeing from the amorous Apollo, she escaped by being changed into a laurel).

As analysts, we might see the "Not" as an attempted escape from the cold (snow-cold skies) and from grief (Jove grieved that day). Indeed, this view is strengthened by a consideration of the last six lines. Keats has implied that he is not tempted even in sleep (or fantasy) to relive scenes of masculine love, or rape, but rather he is drawn back to return to the scene of his dream—now transformed in several ways. In contrast to the original dream's oceanic, manic-like quality, here the grief, depression, sadness, and death break through—"sad" hell, "lovers need not tell their sorrows." The adjective "pale," clearly an allusion to death, occurs twice, and the heaviness is again emphasized by the word "melancholy" describing the storm. Thus, the first poetic "associations" to the dream reveal, perhaps in spite of the poet's wishes, his depressive affect; the form Keats's "spright" floats with is no longer a beautiful figure but a barely disguised representation of death. In the sonnet, Keats tells us, there was "nothing of what I felt in [the dream]." On a manifest level Keats was unable to convey the ecstatic quality of the dream in his poem. From the point of view of defensive operations, we could say that the poet could not maintain the cheerful mood that was initiated by the dream and that interrupted a depressed mood of some days' duration.

I will now examine the ballad in some detail. There is a lengthy tradition associated with La Belle Dame starting in the middle ages and re-emerging with particular strength in the German Romantic movement. Keats's title itself is ambiguous. It can signify "the fairy's lack of pity for the mortal she lures from the world or her own deprivation since she exists without hope of divine grace" (Fass, 1979, p. 43). Keats made prior use of the title of the ballad, derived from a poem by the French

medieval writer, Alain Chartier. A month before the dream, Keats wrote the lovely ode, "The Eve of St. Agnes." In the poem an ardent lover, Porphyro, introduces himself by a stratagem into the bedroom of the sleeping Madeleine on the eve of St. Agnes. Madeleine, according to an old tradition, was waiting for a dream to show her the features of her future betrothed. In effect, Porphyro is able to seduce Madeleine while she is still half asleep while singing to her "an ancient ditty, long since mute,/ In Provence called, 'La belle dame sans merci'." The main themes deal with love awakened and seen in a dream. Love and death are intertwined. Sleep, dream, and awakening are confused, blurring the reality of vision. "Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,/ Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep."[4] It is perhaps no accident, then, that Keats should have seized upon "La Belle Dame" as an extraordinary means of representation of the complicated feelings associated with his own dream in which, like Madeleine, he had a vision. "How changed thou art! How pallid, chill, and drear! / Give me that voice again, my Porphyro, / Those looks immortal, those complainings dear! / O leave me not in this eternal woe, / For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go" ("The Eve of St. Agnes," Stanza XXV).

The ballad, in contrast to the earlier sonnet, is full of ambiguity. There is a dreamlike quality to the entire poem. This is consonant with the idea that the form of the ballad could have been stimulated in part by the dream—and represents a return of the original form after the distancing of the sonnet. The first three stanzas are spoken by an unidentified narrator, which suggests an analogy with an inner voice. The fourth stanza, starting with "I met a lady in the Meads," is in all likelihood spoken by the knight at arms. There is a complex shift from waking to sleeping which is then interrupted by the knight as narrator telling his dream to an unidentified audience. He then awakens either as a result of the horrible dream or simply after

[4] Note the similarity with the earlier correspondence with George and Georgiana.

it is ended. The last stanza, purporting to be an explanation ("this is why I sojourn here"), explains nothing. Its form is reminiscent of the activity of the mind during the process of secondary revision.

There are multiple levels of confusion in both content and form, which are perhaps associated with the unclear boundary between fantasy and reality. There is confusion about what ails the knight, though the issue is clearly one of bondage. Does he remain on the hillside because of the dream or because of the experience, and why should such a poetic encounter, full of love, be followed by the warning dream? Is the fairy equated with La Belle Dame? There is confusion regarding the nature of the fairy. Does she represent an "evil fantasy, luring the hero away from the real world or does she represent the sinful world —materialism, keeping the hero away from the path to his real home—heaven in this instance"? (Fass 1979, p. 27).

It is tempting to see the fairy as the transformed figures from the original dream. From a blissful oceanic fusion emerges a being whose identity is still obscure but who is now both comforter and comforted in the dual role of mother and child. No words are exchanged between the Knight and the fairy, which adds to the sense of mystery and other-worldliness. There seems to be a willed obscurity in the lines, "And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—/ The latest dream I ever dreamt/ On the cold hill side." It is not clear whether latest should be understood as "last" or whether it should be taken literally, meaning that the knight at arms had had many previous dreams in the location. There is a puzzling use of time in this sequence—"latest" refers to past and "ever" refers to future in a strange juxtaposition, from the vantage point of the present observer standing outside of the narrative time.

Although the ballad is full of ambiguity concerning the characters and their motives, one aspect is not ambiguous: its somber, almost unrelieved depressed quality, with themes of starvation, cold, desolation, illness, and death. The eruption of the depressive affects clearly continues the process initiated by

the sonnet but in a much richer, more poetic vein. In the ballad, love is alluded to but the fairy, without explanation, "wept and sighed full sore." It is not clear who is the comforter and who the comforted. In the rough draft of the ballad the poet clearly struggled (either for poetic or for personal motives) against too direct an expression of the theme of death.

The first draft of the third stanza ran thus:

> I see death on thy brow
> With anguish moist and fever dew
> And on thy cheek's death a fading rose
> Fast withereth too.

In the printed version, death is omitted in each case. Thus, "I see a lily on thy brow . . . / And on thy cheeks a fading rose."[5]

I will now turn to a closer examination of the "dream" contained in the latter part of the ballad. In contrast to the sonnet which included the original dream imagery without clearly identifying its source, in the ballad we now find a literary dream. As in the sonnet, the dream occurs toward the latter part of the work. It is no longer a "beautiful dream" but more a nightmarish vision, a spoken warning, oracular in nature, of death, bondage, starvation, and cold. It is integrated in the poem and clearly marked off as a literary dream. And yet it flows smoothly, connected both to what precedes it and to what follows it. As Bate (1963) puts it, "He [the knight] does not actually witness the horrid warning of starvation that this attempted union may bring. That anticipation, which may be genuine or primarily the expression of his own uneasiness, has come to him only in a dream—a dream that has also banished 'la Belle Dame.' And if the dream is now proving to be prophetic, it is again through his own divided nature, his own act, his persist-

[5] It should be mentioned that there are two versions of the ballad included in Keats's collected works. Keats undertook relatively minor revisions in some four of the stanzas at the suggestion of Hunt, at a time when he was quite ill. It is difficult to attribute psychological significance to these changes.

ence in continuing to loiter on the cold hillside even though the autumn is about to become winter" (p. 481).

It is expedient to study the separate transformation of the content of the original dream by tracing the fate of the affects and of the complex imagery. In the original dream experience the dreamer found ecstasy and hoped that he could dream it every night—that is, return in fantasy to the experience. In the sonnet the poet's "idle spright" fled away to the second circle of Hell, the scene of the dream. In the ballad the situation is reversed; the knight for unclear reasons cannot or will not escape from the desolate scene including the dream. The core image portrays the union between the dreamer and the beautiful figure. Though the sex of the figure is not identified in the original dream, it makes sense to assume it is female. The dream is unchanged in the sonnet but is expanded in the ballad into a story from the fourth to the ninth stanza. The form is that of a dreamlike fantasy which expands the original imagery and etches out a more complete, if somewhat mysterious portrait, giving it the identity of a fairy. The tableau, "I floated about the whirling atmosphere . . . with a beautiful figure to whose lips mine were joined," is transformed into "I set her on my pacing steed/And nothing else saw all day long/For sidelong would she bend and sing." The oral imagery of the dream is expanded to being fed "roots of relish sweet" and being told "sure in language strange . . ./'I love thee true' "; it is expanded to being taken to "her elfin grot/ . . . And there I shut her wild wild eyes/ With kisses four." The other part of the manifest dream indicating depression and death finds its own representation but is split off from the tale—in the introductory three stanzas—and projected onto the fairy in one line, "And there she wept and sighed full sore." It emerges encapsulated in the literary dream. This lengthy elaboration can be contrasted to the condensation achieved in the form of the real dream.

Can we say anything about the function of "the dream" in the ballad? This literary dream encapsulates the dreaded inner voice of conscience, doom, and foreboding of death. Yet the

poet is able is able to convey these affects while still preserving the ambiguity of the characters' reactions, thus enriching the multiple meanings and displaying his ambivalence. The function of the dream in the ballad could be considered analogous to that of a dream within a dream. The ballad represents a poetic fantasy on the original dream. The literary dream could be seen in the nature of a superego injection, until then warded off by the dreamer and poet. In the above I am blurring the distinction between "real dream" and "literary dream," which, of course, oversimplifies the issue. We are not sure why Keats included a literary dream as part of the ballad, or whether it was in any way related to the original dream experience. We do know, however, that dreams had profound significance for Keats. As I will show later, Keats contrasted dreams (which he mistrusted) with poetic vision (which was equated with true insight). On this level, then, a literary dream is an ambiguous product and might reflect the author's wish that the nightmarish vision be "only a dream."

There is still another level of possible interpretation of the ballad which I have carefully avoided up to this point because it is so fraught with danger—the symbolic area. However, a certain transparency and fitting together of the themes of the ballad suggests the following.[6] If we heard a patient tell us a dream with a similar manifest content, how many of us would almost preconsciously formulate the story of the ballad as the encounter between a lover and his lady's more private anatomy (the grotto) with dreaded consequences following consummation. The image of "starved lips . . ./ With horrid warning gapèd wide" sounds very much like a castration threat. This reading suggests that the lips in the original dream represented a multiple condensation and that in the ballad death and castration are fused—a not uncommon clinical finding. The dream within the ballad then contains the most repressed level—that of castration at the hands of the lover which becomes fused with the

[6] This reading was suggested by Harry Trosman.

representation of the mother. From the point of view of method, this last interpretation is consistent with the previous formal interpretation. Indeed, a professor of literature, Vera Jiji, reading the poem, commented spontaneously that some of the truncated lines ("And no birds sing") could represent the theme of castration in a formal way. There is support for the existence in the poet of castration anxiety in his avoidance of women as sexual objects and in his selection of an unavailable woman with whom to share at a distance his most personal outpourings.

The lure of symbolic interpretation is evident in Williams's (1966) treatment of the ballad. His paper, subtitled "The Bad-Breast Mother," is more an example of the application of Kleinian concepts than a clarification of the poem. Williams states that "the turning of the idealized breast into 'La Belle Dame sans Merci,' the daemonified breast mother, may well have been felt unconsciously to have been due to [Keats's] own devouring greed, complicated and intensified by its being mixed with envy" (p. 70). The evidence Williams offers to buttress such conclusions is rather flimsy. "We can see that a greedy component of his personality existed by the frequency of his allusions to and preoccupation with food and drink and their pervasiveness in his imagery and in his letters. The envy may be linked with his very considerable ambition" (p. 71). Williams made even more fanciful use of the theory in stating that the word " 'Garland' . . . would refer to the halo of idealization or alternatively could represent the arms of the baby Keats twined round his mother's neck, imprisoning her in his embrace and trying to keep her for himself" (p. 71). Such reductionism does justice neither to the theory nor to the poem.

DISCUSSION

My efforts at a psychoanalytic interpretation of the poem led me first to rely on the more traditional method of relating the poem to the mental life of its author. I accumulated as much

relevant outside information about the author as possible to try to recreate a context and to insert the personal and poetic products within a fictional mind. This makes it possible to reconstruct some of the more plausible connections and meanings. However, such an effort has its obvious limitations since the valence of any particular element is hard to assess.

I then pursued a second line of investigation, a type of structural analysis, limiting myself largely to a description of the manifest content, particularly the stated affects, the imagery, and the metaphors. This approach initially avoids any dynamic formulations. As there were three different products, I examined the shift and transformations from the dream to the sonnet and finally to the ballad. From such a description one hopes to be in a position to draw some inferences about the meaning of the transformations and their psychological underpinnings.

Finally, I alluded to the reader's reaction to the sonnet and the ballad as additional data on which to base inferences about the creative process.

We are faced with an interesting issue in the case of the sonnet and the ballad. The stimulus for their composition is the dream and its lingering effect upon the poet. We cannot view this stimulus as ordinary day residue, to be sure, as it includes both the manifest content and imagery of the dream and its reverberations in the unconscious. Hamilton (1969) has suggested that "object loss leads to a regressive fusion with the lost object and that the dream becomes an integral part of this process, having originally been utilized by the infant to cope with the loss of direct oral gratification from the mother during sleep. . . . Keats resorted to poetry in an attempt to complete the mourning process and to make restitution for the lost object, most importantly his mother, by externalizing his dreams in the forms of poems" (p. 529).

In the material I have discussed here the role of the dream is complex. In addition to the potent stimulus of the content, the form of the dream becomes a carrier of the lost past. The con-

flicts which gave rise to the dream involve a struggle against awareness of depressive affects; because of their painful nature, these affects found only marginal expression in the dream. The same defensive stance, however, need no longer be maintained in the poem. It is not clear whether Keats was conscious of the intrusion of the depressive affects in his work and whether his humorous gloss in the correspondence following the ballad ("Why four kisses") reflected a defensive stance made necessary by the poem's depressive affects, or whether the depression expressed in the poem was cathartic and allowed the poet to regain distance from what was, after all, a rather dismal set of circumstances. The gloss is a healthy reminder for us to be extremely cautious in our reconstruction of the author's conscious state of mind. It is conceivable that Keats wrote the ballad without being at all interested in or even aware of its personal meaning or its connection with the dream.

I noted earlier that the ecstatic mood of the dream could not be maintained in the sonnet, being replaced by a depressive mood like the one that had plagued the poet for some days prior to the dream. Perhaps the inability to maintain the ecstasy can be viewed as a failure of defense, which interfered with the poet's creativity and led to a stilted, uninteresting poem. Indeed, the inclusion of the barely transformed manifest dream might then represent a failed attempt to recapture the ecstatic mood of the dream. Thus the reader's reaction to this poem might be an indicator of the incomplete assimilation by the poet of the conflicts aroused by the dream.

Something must be said about the several hypotheses suggested by the data and their varying levels of plausibility. The description of the process of transformation from dream to sonnet and ballad does not initially require the importation of psychological hypotheses. This last step is necessary at the point at which I compared the process with dreamwork and alluded to defensiveness, implying the presence of conflict. The affect of depression is mentioned by the poet and is clearly more evident in the ballad than in the sonnet or the dream. In compar-

ison to the ballad the sonnet appears to be too close to the original dream experience. It has not yet been integrated by the poet, and defensive needs have the upper hand. The sonnet incorporates the real content of the manifest dream without identifying it as such, representing it instead as a flight of imagination. It is hardly transformed and the subtle shifts from waking to sleeping which lend an aura of mystery and beauty to the ballad are missing. Three days later, Keats's creative imagination had a chance to play with both the form and content of the experience, and he produced a haunting work of art.

If we compare the contents and affects of the dream passages, we find remarkable shifts. In the "real" reported dream, there is barely an allusion to death except indirectly, via the words "in the midst of all this cold and darkness." In the sonnet, we move closer to depression and to hints of death, first in the form of denial: Keats's idle sprite does not flee to "pure Ida" with its snow-cold skies or to Tempe where Jove grieved. The imagery of the last four lines refers to lovers not needing to tell their sorrows. The lips of the figure are referred to twice as "pale" and the storm is "melancholy." It is as though the sonnet begins the process of undoing of the manic-like defense of the real dream.

In the process of transformation, then, the poet had first to distance himself from too personal an intrusion; he finds a proper poetic mode in order to give free rein to the expression of his feelings in a different register. However, the defense against the depressive affects is still partly maintained in the ballad, through the use of ambiguity, the attribution of weeping to the fairy, and finally the encapsulation of the frightening warning in a literary dream. Perhaps we could consider these devices as successful (formal) defenses allowing the emergence of a creative solution. Finally, the ballad amplifies the theme of death through the emergence of one of its childhood antecedents—castration—which is absent from the manifest dream.

Concerning the personal meaning of the various products—dream, sonnet, ballad—in the context of the author's life situa-

tion, some hypotheses are better supported by data than others. From the point of view of the study of creativity, this is clearly the less interesting part of my discussion as we discover once more the everyday conflicts, frustrations, and anxieties which take their toll of even the most gifted. The themes of love and death are intertwined. The attachment of the poet to Georgiana—his guilt about it and his identification with Paolo—do not require much speculation. The similarity between the manifest content of the dream and the Dante canto suggest that an analogy on some other level is present. The reconstruction of the parallels between Lancelot/Guinevere/Galehaut, Paolo/Francesca/Lancelot, and Keats/Georgiana/journal allows the reconstruction of the nature of Keats's attachment to his sister-in-law. The identification of the fairy with the lost mother is commonplace in fairy tales. What I termed the symbolic interpretation dealing with castration is less well supported by the data. The relationship between object loss and creativity is not a new concept. Certainly, Keats had more than his share of losses and setbacks.

Even though the data are rich, there are a number of unexplained features. It is not clear why certain affectively laden episodes do not obviously find their way into the poetry or the dream. To take but one example, Keats's discovery of the prank played on his deceased brother aroused in him very strong feelings, yet I could detect no obvious representation of that incident. Here I am in disagreement with Pederson-Krag (1951), who felt that the slaying of Argus by Hermes in the sonnet was sufficient evidence for Keats's murderous wishes. The dead brother, Tom, is most likely represented in the third stanza of the ballad, starting with "I see a lily on thy brow." The absence of data hampers our inquiry about the more general meaning of Dante to Keats, surely an interesting aspect.

An issue that needs to be considered is whether the imagery in the poetry following the dream is necessarily dynamically related to it, or whether it could be explained on some other basis —e.g., it is simply characteristic of Keats's fondness for images

of floating. I think the inclusion of the dream in the sonnet and the indication by Keats that he wrote the sonnet with the dream in mind is clear evidence. None of Keats's other poems have detailed dreams as content (as does the ballad), although images of sleep and dreaming are frequent throughout his sonnets and other poems. His poetry is full of allusions to fusion with a loved woman, breast imagery, and references to states of dreaming, sleeping, dying, and transition to waking (Hamilton, 1969). The imagery contained in the ballad and other poems examined here cannot, of course, be attributed only to the effects of the dream. It is in many ways typical of Keats's style, including the style of his correspondence, which I will illustrate briefly. The central image in the dream—the two figures floating in the air—is not unrelated to one of Keats's favorite themes, "indolence," the power of passivity. "If I had teeth of pearl and the breath of lilies, I should call it languor, but as I am I must call it laziness. In this state of effeminacy, the fibers of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain, no unbearable frown" (p. 78). The association of love and death takes this form in a letter to Fanny Brawne in July 1819: "I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks—your loveliness and the hour of my death. O, that I could have possession of them both in the same minute. I hate the world: it batters too much the wings of my self-will and would I could take a sweet poison from your lips to send me out of it. From no others would I take it" (Baker, 1962, p. 71).

This passage returns to the original image of the dream, which can then be seen to express not only a fantasy of love but also of *Liebestodt*, of dying together, or at least of the lover being the beloved executioner. Dying together in the act of love may also have been charged with other meanings for the poet. It should be noted that Georgiana was pregnant during all of this time. Keats, very much concerned with surviving and immortality, may have yearned for a child.

I have said relatively little about the cultural setting of Keats's

works. It would be reductionistic to imply that "La Belle Dame" and the sonnet are nothing but elaborations of the dream thoughts and imagery. Many of their elements need to be placed in the context of the Romantic movement and its various favorite clichés and their particular expression in the poetry of Keats. To take one example, a recurrent theme in Keats's poetry is the abandonment of the narrator/hero by a woman who leaves him perhaps while he was asleep. A famous example[7] of this theme is to be found in the long narrative poem, *Endymion* (composed April-November 1817), where a pair of winged horses carry Endymion and his Indian bride aloft, but as he turns to her she dissolves, Eurydice-like, in the moonlight leaving him alone: ". . . I have clung/To nothing, loved a nothing, nothing seen/Or felt but a great dream!"

The blurring of distinction between dreaming and reality is a recurrent theme of Keats. The last two lines of the "Ode to a Nightingale" express this.

> Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
> Fled is that music—Do I wake or sleep?

The related concern with the potential disappearance of the loved one is expressed in its negative in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

> Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
> Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve:
> She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
> For ever will thou love, and she be fair!

The dread of awakening, which is related to the knight's loitering, is a common theme. The poem "On Death" contains many other themes of the Belle Dame ballad:

> Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream,
> And scenes of bliss as a phantom by?
> The transient pleasures as a vision seem,

[7] I am grateful to M. Frank Alweis for this example.

And yet we think the greatest pain's to die.
How strange it is that man on earth should roam,
And lead a life of woe, but not forsake
His rugged path; nor dare he view alone
His future doom which is but to awake.

The relation between dreaming, waking, sleeping, and poetry always fascinated Keats. In an early work, "Sleep and Poetry," written in 1816, Keats explored the relation between dreams and artistic insight. Sleep is presented as a motherly comforter!

Soft closer of our eyes!
Low murmur of tender lullabies!
Light hoverer around our happy pillows!

Some of the same functions are attributed to poesy: it should be a friend to soothe the cares and lift the thought of man.

In his "reworking" of the poem "Hyperion" into the "Fall of Hyperion—A Dream" shortly before his death, Keats differentiates escapist dreams from the imaginative vision of the poet:

The Poet and dreamer are distinct,
Diverse, sheer opposites, antipodes.
The one pours out a balm upon the world,
The other vexes it.

In the same poem he came back to the issue.

For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
. . . Who alive can say,
'Thou art no Poet—may'st not tell thy dreams'?
Since every man whose soul is not a clod
Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved,
And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.
Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse
Be Poet's or Fanatic's will be known
When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave.

Thus it seems that Keats was concerned with the survival of his works after his death but also doubted his right to consider himself a creator. Are his visions those of the "fanatic"? Is he

deceiving himself? In this light he might have taken particular delight in trying to transform the "fanatic's dream" into a poetic vision. That it took him more than one attempt is understandable. This same concern was expressed in the lovely "Ode to a Nightingale" in the line quoted earlier: "Was it a vision [i.e., a true discovery worthy of being conveyed, a real insight], or a waking dream?" [i.e., a personal product of no value].

In addition to being interested in the relation between dreams and poetry, Keats took great pains to elaborate his own theories about creativity. These have been studied by Leavy (1970). His paper, however, fails to go beyond the manifest content of the poet's statements. Leavy says that the "use of Keats's ideas on creativity depends on our willingness to concede that the poet possessed an exceptional access to the workings of his own mind permitting him to know what he was doing and how he did it. I am therefore quite deliberately using Keats's ideas as if they were themselves, so to speak, 'psychoanalytic interpretations' of the data of experience. I am making almost no attempt to 'analyze' Keats by uncovering the unconscious intentions of his ideas" (p. 176). While we may admire the ability of the poet to share with us his experience, I believe we do not do him justice to treat him as a theoretician without understanding the many meanings of the terms he uses.

My efforts have been in the direction of a limited descriptive approach to the transformation of imagery and affects. This may be disappointing to readers looking for explanations of creativity. It is, however, in line with my belief that applied psychoanalysis is far too burdened with speculations and too devoid of data close to observation. Ideally, such data as I have provided could generate further hypotheses capable of testing. What emerges is a greater respect for the complex process leading to the selection of a title in a foreign language to express the myriad of meanings contained in a very brief dream which closely mirrors a few lines in an acknowledged master's poem.

Before closing, I wish to remind you of Keats's discontent

with the sonnet's failure to capture the mood of the dream. Was he any more satisfied with the ballad? Perhaps the above analysis will help answer this question. If Keats was still trying to recapture the ecstatic quality of the original dream, the answer would have to be an unqualified "no"; if the poet were to judge the result in terms of the poetic effect and beauty of the ballad, the answer would have to be an unqualified "yes!" Finally, what would Keats's reaction have been to the above analysis if I could have sent him my paper, as Freud did with Jensen? Could the answer be found in the quotation I have put at the beginning of my article? It is relevant, as it is included in the letter to George and Georgiana: "Here are the poems, they will explain themselves as all poems should do—without comment" (p. 58). In light of my reconstructions about the possible meaning of their content I can well sympathize with Keats's emphatic statement.

REFERENCES

BAKER, C., Editor (1962). *Keats' Poems and Selected Letters.* New York: Scribner & Sons.

BATE, W. J. (1963). *John Keats.* Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

DANTE. *The Divine Comedy.* Translated by M. B. Anderson. New York: Heritage Press, 1944.

FASS, B. (1979). *La Belle Dame sans Merci. The Aesthetics of Romanticism.* Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press.

HAMILTON, J. W. (1969). Object loss, dreaming and creativity. The poetry of John Keats. *Psychoanal. Study Child*, 24:488-531.

LEAVY, S. A. (1970). John Keats's psychology of creative imagination. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 39:173-197.

PEDERSON-KRAG, G. (1951). The genesis of a sonnet. *Psychoanal. Soc. Sci.*, 3:263-276.

ROLLINS, H. E., Editor (1958). *The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821, Vol. 2.* Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

WILLIAMS, A. H. (1966). Keats' "La belle dame sans merci": the bad-breast mother. *Amer. Imago*, 23:63-81.

9 East 96th St.
New York, N.Y. 10128

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Sylvia Plath and the Failure of Emotional Self-Repair Through Poetry

Martin A. Silverman & Norman P. Will

To cite this article: Martin A. Silverman & Norman P. Will (1986) Sylvia Plath and the Failure of Emotional Self-Repair Through Poetry, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 55:1, 99-129, DOI: 10.1080/21674086.1986.11927132

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1986.11927132

Published online: 20 Nov 2017.

Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LV, 1986

SYLVIA PLATH AND THE FAILURE OF EMOTIONAL SELF-REPAIR THROUGH POETRY

BY MARTIN A. SILVERMAN, M.D. AND NORMAN P. WILL, PH.D.

Creativity serves not only an aesthetic function but also psychological self-repair for the creative artist. The authors examine the failure of Sylvia Plath's efforts to control her suicidal violence and to bridge her isolation from others via the shared affective experience of poetry. At first, she used traditional forms and mediated images, but when she abandoned them for a more personal expressive art, she lost the shaping, controlling devices she had been using for self-containment and self-repair. They were no longer available to her when she underwent a sweeping narcissistic regression following some very stressful life events. Her emotional deterioration ultimately cost her her life.

> The friends that have it I do wrong
> When ever I remake a song,
> Should know what issue is at stake:
> It is myself that I remake.
>
> William Butler Yeats

Dr. Silverman is Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at New York University Medical Center, New York, New York. Dr. Will is Associate Professor of English at Union County College, Cranford, New Jersey.

This is a somewhat revised and expanded version of a paper presented to the conference, World as Mirror: Narcissism in Literature and the Arts, at Miami University of Ohio, June 1983; The Psychoanalytic Association of New York, October 1983; The St. Louis Psychoanalytic Society, November 1983; and the North Carolina Psychoanalytic Society, October 1984.

The authors are especially indebted to Shelley Orgel, Del Earisman, and Pamela Hadas for their sensitive observations and suggestions in discussion of this paper in its original form.

Such as the life is, such is the form.

Samuel Coleridge

Form is never more than an
extension of content.

Robert Creeley (quoted by William Carlos Williams)

Form is never more than a
revelation of content.

Denise Levertov

Poetry can be successful only if it bridges the inner worlds of the creative individual and the audience. It does this by creating an intermediate zone between them in which the inner, emotional experiences of one can resonate with those of the other via their correspondence with symbolic, bridging structures provided by the expressive talents of one of them. The modes, images, personae, themes, and artistic devices of which the intermediate, symbolic bridging structures consist are compromise formations born out of the tension between opposing tendencies within the individual producing them. They can be characterized in terms of four sets of overlapping dualities.

One involves the balance between the creative individual's use of the audience to serve his or her own narcissistic interests and the wish, on the other hand, to give something to others that will give palpable form (as Lionel Trilling has put it) to the demonic forces and inchoate terrors that reside within everyone. Successful coordination of these two seemingly conflicting aims depends not only on the possession of talent and proficiency with the tools of one's craft, but also on the ability to set aside one's own aspirations sufficiently to perceive and fulfill those of the individuals in the audience. To put it another way, creative success requires a fortuitous combination of personal, autobiographical expression and of inhibition of self-expression in order to construct works which, in content and form, offer

sufficient ambiguity to allow the people to whom they are offered to project *their own selves* into them.

The second duality, of dissociative and synthetic functions (Weissman, 1967), involves a balance between destructive and constructive activity, which ultimately derives from the relative strength of aggressive and libidinal inclinations. For a successful outcome to take place, the tendency to change, attack, and break down old perceptions, images, themes, artistic shapes, and forms must be balanced by the urge to rebuild and recombine the old elements into new and at least equally satisfying ones that will be sufficiently welcomed by the receiving audience to give them a chance of surviving the transformation. The death blow dealt to the old must be counterbalanced by enough love of life and of the people who live it to preserve the vitality of the shards it leaves and to reorder them, along with the influx of enough life force of one's own, to produce viable new entities in a process of successful rebirth. For this to be carried out, the creator must have a largely positive attitude toward his/her own self, the audience, the content of his/her own productions, and the art form shared with past or present colleagues that serves as his/her vehicle for creative expression (see Bloom, 1973, 1975). The very act of creating, in fact, often represents an active attempt to overcome destructive inclinations by transforming them into constructive activity.

The third duality involves the interplay between pretense and fantasy on the one hand and the acceptance of reality on the other. The creative artist is able to induce an illusion of the power to transgress the boundaries of reality in order to create a seemingly new reality constructed by the imagination. This process is successful, however, only if the creator and the audience are both willing to acknowledge that what has been created is not truly real, but possesses *only* the symbolic or virtual existence it derives from the temporary willingness of both parties to treat it as though it were real. Such a joint partial suspension of the appreciation of reality creates an illusion of return to the "primordial sharing situation" (Werner and Kaplan, 1963) of the earliest mother-child interaction in which communication

originally developed (see also, Holland, 1968). Siomopoulos (1977) has aptly described the emotional attunement between the poet and the reader or auditor: it arises out of the writer's expression of unconscious wishes or fantasies whose emotional tone is carried in aesthetically satisfying metaphorical images and linguistic forms which activate the emergence of "similar but not identical" wishes and fantasies in the audience. The reader or auditor thus gives meaning to the poet's expressions, just as, earlier in life, "the mother, an integrated sender-receiver of affective messages, transform[ed] the infant, a potential sender-receiver, into a human being capable of affective communication" (p. 507).

To achieve success as a poet, or as a creative individual employing some other art form for affective communication to a responsive audience, one must accept communicating on a level of *symbolic* expression alone. This requires that one be content with interacting on a virtual, symbolic level rather than insisting on actual concrete fulfillment of one's desires in a state of undifferentiated "dual-union" (Hermann, 1936) with an audience-mother who is an all-giving, ever-faithful, never-abandoning provider of the gratification of all one's needs and wishes. One needs to progress from insisting on having one's mouth filled by and with the mother as a constant gratifying presence, to expressing one's needs and desires by filling an admittedly unfilled void with words. Words need to be accepted as a means of communicating symbolically in "a communion of empty mouths" (Abraham and Torok, 1972).

Modell (1970) has addressed himself in an interesting way to the interplay between the second and third dualities described above. He states: "The failure of creativity may be related to a failure to accept the separateness of objects. The successful creator must have some love for and fidelity to tradition outside the self that he transforms in the creative act" (p. 249). He also indicates that "the failure to accept that which exists outside of the self reflects a failure to resolve ambivalence" (p. 246).

The fourth duality involves harmonious interplay between

primary and secondary process mechanisms (see Noy, 1968, 1972). Primary process mechanisms operate in a rapid, freely ranging, fluid, open-ended fashion, well-suited to playful innovation and invention. They are used to generate new and original effects, images, sensations, themes, and expressive forms. By themselves, however, such processes tend toward disorganization and loss of control. Their employment needs to be complemented by the more conservative and organizing secondary process mechanisms that provide organization and stability by imposing rules, regulations, and order upon the dizzying freedoms of primary process functioning. Secondary process functioning provides a check upon the disorganizing, centrifugal, revolutionary effect of the primary process tendency toward spontaneity, originality, and freedom from restraint. It does this by requiring adherence to traditional form and content as cohesive binding forces that maintain order and keep things under control. This duality, between freewheeling innovation and conservative traditionalism, is a superordinate one that is closely connected with and to a significant extent underlies the other three.

Leavy (1970), in the course of a delightful examination of John Keats's observations on the necessity for imaginative freedom and uninhibited openness to sensations and images that defy the restraints of reality and reason, introduces the following caution: "The obvious connecting link is in the comparable state of the ego defenses, and the consequent degree to which the primary process takes over. It is essential, however, not to exaggerate the dominance of the primary process over the secondary in creative imaging, if in fact it ever does dominate. Formal properties of literature exact a control over the imaginal contents and their contextual relations" (p. 186).

THE LIFE AND WORK OF SYLVIA PLATH

When the creative process is successful, the unconscious forces that generate it tend to operate more or less silently and remain

largely hidden from view. When it fails, however, the deeper conflicts and needs that power the urge to create are likely to be rendered more visible. The tragic failure of Sylvia Plath's attempt to employ her creative talents not only for literary production but also for self-control and self-healing can serve as an unfortunate illustration. When we examine the chronological sequence of her *Collected Poems* (1981), her courageously autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar* (1971), the published portions of her *Journals* (1982), and what is known about her actual life, we observe a valiant but unsuccessful attempt to make use of literary talent to resolve the powerful, unconscious, emotional conflicts of a severe narcissistic and depressive disturbance.[1]

The key events of Sylvia Plath's life are well known. Most of them have been summarized by Orgel (1974). She was born in Boston on October 27, 1932. Her first eight years were spent in a seaside town in Massachusetts with her German father (an entomologist, ornithologist, and icthyologist who wrote a notable book on bumblebees), her Austro-American mother, and her two-and-a-half-years-younger brother. When she was eight years old, her father died after a long-standing circulatory disease, which had necessitated the amputation of part of one leg. The family then moved inland to join the maternal grandparents in Wellesley, Massachusetts, where Plath's mother taught shorthand and typing. Little is known about the details of her early life, but there are ample indications that Sylvia experienced her father's death as a terrible loss and abandonment which she could neither accept nor fully overcome.

In her journal entries and her later poetry, she indicated that

[1] After preparing this communication, we came upon two works that contain views which are similar to some of ours on the creative process and on the use of creativity for emotional self-repair. They are *Creativity and Repair: Bipolarity and its Closure*, by Andrew Brink, Hamilton, Ontario: The Cromlech Press, 1982, and *Portraits of the Artist: Psychoanalysis of Creativity and its Vicissitudes*, by John E. Gedo, New York: Guilford Press, 1983. Also see "The Role of Skin in Normal and Abnormal Development with a Note on the Poet Sylvia Plath," by Barrie M. Biven, *Int. Rev. Psychoanal.*, 1982, 9:205–229.

she felt neither integrated, whole, nor capable of fulfilling her very lofty, even godlike ambitions (e.g., see *Journals*, p. 23). She longed for her father as a source of masculine strength that might offset a powerful pull toward dependent merger with her mother at the cost of her own separate, personal identity. In 1950, for example, she wrote to herself:

> You wonder if the absence of an older man in the house has anything to do with your intense craving for male company. . . . You wish you had been made to know botany, zoology and science when you were young. But with your father dead, you leaned abnormally to the "humanities" personality of your mother. And you were frightened when you heard yourself stop talking and felt the echo of her voice, as if she had spoken in you, as if you weren't quite you, but were growing and continuing in her wake, and as if her expressions were growing and emanating from your face (*Journals*, p. 26).

Her adolescence was painful and difficult, despite academic and intellectual brilliance. In 1953, in the summer after her junior year at Smith College, she was awarded a one-month guest editorship at *Mademoiselle* in New York City through a competition sponsored by the magazine. Upon her return home from what should have been a gala and confidence-building experience, Plath made a serious suicide attempt.

In *The Bell Jar*, a fictionalized account of her experience, written during the spring and summer of 1961, she described the heroine, Esther Greenwood, as detached, unproductive, and unable to dispel her intense loneliness, to fill the bottomless well of her emptiness, or to make herself feel attractive and good with food, clothes, adornments, or relationships. Esther fails, in a dramatic and disturbing banquet scene during which she eats everything in sight, to relieve her insatiable hunger. The food, in fact, turns out to be poisonous. She obtains no satisfaction from the beautiful clothes and gifts she receives and ultimately discards them. She is unsuccessful in her attempt to obtain a reassuring definition of herself as a woman in a series of encounters with several very different men. She is unable to

respond fruitfully to offers of warm friendship and assistance from the young women working with her or from the female editor who is available to her as a mentor. She returns home to her mother, whom she finds unempathic, cold, and unyielding when she reaches toward her to be held and soothed. She makes a pilgrimage to the sea (identified clearly in many poems, beginning with "Full Fathom Five" in 1958, with Plath's lost father and lost childhood) and to her father's grave, after which she attempts suicide by crawling into a hole in the wall of her mother's house with a stomach full of sleeping pills. She is rescued in the nick of time and is hospitalized. Her psychiatrist there, a woman (a male psychiatrist has earlier sorely failed her), is described as warm and helpful, but an ambivalent note is introduced in the characterization when the doctor violates Esther's trust by sending her for electric shock treatment, although it poses a threat to her valuable brain.

In reality, Sylvia Plath felt very grateful to her psychiatrist, Dr. Ruth Beuscher, with whom she worked in psychotherapy after her suicide attempt and again in 1959. Plath returned to college, graduated with highest honors, and continued to write poetry and short stories, some of which were published. (She had begun to write poems at the age of nine, a year after her father's death, and wrote intensively in college, using his red thesaurus [Orgel, 1974].)

In February 1956, while attending Cambridge University on a Fullbright fellowship, she met the poet, Ted Hughes. Just a week before meeting him she had written in her diary:

> Today my thesaurus, which I would rather live with on a desert isle than a bible, as I have so often boasted cleverly, lay open, after I'd written the rough draft of a bad, sick poem at 545: Deception; 546: Untruth; 547: Dupe; 548: Deceiver (*Journals*, p. 98).
>
> I am going to the psychiatrist this week, just to meet him, to know he's there. And, ironically, I feel I need him. I need a father. I need a mother. I need some older, wiser being to cry to. I talk to God, but the sky is empty, and Orion walks by and

> doesn't speak. I feel like Lazarus: that story has such a fascination. Being dead, I rose up again, and even resort to the mere sensation value of being suicidal, of getting so close, of coming out of the grave with the scars and the marring mark on my cheek which (is it my imagination?) grows more prominent: paling like a death-spot in the red, windblown skin, browning darkly in photographs, against my grave winter-pallor. And I identify too closely with my reading, with my writing. I *am* Nina in *Strange Interlude*: I *do* want to have husband, lover, father and son, all at once. And I depend too desperately on getting my poems, my little glib poems, so neat, so small, accepted by *The New Yorker* (*Journals*, p. 100).

Two days after meeting Hughes at a party (where, according to *The Journals*, he kissed her and she bit his cheek, drawing blood and thinking of giving herself, "crashing, fighting," to him [p. 113]), she wrote the poem "Pursuit," now the third in her *Collected Poems*. In *The Journals* she described it as a "poem about the dark forces of lust" (p. 116) and dedicated it to Ted. In the poem she transforms him into a "hungry," insatiable panther whose ardor inflames her to submit to his burning, tearing, biting, and killing her, drinking her blood and devouring her flesh. The image of lust evoked within her was a terrifying, sadomasochistic, oral-aggressive, cannibalistic vision indeed.

Two weeks later, on March 10, 1956, after a session with her English psychiatrist, Dr. Davy, she wrote:

> I fear oppressive and crushing forces, if I do not plot and manage and manipulate my path, joining: academic, creative & writing, and emotional & living & loving: writing makes me a small god: I re-create the flux and smash of the world through the small ordered word patterns I make. I have powerful physical, intellectual and emotional forces which must have outlets, creative, or they turn to destruction and waste . . . (*Journals*, p. 131).

Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes were married on June 11, 1956, a few months after they had met. She completed her work at

Cambridge, obtaining an M.A. degree, and the two of them moved to the United States. After a summer at Cape Cod, she began teaching at Smith College, while Ted taught at the University of Massachusetts. She wrote over one hundred poems in 1956 and 1957. But the extent to which Ted became intertwined in her life and work became a source of concern. In a passage in her diary dated March 4, 1957, we read:

> I get quite appalled when I realize that my whole being, in its refusing and refusing after my 3-year struggle to build it flexible and strong again, my whole being has grown and interwound so completely with Ted's that if anything were to happen to him, I do not see how I could live. I would either go mad, or kill myself (*Journals*, p. 156).

And again on July 7, 1958, she wrote:

> My danger, partly, I think, is becoming too dependent on Ted. He is didactic, fanatic—this last I see most when we are with other people who can judge him in a more balanced way than I. . . . It is as if I were sucked into a tempting but disastrous whirlpool. Between us there are no barriers—it is rather as if neither of us—or especially myself—had any skin, or one skin between us and we kept bumping into and abrading each other (*Journals*, p. 245).

Following the year of teaching, the couple remained in Boston for an additional year, living on savings and writing. Plath also worked as a secretary in the records office of a hospital. In the fall of 1958, she returned to her former psychiatrist, Ruth Beuscher. Her journal entries indicate that she considered the therapy very fruitful. They explored her anger at her father for dying and leaving her, her guilt over his death, and the extension of her anger to all men. They examined her hatred of her mother, whom she perceived as unloving, a model of feminine weakness and lack of self-fulfillment. She perceived her mother as entrapping her in an ambivalent, hostile-dependent, symbiotic bind from which she struggled to extricate herself. They discussed her doubts about Ted as a husband and

the fights they had over his attitudes toward work, money, and their writing careers. She vigorously defended her choice of him as a mate, despite her doubts, her recurrent nightmares of his leaving her for other women, and his strong desire to return to England. They explored her conflicts about her career and her femininity and examined her turning to Dr. Beuscher as a second mother with whom she wished to communicate via wordless silence (*Journals*, pp. 264-311).

In December 1958, after a long session with her psychiatrist, Plath wrote:

> Writing is a religious act: it is an ordering, a reforming, a re-learning and reloving of the people and the world as they are and as they might be. A shaping which does not pass away like a day of typing or a day of teaching. The writing lasts: it goes about on its own in the world. People read it: react to it as to a person, a philosophy, a religion, a flower: they like it, or do not (*Journals*, pp. 270-271).

THE TURNING POINT IN SYLVIA PLATH'S WORK

But *The Journals* are also replete with references to intolerance of the rejections Ted Hughes merely shrugged off. She wondered how to live with the insecure livelihood writing was likely to provide, especially if her wish to have a baby were to be fulfilled. Then she wondered, even more significantly, how to live with "what is worst, the occasional lack or loss of faith in the writing itself" (*Journals*, p. 271). A week later, having read Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" and having thought about her own suicide attempt and its connection with her relationship with her mother, she recorded this insight into her motives for writing:

> I felt if I didn't write nobody would accept me as a human being. Writing, then, was a substitute for myself: if you don't love me, love my writing and love me for my writing. It is also much more: a way of ordering and reordering the chaos of experience (*Journals*, p. 280).

Subsequent events seem to have indicated that the tendency to identify herself with her writing was a very dangerous one for her. It seems to us that she would have been better off had she maintained perspective on the separateness of her personal and professional motives. It is our impression that she needed to avoid blurring the distinction between herself and her poetic output and that it was necessary for her to keep faith in her writing as a means of containing her tensions, reshaping and balancing the disorder she perceived within herself, and maintaining contact with the world of writers and readers surrounding her by discovering their common ground of experience.

We learn from her journal entries, however, that, beginning in the middle of 1959, a combination of unfortunate occurrences interfered with her ability to do this. For reasons that are not fully clear, she was beginning to experience increasing doubt about her ability to achieve success as a writer and poet. At the same time, she received dispiriting medical reports that she probably would never be able to express her wishes for feminine creativity by bearing children. There were increasing tensions in her marriage, and she was troubled with painful doubts about her husband, who also was pressuring her to leave Boston, her mother, and her psychiatrist to return to England with him.

At the same time that she had resumed psychotherapy with Dr. Beuscher, she also had attended (together with George Starbuck and Anne Sexton, with whom she met weekly to drink martinis and "hilariously discuss imaginative ways of committing suicide" [●rgel, 1974, p. 269]) a creative writing course given by Robert Lowell. When she became dissatisfied with her poetry in mid-1959, feeling dammed up, choked in her expression, and unsuccessful in her art, she turned away from the traditional, more technically distanced forms she had been employing and began to experiment with the freer and much more personal, more directly self-expressive techniques of Lowell and his group. The degree to which deterioration in her emotional

condition contributed to this shift in her poetic style and approach is a matter of speculation.

The significance of Sylvia Plath's shift in her creative approach can best be appreciated by a careful study of her published works. Her *Collected Poems* (Plath, 1981) covers her productive adult years between 1956 and 1963. The first one, "Conversation Among the Ruins" (1956), is a cool performance in every way. This is an early poem, with a certain stilted diction that makes it sound like an apprentice work carried out by someone caught up in the sound of words, writing, as Ted Hughes tells us she did, with thesaurus in hand, striving for poetic effects through verbal texture and conventional devices tempered by cleverness. Yet the poem clearly demonstrates her potential. The closing question, "With such blight wrought on our bankrupt estate,/What ceremony of words can patch the havoc?" (*Poetry*, p. 21), not only rises to an effective tone but also prophetically captures the theme of doubt in the power of art to sustain order against a destructive tide that was to persist as a central theme of her work to come.

In the poem, she recognizes a powerful destructive force within herself, expressed in the world of a male with a "black look," who "stalks" through her "elegant house . . . rending the net/Of all decorum." The speaker, female and feminine, can only sit, resigned to the frozen helplessness embodied in the image of a Greek statue. This sense of stoic helplessness, of composed and static perfection threatened by destructive forces, was to persist in her writing throughout her career. Here, however, the tension between the powerful but destructive energy of the "wild furies" unleashed by the dark male and the "elegant" order maintained by the female within her is held in balance by the traditional sonnet form, in the ceremonious but one-sided conversation and in the words of the restrained and restraining female. Plath's use of a persona as a distancing device is one she relied on often in her early poems.

The third poem in the collection, "Pursuit" (1956), as we have indicated, was written after she had met Ted Hughes in an

erotic encounter made bloody by a kiss that had become a bite. In her journal entry, she recorded her initial impression of him as of a "big, dark, hunky boy, the only one there huge enough for me, who had been hunching around over women, and whose name I had asked the minute I had come into the room. . . . colossal" (*Journals*, p. 112). She seems to have turned to him as an externalized, projected personification of the dark, masculine destructive force she feared within herself (see Orgel, 1974). The poem is stilted and melodramatic, but it contains a raw power expressed in the frightening images that sprang from her depths:

> Insatiate, he ransacks the land
> Condemned by our ancestral fault,
> Crying: blood, let blood be spilt;
> Meat must glut his mouth's raw wound.
> Keen the rending teeth and sweet
> The singeing fury of his fur . . . (*Poems*, p. 22).

Plath appears to have done more than seek someone outside herself into whom she might project the dangerous, destructive forces she feared within her. She seems to have sought simultaneously to tame and control them via literary expression (two years later she would write, "Fury jams the gullet and spreads poison, but, as soon as I start to write, dissipates, flows out into the figure of the letters: writing as therapy?" [*Journals*, p. 255]). The poem appears to be a conscious attempt to use literary exercise to quell her inner turmoil. She makes use not only of the conventions of poetic form, but also of kinship with other human beings, i.e., her fellow writers Racine, whom she quotes, and Blake, whose poem, "The Tyger," she echoes, to restrain and contain her passions.

In "Tale of a Tub" (1956), in many ways one of her most successful early poems, she already begins to reveal dissatisfaction with her poetry and its self-reparative abilities. Her speaker intends to examine and reveal herself, but cannot directly exhibit her bold and naked self. Yet she is distressed at having to

resort to fictionalization of herself through art. She is displeased at covering her "nude flanks" with literary devices and objects to distancing herself from her observers by placing fabricated personae between herself and them. She seeks containment but bridles at the limitations imposed upon her by the rules of poetic form and style. She finds her naked self repugnant, yet regards the strategy of recreating herself in art as an unsatisfactory evasion, an untruthful artifice. The poem may allude to Wallace Stevens's (1969) "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction," a poem on literary fictions as fabrications, but she appears unable to accept the limitations involved in such a view of poetry because of her unwillingness to settle for merely symbolic communication via images that are removed and detached from her own being.

The paradox of "Tale of a Tub" appears to reach to the heart of Plath's personal and poetic struggles. She sought to be composed and perfect, even as she recognized the disorder and turmoil within her. She was impatient with and distrusted her ability to perfect the skills she needed to establish order and control over her inner chaos. She was uncertain of her ability to establish the contact with humanity she felt she lacked (see *Journals*, pp. 326-327) by sharing her experience with other writers and readers. She feared that she would not be able to achieve perfection through mastery of the tools of poetic expression and believed that only "death" could make her "real," by providing the permanent perfection and order for which she longed.

Plath's poetry remained quite traditional but was unsatisfying to her and received only limited acceptance through the middle of 1959, when she was growing increasingly distressed with her lack of literary success. She narrowly missed winning the Yale Younger Poets prize in May 1959 and was surprised at Dudley Fitts's explanation: "my lack of technical finish . . . was what deterred him, my roughness, indecision, my drift in all but four or five poems. When my main flaw is a machine-like syllabic death-blow. A real sense of Bad Luck. Will I ever be liked for

anything other than the wrong reasons?" (*Journals*, p. 304). The next line in this journal entry refers to the completion of her first published volume of poetry. Comparing the title poem, "The Colossus," (1959), with a neighboring work in *The Collected Poems*, "Poem for a Birthday" (1959), can serve to illustrate the turn in Sylvia Plath's approach to poetry.

"The Colossus" resembles her earlier works more than it does her later style. On one level, it deals with her struggle to cope with her father's death, on another with her struggle to relate to what she calls in *The Journals*, "the buried male muse and god-creator," which she located variously in her father, her husband and her "artist's subconscious" (p. 222). In the poem the speaker clambers about on the head of a huge but shattered statue "with glue pots and pails of Lysol" (*Poems*, p. 129). The content of the first three stanzas offers little with which to discern the underlying meaning, but in the fourth stanza Plath identifies the subject ("O father . . .") and uses the "blue sky of the Oresteia" to allude to the theme of Orestes and Elektra, whose father was killed through their mother's scheming. From *The Journals* we have learned about her relief at Dr. Beuscher's having granted her "permission," during the previous year, to hate her mother. But the emotion underlying the poem's surface is accessible even without knowledge of her personal history. The strategies of allegory and allusion still serve her as she explores her intense personal experience with artistic control.

"Poem for a Birthday" is a very different poem strategically. Her journal entries in 1957 and 1958 (see pp. 151, 163, 218, 242, 296) inform us that she had been growing increasingly frustrated by her failure to open up her deepest experience in her poems. Ted Hughes, in his annotation to the poem in *The Collected Poems* (p. 289), tells us that she had sought "a way out through Robert Lowell's earlier manner of writing" and through Theodore Roethke's work. The seven poems or sections making up "Poem for a Birthday" make a departure in Plath's work, both in the speed of their "miraculous" composition and in their often disjointed and unmediated expression of personal images from her psychic life.

She began the poem five days before her own birthday, when she was herself five months into her first pregnancy. It appears to express her ambivalence toward motherhood (see also *The Journals*, pp. 325-329), the tensions she felt in her creative alternatives, her complex relationship with her mother, and the resonance between the approaching birth of her child and her past experiences with near-death and "rebirth."

As a poet, for the first time she poured her psychic life directly into a poem in an effort not so much to transform it as to recreate it. The images in the poems are stark and raw as the poet struggles back and forth between her perceptions of her mother's pregnancy with her and of her own current pregnancy as devouring mother-child fusions leading to the twin metamorphoses of death and (re)birth. Her journal entry on the day Hughes gives as the date of completion of "Poem for a Birthday" includes:

> Dangerous to be so close to Ted day in day out. I have no life separate from his, am likely to become a mere accessory. . . . What horrifies me most is the idea of being useless: well-educated, brilliantly promising, and fading out into an indifferent middle age. . . . Must never become a mere mother and housewife. Challenge of a baby when I am so unformed and unproductive as a writer. A fear for the meaning and purpose of my life. I will hate a child that substitutes itself for my own purpose: so I must make my own (*Journals*, pp. 326-327).

The forces driving her toward metamorphosis of her creative life, she indicates in section six of the poem, were as inexorable as those shaping the new life within her womb. The poem's sustained metaphor of a metamorphosing caddis worm simultaneously describes her own transformation as a writer and her fear that she was merely the silk case in which the fetus slept until it broke forth from her and robbed her of her (seemingly masculine and phallic) creative power, leaving her "tongueless."

In the final section, Plath harks back to her failed attempt at rebirth through suicide and, in identification both with the mother she has become and the fetus within her, links her

pregnancy with that attempt. She describes her recovery as a process of reconstruction in which she becomes "good as new," but not the truly new she yearns to be. She yearns to escape from the restraints of those who love and rescue her, viewing them as impediments to the free expression of her experience.

"Poem for a Birthday" deals more openly with her deepest experience than anything she had written previously. The poem in many places *is* her experience, expressed in raw, unmediated psychic images. To achieve the immediacy of expression she craved, it seems to us, she sacrificed the contact with others which she so desperately needed. Her awareness of her dilemma is indicated by the following entry made in her journal on the day the poem was completed: "I shall perish if I can write about no one but myself. . . . Writing is my health; if I could once break through my cold self-consciousness and enjoy things for their own sake, not for what presents and acclaim I may receive" (*Journals*, p. 325).

Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes sailed to England in December 1959, although this meant that the treatment with Dr. Beuscher had to be broken off. Plath wrote almost no poetry between "Poem for a Birthday" and the summer of 1960. One of her first compositions at that time was "Stillborn," which reveals her growing dissatisfaction with poems as products distinct from herself, as offspring with which she had to part. "These poems do not live," she complains, despite what she sees as their formal perfection:

> They grew their toes and fingers well enough,
> Their little foreheads bulged with concentration.
> If they missed out on walking about like people
> It wasn't for any lack of mother-love (*Poems*, p. 142).

The poems of her past had been "proper in shape and number and every part," but this was no longer sufficient to her needs; it was no longer what she demanded of poetry. "It would be better if they were alive," she wrote, adding, "and that's what they were." Her first child, a girl, had been born in April, alive

and healthy, and, in seeming competition with her daughter, deriving from apparent narcissistic regression, Plath had come to feel that her poems ceased to "live" when they were separated from her. She seemed to feel that her daughter's independent existence, separate and apart from her, coupled with the simultaneous loss of Dr. Beuscher, her "second mother," robbed her of creative achievement. She could no longer settle for filling the void with merely symbolic words in a communion of empty mouths. A sense of creative energy wasted and of depletion without recompense began to plague her writing life. "They are dead," she says of her poems in the closing lines of "Stillborn," "and their mother near dead with distraction." The growing demand she would make on her verse to fulfill her needs is expressed in the last line, as she complains, "And they stupidly stare, and do not speak of her."

Gone is the sense of poetry as a reordering and shaping of the chaos of experience. Gone is the sense of poetic purpose she had articulated while she was seeing Dr. Beuscher. She now required a direct expression of herself *in poems that spoke of her.* She chose to eliminate the distance she formerly had established between herself and her poems by the use of personae and other traditional poetic forms and techniques. Her tendency to identify with her poems and to view their acceptances or rejections as measures of her self-worth was exacerbated by this theoretical and strategic shift in her view of the function of poetry.

THE IMPACT OF DISASTROUS LIFE EXPERIENCES

If all had gone well in her life from this point on, perhaps she might have recovered from the narcissistic regression that had contributed to her abandonment of poetry as an organizing, self-controlling, confidence-building, creative means of bridging the gap between herself and others. She might have been able to extricate herself from the dangerous position she

had assumed when she began using poetry to pour herself out in an uncontrolled torrent of raw, unrestrained, narcissistic-exhibitionistic self-revelations, poetry which expressed her murderous, narcissistic rage (see Kohut, 1972) and which would disturb and distress her readers and even incite some to self-destruction. These later poems would fail to restrain, or to rid her of, the terrifying destructiveness to which she felt inclined: she would re-incorporatively identify with the objects of her rage (see Orgel, 1974) as she gave birth to them in her poetry, instead of using poetic expression to regulate her rage or extrude it from her being.

Unfortunately, however, a series of disasters occurred in her life. In February 1961 she suffered a miscarriage. The following month she spent a week in a hospital undergoing an appendectomy. She became pregnant again and caried her child through a bitterly cold, hard winter. In January 1962 she gave birth to her second child, a son (thus replicating the sequence of her own and her brother's births). She was able to use her literary skills to express the emotions stirred in her by these experiences. Although her output had been very low in 1960 (only twelve poems, a sharp decrease from her average of thirty per year from 1956 through 1959), it went up to twenty-one in 1961, before exploding to fifty-six in 1962. She responded to the miscarriage by writing three poems, "Morning Song," "Barren Women," and "Heavy Women" in February 1961. In the first, she acknowledged the separate, independent existence, the absolute otherness of the first child she had borne. In the second, she suffered from her emptiness in an exemplification of her tendency to derive no pleasure from her successful creations but to identify with her failures as evidence of her lack of self-worth. In the third, she pictured herself as excluded from the enviable "archetypal" joys and sorrows, rewards and disappointments of motherhood, disparaging it as a merely passive form of creativity.

The appendectomy experience also generated a trio of poems, "In Plaster," "Tulips," and "I Am Vertical," in 1961. In

these poems, written concurrently with *The Bell Jar* during the spring and summer of 1961, she seems to have expressed a smoldering rage at having been accorded insufficient attention and care from the mother-surrogate nurses whom she describes as passing her by without notice like the cold, ungiving parent she perceived her own mother to have been. Her mood of sulky, cold, bitter isolation persisted in the dozen poems she wrote during the rest of that year, though the last few show a stirring of interest in the pregnancy that culminated, in January 1962, in the birth of her second child.

In a long dramatic poem, "Three Women" (1962), she again took up the recurring tensions childbearing stirred in her. A wounded sense of lost union, robbing and deforming her, rendering her empty and suicidally enraged, permeates this long poem, blotting out a weak attempt to find solace and reparation in a return, with her attractiveness as a woman restored to her, to a loved and loving husband. The poems that followed during the next few months reflect a regressive, narcissistic withdrawal into a deepening blackness, emptiness, and isolation, as exemplified by "Little Fugue" and "Crossing the Water" (April 1962). The figures of other people all but completely drop out of her poems, and a terrifying, murderous rage appears. In "Elm" she writes:

> I am inhabited by a cry.
> Nightly it flaps out
> Looking, with its hooks, for something to love.
>
> I am terrified by this dark thing
> That sleeps in me;
> All day I feel its soft, feathery turnings, its malignity.
>
> Clouds pass and disperse.
> Are those the faces of love, those pale irretrievables?
> Is it for such I agitate my heart?
>
> I am incapable of more knowledge.
> What is this, this face
> So murderous in its strangle of branches?—

Its snaky acids kiss.
It petrifies the will. These are the isolate, slow faults
That kill, that kill, that kill (*Poems*, p. 193).

In the summer, her mother came to England for a long visit, possibly stirring up her old fears that the parent would appropriate her latest creations. But the most serious stress came when Plath discovered that her husband was having an affair with another woman (Butscher, 1976, p. 313; *Letters Home*, p. 540). Her poem "Words heard, by accident, over the phone," dated 11 July 1962, vividly records her horror and her rage. The tensions following this discovery grew during the summer, a time when she seems to have been paralyzed poetically. Only one other poem, "Poppies in July," expressing a wish for escape into drug-induced sleep, appeared during July, and only one in August, "Burning the Letters," presumably Ted's letters. September produced only two poems. In "For a Fatherless Son" she announces to her infant that he "will be aware of an absence, presently" (*Poems*, p. 205). The other, "A Birthday Present," expresses a terrifying suicidal rage in which she states that death is the only gift she seeks:

I do not want much of a present, anyway, this year.
After all I am alive only by accident.

I would have killed myself gladly that time any possible way.
Now there are these veils, shimmering like curtains,
The diaphanous satins of a January window
White as babies' bedding and glittering with dead breath. O ivory! (p. 206).

And later in the same poem she states:

If you only knew how the veils are killing my days.
To you they are only transparencies, clear air.

But my god, the clouds are like cotton.
Armies of them. They are carbon monoxide.

Sweetly, sweetly I breathe in.
Filling my veins with invisibles, with the million

Probable motes that tick the years off my life (p. 207).

Apparently, the loss of this man, who represented not only the reincarnation of the powerful father for whom she yearned and whose loss twenty-two years earlier had been intolerable, but also the externalization of the dark, destructive rage within her that posed a threat to her existence, was the final blow. In October 1962, Plath and Hughes separated. He moved out, leaving her to cope with the two infants. Despite the demands of the two children and a bout with influenza that gave rise to the poem, "Fever 103," she poured out twenty-five poems in October alone. During this outburst, she wrote many of her best and most admired poems, producing the bulk of what became the *Ariel* volume. Significantly, the more traditional rhythmic and structural elements of many of these poems are not evident from the text alone but can be heard in the sound recordings of Plath reading her poems to an audience. Her style moved from what John Frederick Nims (1976) has called "the elegant . . . written language" of *The Colossus* to a more immediate spoken rhythm and diction. Nims further points out that Plath's later stanzaic forms often do not coincide with her rhyme patterns; "each goes its separate way," he notes, "with a kind of schizophrenic indifference to the other." What discipline remains in her poems is, he argues, "a source of discipline that is personal and internal: it is for her, not for us" (p. 144). It might almost be said that Plath's poems can no longer stand alone in this regard, but depend upon her actual presence, her personal interpretive reading of them, to convey their formal elements to others.

The *Ariel* poems include "The Arrival of the Bee Box" and "Stings," in which she expresses murderous rage toward those who, in one way or another, have left her: her children, her husband, and her bumblebee-expert father. Also included is

"Daddy," the famous poem in which she describes her ambivalent longing to be reunited with the two fathers who had abandoned her—the original one she lost at the age of eight and the replacement for him she married later on—to submit to their cruel power in a masochistic, erotic attempt to once more join with them, as well as to catch up with and kill them. In the poem, she struggles against the homicidal-suicidal wish to merge with her victims in death by transforming them into Nazi storm troopers who personify her split-off, projected rage as an exciting, masculine force bent on her destruction.

"Ariel," the title poem, appears to capture Plath's regressive longing to abandon herself to her long-standing yearning to go back in time, to melt into her mother's body as a fetus to be nurtured and protected in blissful, thoughtless unconsciousness. Yet she seems to be struggling against this "suicidal" wish to become the "child's cry" that "melts in the wall" (*Poems*, p. 239). The name of the horse into whose flanks she presses her own body seems to refer not only to her mother's name, Aurelia, but also to Ariel of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, who longs to be released from his servitude so that he can once again become a free spirit of the air. The struggle appears to fail, as the poet's attempt to order and control her suffering by creating a constructive metaphor of horse and rider collapses, with a shift to a direct recording of psychic images in a new identification, with "arrow" and "dew," that records the terrible actuality of the dissolution of a self that can become real only in death. The powerful closing lines mark the identification of the poet and the poem in a sweeping surrender to fusion and death:

> And I
> Am the arrow,
>
> The dew that flies
> Suicidal, at one with the drive
> Into the red
>
> Eye, the cauldron of morning (pp. 239-240).

The sometimes broken syntax in the poem, the disjointed images, the disjunction of rhythm and lineation, the collapse and blurring of metaphor, the confusion of poem and self reflect, as do similar movements in "Daddy," the power of Plath's disturbance breaking through the regulating forms she has needed so desperately at times of crisis.

Plath turned thirty on the day she wrote "Ariel." In "Lady Lazarus," written at about the same time, she expresses a cold and smirking, yet resigned submission to the inevitability of the third of the suicide attempts she claims in the poem to manage at the end of each decade. Through multiple reference to her poem, "Daddy," she indicates that vengeful reunion with her abandoners is her object.

During November, and then in London where she moved with her children in December despite the bitterly cold winter, the worst in one hundred forty-six years, she wrote feverishly, sometimes producing several poems in one day. In them, she moved inexorably closer to abandonment of herself to her murderous, devouring oral rage, which she turned suicidally upon herself in an apparent fantasy of oral ambivalent fusion with her primal mother. She depicted herself as a victim whom she would let be killed by "Dame Kindness." She gave up on "Words," which she now depicted, in a poem of that title, as dried up, empty sounds of distant axe-strokes and of the hoof-taps of unseen, riderless horses, no longer worth the empty mouth in which they would have to echo.

Her last poem, written six days before her suicide, provides an ironic unity to her *Collected Poems* as it brings to permanent perfection the helpless woman of the first poem, "Conversation among the Ruins." It begins:

> The woman is perfected.
> Her dead
>
> Body wears the smile of accomplishment,
> The illusion of a Greek necessity

Flows in the scrolls of her toga,
Her bare

Feet seem to be saying:
We have come so far, it is over (p. 272).

The next lines suggest the possibility that her suicide was intended not only to wreak vengeance on the men who had abandoned her and to ambivalently fuse with and simultaneously destroy the mother in her, but also to spare her children from the murderous rage she felt toward them:

Each dead child coiled, a white serpent,
One at each little

Pitcher of milk, now empty.
She has folded

Them back into her body as petals
Of a rose close when the garden

Stiffens and odors bleed
From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower (pp. 272-273).

Six days later, after setting out a slice of buttered bread and a cup of milk for each of her children, Sylvia Plath took her life by turning on the gas and putting her head into the oven.

Alvarez (1972) was of the opinion that she did not intend to die, but arranged things so that she would be rescued by the *au pair* girl who would have arrived earlier that day had she not been delayed. His thesis is supported by the recurrent equation in Plath's poetry of suicide with rebirth and by her repeated poetic assertions that she could rise phoenix-like from her own ashes. In "Lady Lazarus" she wrote:

I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die (p. 244).

A little further on she said:

Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day
To the same place, the same face, the same brute
Amused shout:

'A miracle!'
That knocks me out (pp. 245-246).

If Alvarez was right, we might be permitted to speculate further that one unconscious motivation behind her suicidal act was to extricate herself from her predicament and obtain the meaningful psychiatric help she had been unable to find in England. Perhaps she hoped to repeat her experience of ten years earlier of hospitalization for a brief course of somatic therapy followed by the entry of her "second mother," Dr. Beuscher, into her life. If this is so, she chose a risky and magical approach that based itself on the supposition that she could omnipotently control the world about her, space and time, life and death—a deadly miscalculation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

What works best for one creative artist is not necessarily what is optimal for another. The problems involved in successfully realizing creative goals vary from one instance to another, as does the matrix of the personal struggles and conflicts that help to generate the creative urge in each artist and that are in turn affected by the creative activity carried out. For Sylvia Plath, the

creative urge and the need for literary success were intertwined with her need to overcome her depressive, narcissistic withdrawal from the world of people around her, to check and ameliorate her strongly aggressive, destructive urges via constructive activity, and to stem her regressive pull toward merger and fusion with the objects of her ambivalent feelings. Her poetry afforded her an opportunity to establish order and control over the raw desires and chaotic, affective storms that tore her apart; she could thus externalize and cast them into figurative shapes, placed at a distance from her central core. She could then submit these figures to the ordering and controlling influence of measured, organized and organizing, secondary process mechanisms.

Despite her doubts about either the personal or literary success of her efforts, she was increasingly adept at employing traditional forms and figures to achieve her ends. A series of defeats shook her professional confidence, however, at the same time that medical reports cast doubt on her ability to bear children. These frustrations contributed to blurring the distinction between her ability to create literarily and to create bodily, posing a dual threat to her vital need to be creative. She had increasing doubts about the viability of the marriage she had entered, in large part for unconscious, irrational reasons (including creating the illusions of exteriorizing the destructive rage within her and of rediscovering the idealized source of masculine strength she had lost when her father died early in her life). There was a mounting threat of being wrenched away from her home, mother, and psychiatrist (her idealized, libidinized "second mother"). One result was that she became anxious and lost faith in the conventional poetic methods she had been employing. She abandoned them in favor of the less distanced, less controlled and controlling, but more personal and self-expressive mode that not only did not afford her the personal protections she needed but pulled her in directions that could only heighten her inner turmoil.

Her literary productivity diminished as she entered into a

phase of bearing real, live children instead poetic brainchildren (a shift which frightened her), but a series of dramatic, increasingly stressful life events, culminating in abandonment by the husband who had such powerful unconscious meaning to her, stimulated her to a literary outflow that increased until it reached torrential proportions, simultaneously with an apparent deepening regression into a depressive, narcissistic rage of major proportions. The art form she employed at that time could no longer serve her emotional needs. Instead of opposing her narcissistic withdrawal, extruding and exerting formal control and order over her raging passions, and checking her tendency toward ambivalent destructive fusion with the objects of her primitive desire, it accentuated the dangerous trends within her. She became more and more removed from her readers, whom her poetry tended increasingly to agitate, disturb, and incite violently rather than inspire or delight, and she identified with the increasingly virulent, destructive images her pen created. Unable to check the self-destructive tide in which she was caught and unable to obtain effective outside help, she was swept inexorably toward suicide.

We cannot, from the surface content of Sylvia Plath's poetry, read off what took place within her unconscious the way one can travel from the expressions of an analysand on the couch (which are offered for the *purpose* of obtaining access to unconscious currents), via associative pathways and analysis of resistances, to the unconscious sources to which they are linked. And so little is known about her early life that there is room only for speculation. We do not believe, in other words, that we can analyze someone from the literary works she produces, but if conditions are right we certainly can learn a great deal about that person.

We have access to richly informative revelations Sylvia Plath made in her diary about what she was able to observe of the connection between her work and her personal problems. In the unabashedly autobiographical novel she wrote and in the self-revelatory poetic style she adopted for her later poetry, she

inevitably revealed much about herself. And in her journal entries and Ted Hughes's annotations to her *Collected Poems* we are told a great deal about the writing of her poetry and its interdigitation with the very dramatic life experiences she was going through at the time.

The net effect is a wealth of information that permits the drawing of meaningful conclusions about the effects of her working methods on her relationship with herself and with her readers. We are helped to understand how it is that her longstanding struggle to control and make constructive use of the aggressive tensions within her and to use her poetry to free herself from her tendency toward primitive merger and incomplete self-definition ultimately failed, so that her clinical course eventuated in suicide. We are assisted in comprehending why she has had such a powerful, at times even dangerous effect on adolescents and college students that her later work is a source of concern to those who teach courses in modern literature. We are guided toward a deeper grasp of the power afforded by literary form and structure to order, shape, and control the powerful surges of disorganizing, disruptive, and potentially destructive, unconscious emotional storms that impel creative artists to find the means to control them and help to generate creative activity. And this is not an inconsiderable reward for the effort expended.

REFERENCES

ABRAHAM, N. & TOROK, M. (1972). Introjection-incorporation: mourning *or* melancholia. In *Psychoanalysis in France*, ed. S. Lebovici & D. Widlöcher. New York: Int. Univ. Press, 1980. pp. 3-16.

ALVAREZ, A. (1972). *The Savage God. A Study of Suicide*. New York: Random House.

BLOOM, H. (1973). *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press

——— (1975). *A Map of Misreading*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

BUTSCHER, E. (1976). *Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness*. New York: Seabury.

FREUD, S. (1905). Three essays on the theory of sexuality. *S.E.*, 7.

——— (1914). On narcissism: an introduction. *S.E.*, 14.

——— (1923). The ego and the id. *S.E.*, 19.

GROLNICK, S. A., BARKIN, L. & MUENSTERBERGER, W., Editors (1978). *Between Reality and Fantasy: Transitional Objects and Phenomena*. New York: Aronson.

HERMANN, I. (1936). Clinging—going-in-search. A contrasting pair of instincts and their relation to sadism and masochism. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 1976, 45:5-36.

HOLLAND, N. N. (1968). *The Dynamics of Literary Response*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

KOHUT, H. (1972). Thoughts on narcissism and narcissistic rage. *Psychoanal. Study Child*, 27:360-400.

KRIS, E. (1952). *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*. New York: Int. Univ. Press.

LEAVY, S. A. (1970). John Keats's psychology of creative imagination. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 39:173-197.

MODELL, A. H. (1970). The transitional object and the creative act. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 39:240-250.

NIMS, J. F. (1976). The poetry of Sylvia Plath: a technical analysis. In *The Art of Sylvia Plath: A Symposium*, ed. C. Newman. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, pp. 136-152.

NOY, P. (1968). A theory about art and aesthetic experience. *Psychoanal. Rev.*, 55:623-645.

——— (1972). About art and artistic talent. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 53:243-249.

ORGEL, S. (1974). Sylvia Plath: fusion with the victim and suicide. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 43:262-287.

PLATH, S. (1971). *The Bell Jar*. New York: Bantam Books, 1972.

——— (1977). *Letters Home*, ed. A. S. Plath. New York: Bantam Books.

——— (1981). *The Collected Poems*, ed. T. Hughes. New York: Harper & Row.

——— (1982). *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, ed. T. Hughes & F. McCullough.

SIOMOPOULOS, G. (1977). Poetry as affective communication. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 46:499-513.

STEVENS, W. (1969). Notes toward a supreme fiction. In *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*. New York: Knopf, pp. 380-408.

STIERLIN, H. (1976). Liberation and self-destruction in the creative process. In *Psychiatry and the Humanities, Vol. 1*, ed. J. H. Smith. New Haven/London: Yale Univ. Press, pp. 51-72.

WEISSMAN, P. (1967). Theoretical considerations of ego regression and ego functions in creativity. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 36:37-50.

WINNICOTT, D. W. (1953). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. A study of the first not-me possession. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 34:89-97.

WERNER, H. & KAPLAN, B. (1963). *Symbol Formation. An Organismic-Developmental Approach to Language and the Expression of Thought*. New York: Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Martin A. Silverman, M.D.
551 Ridgewood Rd.
Maplewood, NJ 07040

Norman P. Will, Ph.D.
92 Hawthorne Ave.
Glen Ridge, NJ 07028

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Toward a Psychoanalytic Iconography

Harry Trosman

To cite this article: Harry Trosman (1986) Toward a Psychoanalytic Iconography, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 55:1, 130-167, DOI: 10.1080/21674086.1986.11927133

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1986.11927133

Published online: 20 Nov 2017.

Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LV, 1986

TOWARD A PSYCHOANALYTIC ICONOGRAPHY

BY HARRY TROSMAN, M.D.

In describing the principles of psychoanalytic iconography, I follow a historical approach, pointing out that the rudiments of such an interpretive mode are present in Freud's works on Leonardo and on the Moses *of Michelangelo and reach a classical expression in Kris's paper on Messerschmidt. Some recent scholarly studies of works of art rest on the incorporation of psychoanalysis into contemporary views of the nature of man, thus permitting a level of analysis of art not previously attained. The interface between a psychoanalytic understanding of the artist's life and preoccupations and the unconscious content present in the work itself continues to offer an opportunity for refining the analytic tool as an instrument for understanding aesthetic response and creativity.*

In this paper I shall examine and evaluate psychoanalytic contributions to the understanding of the visual arts. "Iconography" is the useful term proposed by Panofsky (1962) to differentiate the study of the subject matter and meaning in a work of art from a concern with form and style. Although I do not wish to eliminate style as a source of psychoanalytic interest and have discussed style elsewhere (Trosman, 1985), in this paper I propose narrowing the field to more common types of psychoanalytic studies. When I refer to psychoanalytic iconography, my aim is to offer a mode of interpretation for specific works of art which rests on the understanding of psychoanalytic theory, method, and empirical findings. Today we may find it difficult to delimit exactly what is "psychoanalytic" when we examine some critical approaches, since psychoanalysis has be-

come not only a theory, a method of investigation, and a body of knowledge but also an intellectual attitude that permeates contemporary cultural life. Thus, although some current criticism and historical studies are not referred to as psychoanalytic by their authors (e.g., Heller, 1984; Posner, 1982; L. Steinberg, 1983), I believe that they rest on psychoanalytic principles.

First, I shall trace the development of this field by concentrating on Freud's monograph on Leonardo da Vinci (1910), his paper on the *Moses* of Michelangelo (1914a), and Kris's (1952) classic study on Messerschmidt. I shall then proceed to a description of the principles which underlie psychoanalytic iconography and shall refer to specific studies and works of art which illustrate the application and limitations of these principles.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PSYCHOANALYTIC ICONOGRAPHY

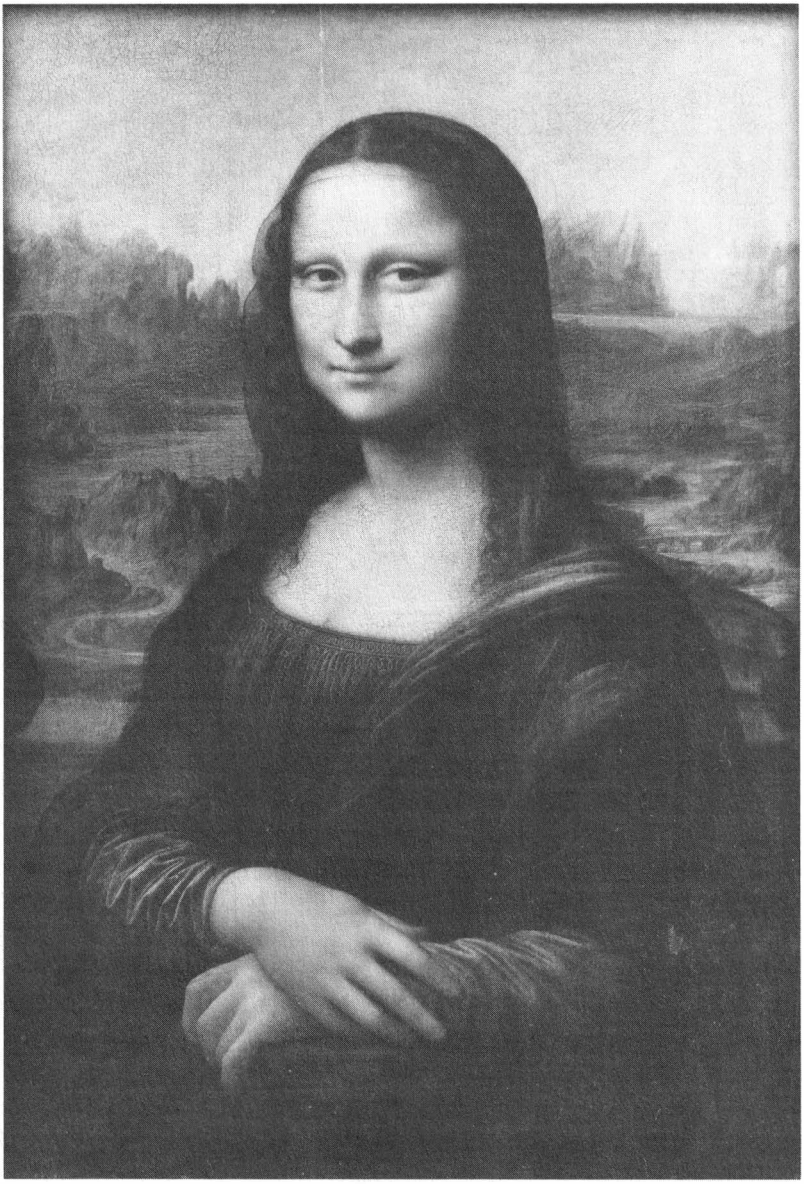
Any attempt to examine the psychoanalytic contribution to understanding the visual arts begins with a discussion of Freud's monograph on Leonardo (1910). In his study, Freud placed the emphasis on Leonardo's childhood memory as a nodal point for a discussion of Leonardo's personality. Screen memories were considered to be clinical psychoanalytic data par excellence and for some ten years had been seen as a legitimate source for forming psychoanalytic inferences (Freud, 1899). Until this time works of art in their own right had a less legitimate position as data in the psychoanalytic canon. Admittedly, several times prior to 1910, Freud had referred to works of art—such as *Oedipus Rex* or Jensen's *Gradiva* (Freud, 1900, 1907)—but such references had been largely illustrative of a formulation already based on clinical grounds. Until the publication of the Leonardo book, there had been no attempt to examine a work of art as a means for enlarging the understanding of the personality of the artist.

It should also be stated here that even when Freud did examine works of art in the monograph on Leonardo, he did so primarily in order to make a biographical point. Thus, it is debatable whether Freud's references to the paintings of Leonardo were intended as a form of psychoanalytic criticism which adds understanding to the work itself independent of biographical reflections. Freud made references in the Leonardo book to the paintings of the *Mona Lisa* (Illustration 1), the *Madonna and Child with St. Anne* (Illustration 2), *St. John the Baptist* (Illustration 3), and the *Bacchus* (Illustration 4) in the context of describing a preoccupation in the mind of the artist. In the Leonardo book, Freud thus opened up the problem of psychoanalytic art criticism by considering the work itself as an expression of the individual artist's preoccupation.

In the intervening three-quarters of a century, Freud's book on Leonardo has been subjected to much critical evaluation (Maclagan, 1923; Wohl and Trosman, 1955; Schapiro, 1956; Eissler, 1961; Farrell, 1963; Gombrich, 1965; Wolheim, 1970; Lichtenberg, 1978). Almost every piece of evidence which Freud used in order to substantiate his view of Leonardo's personality has been called into question, either by further historical research or by subsequent psychoanalytic findings. This being the case, one might well question what continues to be valuable in the book and what is a legitimate legacy for current research and further studies.

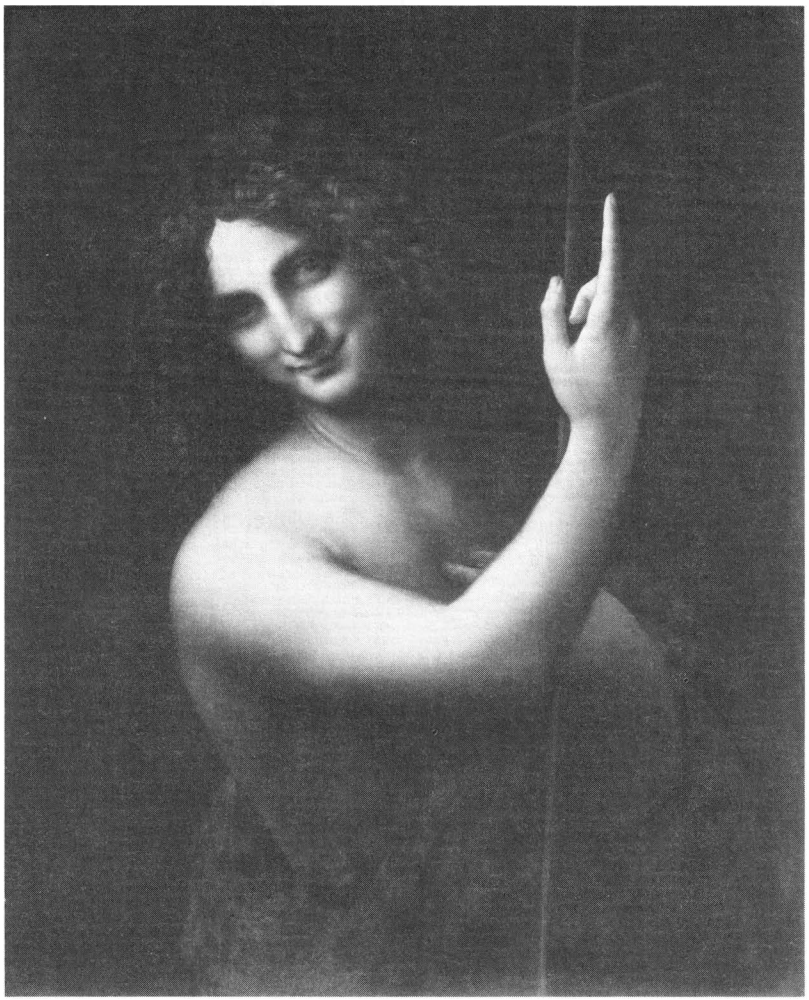
We recall that in his monograph Freud first presented the enigmatic quality of Leonardo's personality, pointing out that he was poorly understood by his contemporaries; they did not understand why he could not finish his artistic works or concern himself with elevating his status as a true artist should. Instead, he seemed to be desultory in his artistic interests and neglected them in favor of apparent trivialities, such as experimental studies or naturalistic and scientific explorations of nature.

Freud reasoned that much of Leonardo's personality was explicable in the analysis of a childhood memory of a vulture opening his mouth with its tail and striking him many times

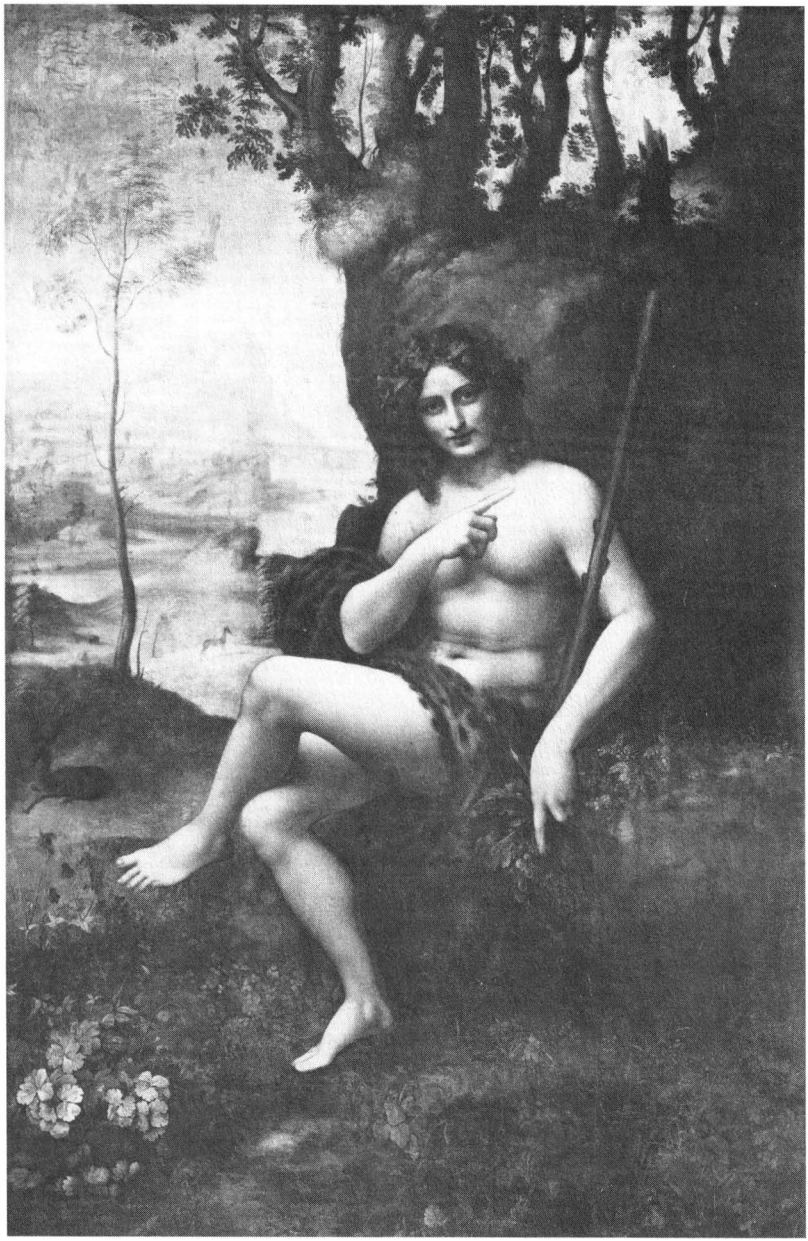


1. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa* (Paris: Louvre).

2. Leonardo da Vinci, *Madonna and Child with St. Anne* (Paris: Louvre).



3. Leonardo da Vinci, *St. John the Baptist* (Paris: Louvre) Alinari/Art Resource.



4. Leonardo da Vinci, *Bacchus* (Paris: Louvre) C.F.L. Giraudon/Art Resource.

against his lips while he was lying in the cradle. Building on the little that was known about Leonardo's childhood and birth, including his illegitimacy, Freud reasoned that Leonardo spent the initial period of his life in a close oedipal attachment with his mother, an abandoned peasant girl, before he was taken from her and admitted to the home of his newly married father. Thus he was exposed to two maternal figures, his biological mother and a stepmother who had no children of her own. Leonardo puzzled about sexual matters and had an early fantasy of parthenogenetic birth, endowing his mother with both masculine and feminine qualities. His intense oedipal involvement led to an increase in sexual curiosity and inhibition as far as his overt sexual behavior was concerned. But he succeeded in sublimating his sexual interests in the direction of scientific curiosity and interest in nature. For many years, Leonardo found himself in conflict between his artistic and scientific interests; he pursued a course of continuing commitment to science until sometime in his fifties when he met La Gioconda. She reactivated his childhood memories of his abandoned mother because of a smile which she shared with the peasant girl of Leonardo's distant past. Leonardo became intensely immersed in painting the *Mona Lisa* in order to capture her personality and the fleeting nature of her smile. Subsequently, he developed an interest in depicting the two mothers of his childhood, who then appeared in the *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*. He continued an interest in depicting the smile and the androgynous nature of his mother in the later paintings of the *St. John* and the *Bacchus*.

In addition, Leonardo maintained an ambivalent relationship to his father, who had interfered with his intense mother attachment, and he was in conflict over the resultant hostile feelings. He established a reactive identification with father surrogates, such as Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan, and he shared with both his father and the Duke the sense that he, like them, was unable to finish tasks that he had started. The accusation posterity brought against him he expressed about Sforza:

". . . none of the works that he undertook was completed" (Freud, 1910, p. 122).

As I stated previously, Freud in the Leonardo book was primarily interested in the utilization of psychoanalysis for biographical purposes. Thus, the data that he used for his synthesis of Leonardo's personality was the meager data of historical documentation and the findings of about twelve years of clinical psychoanalytic work. He could use, of course, only the historical data that was available to him at the time. But since the writing of his original monograph, questions have been raised about both his psychoanalytic formulations and the historical evidence, in the light of new data.

As early as 1923 (Maclagan, 1923), it was pointed out that Freud had made a serious error in his description of Leonardo's early memory. The bird that Leonardo had referred to—*nibbio* in Italian—was not a vulture but a kite. Freud had erred in using Maria Herzfeld's German translation from the Italian, which had misidentified the bird. In spite of Freud's use of Italian in other places in the book and his apparent knowledge of the language, he did not check the Herzfeld translation. Probably out of his own wish to support his thesis about the meaning of the vulture as both an Egyptian and a Medieval symbol of parthenogenetic impregnation, he was led astray. By not pursuing the psychoanalytic meaning associated with kites, about which Leonardo wrote in other contexts, Freud missed an important piece of evidence, which would have suggested an alternate view of Leonardo's relationship with his mother.

In addition, Freud was at the beginning of his investigation of genetic antecedents for male homosexuality and had not yet had a wide experience with patients of this type. He therefore tended to overestimate one particular constellation, namely, overattachment to the mother and abandonment by the father, with a formation of a feminine identification as a result of the intense maternal attachment. Through the subsequent years, alternate dynamic and genetic explanations have been offered

for other types of homosexuality, and it is quite possible that such explanations—for example, the situation which governed the early life of Michelangelo—might equally well have applied in Leonardo's case (Wohl and Trosman, 1955; Liebert, 1983).

Thirdly, at the time Freud wrote his book he was unaware of an important piece of historical documentation which appeared in 1939 (Möller). A tax return of Leonardo's grandfather was discovered which indicated that Leonardo was present in the home of his grandfather shortly after his birth, and the grandfather lists the names of the ten godparents who were present at the time of the baptism. Thus, it is likely that Leonardo was not abandoned at birth by his father nor shortly after his birth by his mother. In addition, subsequent work has added further dimensions to the view of Leonardo's personality that Freud had presented and has called into doubt the whole issue of a conflict between a scientific and an artistic part to his personality, as well as the issue of Leonardo's lack of interest in Christianity and the orthodox view of religion of the time. Additional historical, social, and psychological meanings have been legitimately ascribed to the early memory. The smile in Leonardo's work has been further explicated as a not unique contribution by Leonardo himself. The particular contribution Leonardo made to Renaissance art has been given a much more specific and precise description than the one that Freud attributed to him (Clark, 1967; Schapiro, 1956).

After such thorough criticism, we may well ask what value we can continue to attribute to Freud's book and what the legacy is for the psychoanalytic iconographer who approaches the visual arts today. It is paradoxical that many of the art historians who have been critical of Freud's approach have at the same time praised the boldness of his contribution. None have suggested an alternate and equally encompassing view of Leonardo's personality. Many would agree with the general psychoanalytic view, i.e., that the work of art is a product of personality in depth—as long as this view is presented as a general statement.

The art historical approach has been concerned primarily with seeing works in the context of an artistic tradition and has conceived the shaping of a work of art in terms of a rationalistic psychology dedicated to problem solving and concern with formal problems. *Pari passu* there has been an interest in considering the work as an expression of the creator's personality. "That impulses from the depths of the psyche feed into works of art is not in doubt," states the art historian (L. Steinberg, 1984, p. 45), even though there is incredulity about specific psychodynamic and genetic formulations.

There are at least two fundamental principles which were proposed in the Leonardo book and which continue to maintain a place in psychoanalytic art criticism to this day. First, Freud viewed an original art work in the context of a critical life experience in the life of the artist. His crucial example in the Leonardo book is the view that, since the *Mona Lisa* was a portrait from which Leonardo could not part—he kept the picture for the rest of his life—the meeting with this woman was a significant psychological experience in Leonardo's life, and this meaningful psychological experience affected the direction of his work. Here Freud could point not only to the importance of both the sitter and the painting for Leonardo but also to the critical responses of the centuries, which suggest a shared universality in both the experiences and the responses. Freud provided an explanation for the importance that the ages have attached to this icon, an explanation derived from the emotional importance we attach to the early mother-child bond.

A second contribution of Freud's monograph is to suggest a psychological link with the issue of motif or iconographic imprint. Freud saw the *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*, the *Bacchus*, and the *St. John* as linked by Leonardo's identification with androgynous figures that are narcissistic objects, images of his own idealized self. Freud's contribution was to provide an experiential basis for what might generally be called the artist's characteristic motif. The artist finds means for the satisfaction

of fundamental drives through the manipulation of his artistic tools and the performance of his artistic task. When Schapiro (1956) emphasized a particular contribution of Leonardo to the art of the Renaissance, he did not emphasize the issue of smiles or the pyramidal form that Kris (1952) attributed to Leonardo. Instead, in discussing the *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*, Schapiro emphasized the interlocking forms of the figures and the attempt at an organic dynamic unity among the figures, which made familial relationships a theme for formal expression. One of the irrefutable facts in Leonardo's early life, namely, his illegitimacy, makes such a concern understandable.

The critical response which met the Leonardo book did not follow the publication of Freud's paper on the *Moses* of Michelangelo (1914a). In fact, little attempt has been made to deal with this work, in either an art historical or a psychoanalytic context. (Wolheim's 197● paper is an exception to this neglect.) This is surprising in view of the fact that Freud in this paper subjected a work of art to a meticulous visual analysis, an approach which is by no means alien to the art historian. In addition, Freud dealt here with a specific work of art and used the psychoanalytic method not for purposes of psychobiography but for purposes of illuminating the nature of the work itself.

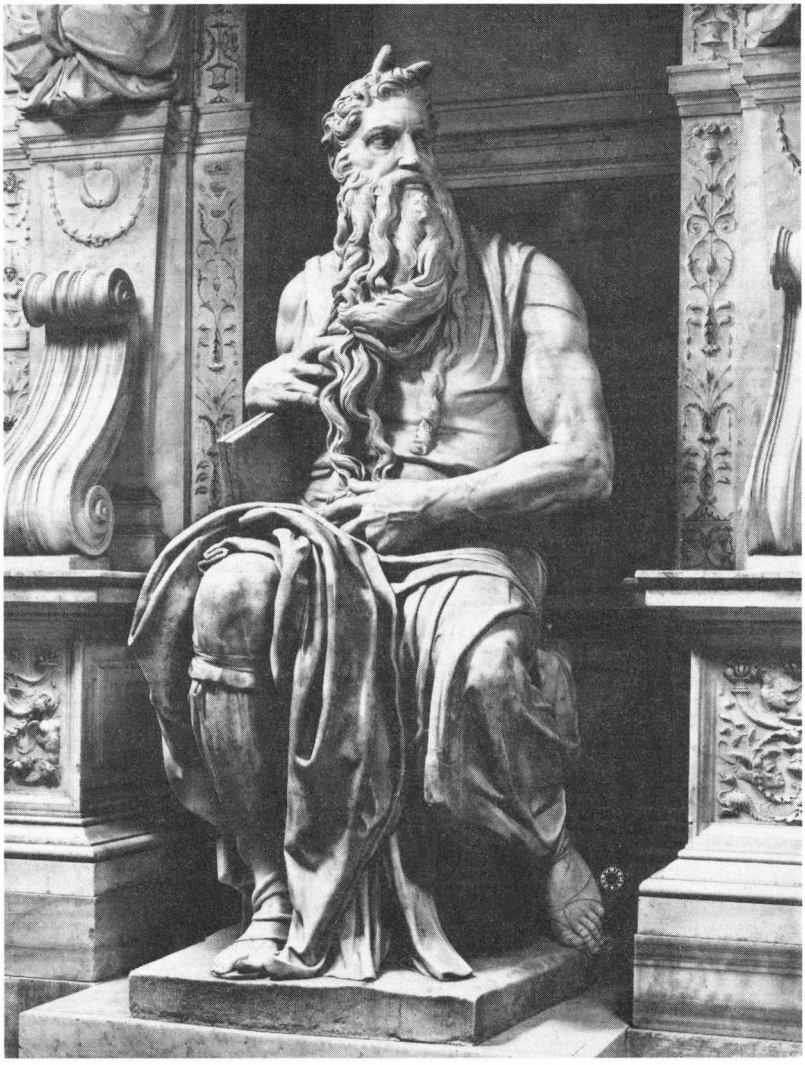
The Moses paper clearly deserves careful attention. Freud began by making a distinction between being moved by a work and not feeling a sense of satisfaction until he had had an opportunity to analyze the factors which evoked his emotional response. He supported the view that aesthetic response is motivated by unconscious factors, and he added a dimension to the pleasure to be derived from critical understanding, a kind of after-pleasure in addition to the initial aesthetic resonance. He also suggested that we are moved essentially by something in the artist's intention, that the intention is present in the work, and that the artist strives to recreate in us, the viewers, an emotional attitude similar to his own in the process of creation.

Freud (1914a) described the intensity of his own response to the Moses statue (Illustration 5) and his need to return to it time after time in order to puzzle out its strange effect upon him.

> . . . no piece of statuary has ever made a stronger impression on me than this. How often have I mounted the steep steps from the unlovely Corso Cavour to the lonely piazza where the deserted church stands, and have essayed to support the angry scorn of the hero's glance! Sometimes I have crept cautiously out of the half-gloom of the interior as though I myself belonged to the mob upon whom his eye is turned—the mob which can hold fast no conviction, which has neither faith nor patience, and which rejoices when it has regained its illusory idols (p. 213).

Freud pointed out that there has been a puzzle about the statue, centered on the issue of whether it was meant to be a depiction of a moment in the life of Moses or whether it was meant to be a study in character. He described the varied critical responses. Some critics have seen the statue as that of a wrathful Moses with pain and contempt on his face, a Moses who has just witnessed the people worshipping the Golden Calf following his descent from Mount Sinai with the Tables of the Ten Commandments under his arm. Others have pointed out that, since the Moses statue was meant to be part of a large commemorative tomb for Julius II and to be placed at a corner of the second story, it is unlikely that Moses was to be seen as about to rise up from the tomb in order to castigate the people; thus the positioning of the statue was meant to express a decorative effect.

Applying the method of the psychoanalyst in paying careful attention to small details of the work—since psychoanalysis "is accustomed to divine secret and concealed things from despised or unnoticed features" (p. 222)—Freud noted two features of the statue which had been heretofore neglected. He noticed the attitude of the right hand and the position of the two Tables of the Law under the right arm. Freud observed that strands from the left side of Moses' beard were positioned so that they were



5. Michelangelo, *Tomb of Pope Julius II*, detail of *Moses* (Rome: S. Pietro in Vincoli).

on the right side of his body. Freud reasoned that what we see is a retreating motion of the right hand and that we are to imagine that, prior to the depiction of the statue, Moses had grasped the full beard with all the fingers of his right hand. What we see in the current statue is a retreating motion of the right hand after the beard is let go. Freud reasoned that Michelangelo was depicting a Moses who indeed has witnessed the people worshipping the Golden Calf as he paused in his descent from Mount Sinai, carrying the Tables under his right arm. His initial response is one of wrath, and he grasps his beard in order to rise and express the full measure of his indignation. In rising, however, he loosens his grasp on the Tables, and they are about to slip and break from under his arm. He then quickly releases his hand from the beard in order to control the precious Tables and save them from destruction. In other words, he is tempted to take vengeance but rises above the temptation, and the whole sculpture becomes a "concrete expression of the highest mental achievement that is possible in a man, that of struggling successfully against an inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he has devoted himself" (p. 233).

By drawings, Freud illustrated what he assumed to be the previous positions of Moses which Michelangelo had in mind (Illustration 6). In Figure 1, Moses is presented sitting calmly; in Figure 2, enraged as he notices the apostasy, he is about to jump to his feet. Figures 3 and 4 display the statue as it actually exists, following the inhibition of the outburst.

Freud corrected the biblical view of Moses as having destroyed the Tables, pointing out that the biblical text is garbled and unlikely to be historically accurate. Freud also hazarded a biographical interpretation suggesting that Michelangelo was depicting a reproach against Julius and himself—two men given to violent tempers and unrealistic grand schemes—thus expressing a premonition of the failures to which they were both doomed. However, the biographical reflection is mentioned only in passing. It is a minor point in a study concerned with the work per se.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

6. From *Collected Papers, Vol. 4*, by Sigmund Freud. Authorized translation under the supervision of Joan Riviere. Published by Basic Books, Inc., 1959, by arrangement with The Hogarth Press Ltd. and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London. Reprinted by permission.

Quite clearly, Freud saw the work of art as an expression of a psychological reality which lies behind it. He identified with those who "had emancipated themselves from the visual image of the statue" (p. 229) in order to understand something of the unconscious motives which lie behind it. In addition—and I believe this is crucial—Freud found that after a thorough analysis of the manifest content of the statue, one arrived at a valid psychoanalytic principle, an expression of a psychological truth imbedded in the statue—namely, with progressive development, the taming and the transformation of drives through the participation of ego influences lead to psychological growth and creativity.

Freud's interpretation of the Moses statue was directly related to a crisis in his own life. We have clear reference to the fact that as he wrote the paper, Freud was responding to the apostasy of Jung and Adler from the psychoanalytic movement; his feelings toward the dissidents were those which he attributed to Moses as he witnessed the people worshipping the Golden Calf. Freud himself made reference to the similarities in the two situations (Jones, 1955, p. 367); he wrote the Moses paper shortly after his last attempts to reconcile Jung to his views on the libido theory; and in the same year, 1914, he expressed his feelings toward the dissidents in his polemical work, "On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement" (1914b). Such a degree of awareness suggests the use of conscious subjectivity as a factor in the understanding of a work of art. It is likely that the aggressive energy freed and transmuted in reconciling Freud to the unavoidable defection served as a stimulus toward the creative insights of the Moses paper.

The methodological difficulty here, of course, is the problem of whether one has projected too much of one's own preoccupation into the work and thus colored the meaning because of subjective pressure. Is Freud's interpretation referable to the statue or is it a distortion due to Freud's self-preoccupations? The question of evidence is to be answered by the thoroughness of the analysis and the fit between interpretation and elements

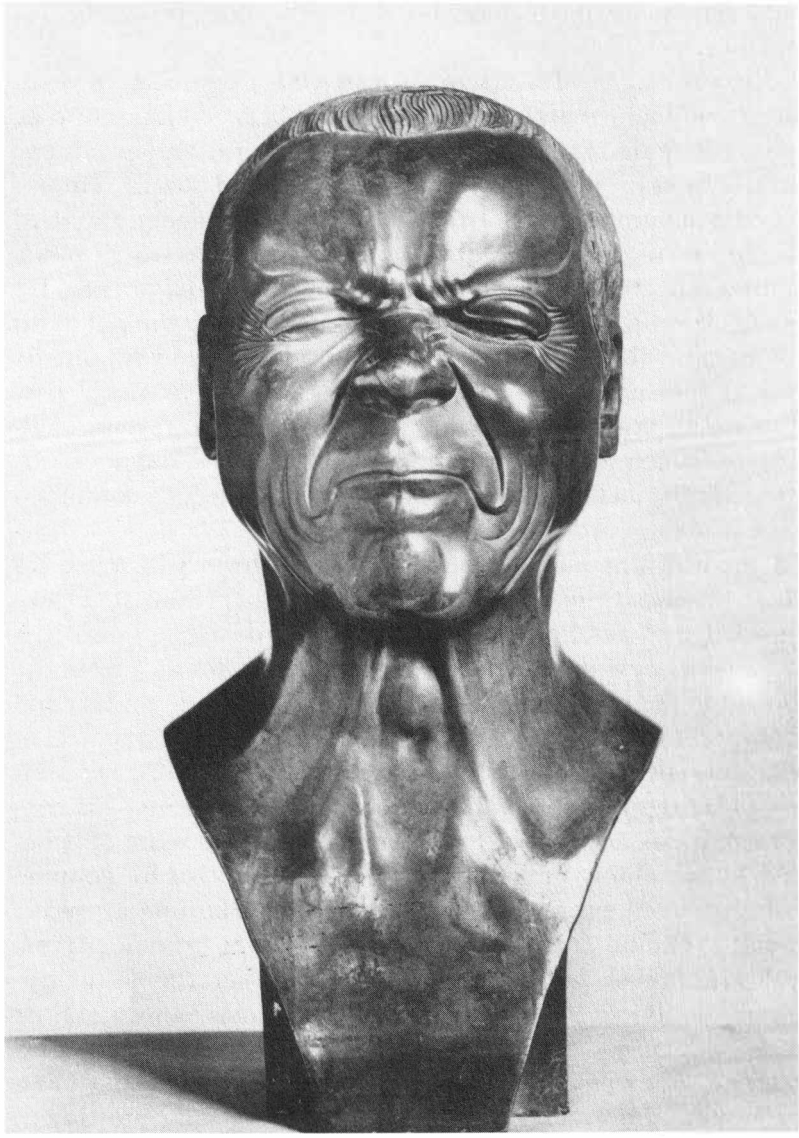
of the work. Those who find fault with Freud's interpretation can justify their criticism by further examination of the manifest content and by proposing alternate interpretations. For example, is it true that the right arm is actually supporting the Tables under the armpit as Freud assumed? Does the manner of grasping the beard with the full hand denote reverence in the presence of God rather than the expression of anger turned against the self (Janson, 1968)? Freud, sensitive to such criticism, responded that when considering a creator with the capacity for expressive thought such as Michelangelo, one can probably credit him with more intention rather than less. But finally, Freud was quite prepared to accept the idea that the artist himself may not fully succeed in creating in his work what he intended. And on occasion the psychoanalytic critic must fill in the artist's lack of success with a valid psychoanalytic interpretation accounting for failure as well as success.

One can readily understand why Freud's paper met with so little critical response. In an era devoted to respecting the sanctity of the manifest text, Freud's analysis seemed arbitrary. Although he made a careful analysis of small details of the statue itself, when it suited his purpose he gave up the detailed description and turned instead to an interpretation of intent which is at some remove from the direct description. In addition, the interpretation of intent itself cannot be documented by any historical evidence, such as letters or plans for the commission, which would support Freud's point of view. Thus, Freud pleased neither the new critics nor the traditionalists and seemed to permit the potentiality for a wide range of interpretations independent of the work or a factual description of its historical context. In addition, is there universal agreement about the "highest mental achievement that is possible in a man, that of struggling successfully against an inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he has devoted himself"? As Shakespeare reminded us in *Henry V*, "What if the cause be not just?" Does the same hold?

Freud himself apparently had reacted to another view of the

Moses statue earlier in his life—not as if it were an exemplar of a successful struggle against a violent passion but of an accusatory figure who shamed him as a member of a mob lacking conviction and faith and wishing for illusory idols. Thus we are left with continuing possibilities of multiple interpretations and must turn instead to an example of a psychoanalytic view of art works in which the understanding seems fairly precise and certain. In making such a transition, we find that we are on safer ground if we can connect the work of art to a direct expression of what we know about psychopathology.

In psychoanalytic circles, it has been generally accepted that Ernst Kris's (1952) paper on Messerschmidt (originally published in 1933) represents a high point in the application of psychoanalytic knowledge to the understanding of particular works of art (Kohut, 1960). Franz Xaver Messerschmidt (1736-1784) was a successful sculptor who lived in Vienna and initially worked in a late Baroque style for the Austrian aristocracy and the members of the Hapsburg court. Prior to 1770, he did busts of the Emperor Josef II and Maria Theresa in a rhythmic, flowing style in keeping with the tradition of Bavarian and Austrian rococo. In the early 1770's, he developed a psychotic illness and felt that he was persecuted "by all of Germany." He was passed over for a professorship in the Academy of Vienna because he was considered unqualified to teach, and he left the capital to live in the provinces, where occasional visitors described him as "scurrilous, scornful, and isolated." At about this time, the style of his work changed. From the early 1770's on, he became preoccupied with doing a series of life-sized male busts—more than sixty were found in his studio after his death —which depicted a variety of human expressions. Messerschmidt strove to represent changes in the facial musculature while the face is engaged in such actions as grimacing and smirking (Illustration 7). He was not concerned with the expression of affects or with the expression of personality traits; the emphasis of the work was on facial distortions and muscular



7. Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, *The Morose Man* (Vienna: Österreichische Galerie).

shifts such as yawning, clenching the teeth, and pressing the lips together.

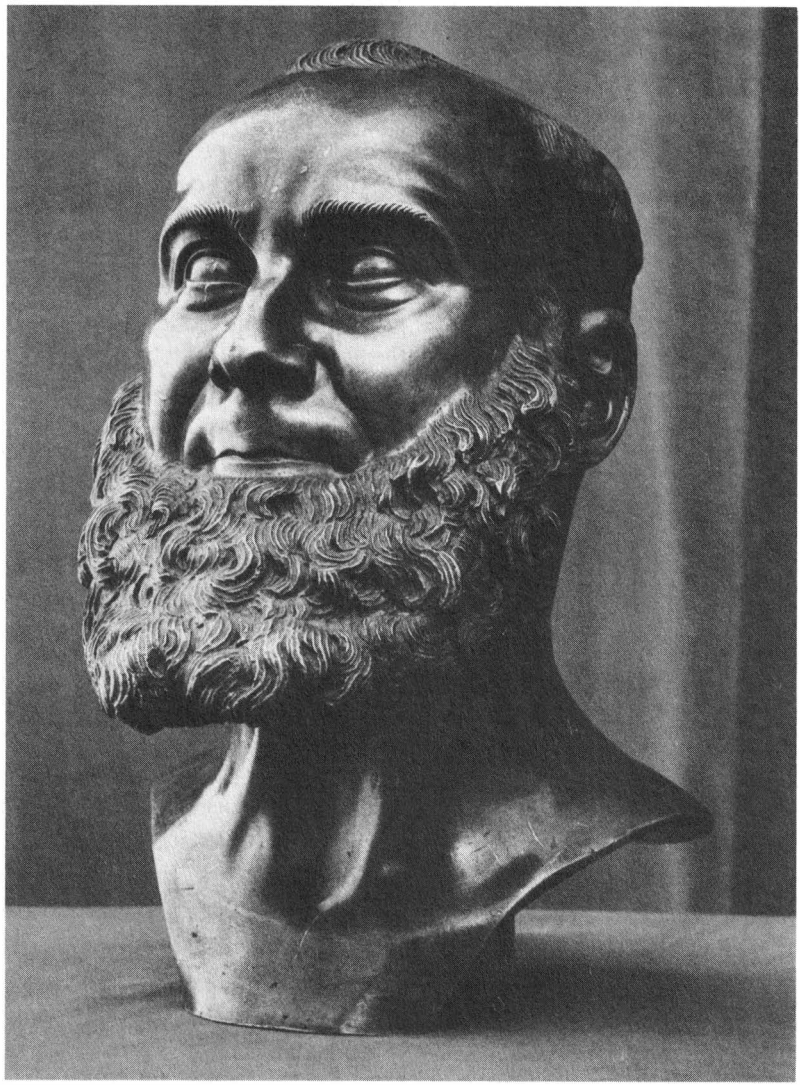
The content of Messerschmidt's psychosis consisted of delusional and hallucinatory experiences. He believed himself to be tortured by demons who visited him at night and produced painful sensations in his lower abdomen and thighs. He engaged in a number of apotropaic mechanisms to magically ward off the intrusions of the disturbing demons. He would pinch himself repeatedly while looking in the mirror as he worked. He would clamp his lips together in order not to show the red of his lips because this stirred the demons, and he would repeatedly look at himself in the mirror while working. His florid psychosis—apparently a paranoid type of schizophrenia—although related to the stylistic changes in his work, did not interfere with the technical quality of his sculpture, which continued to be of a high order.

Kris, who was initially trained as an art historian, wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on Messerschmidt as his interest in and knowledge of psychoanalysis had begun to develop. Thus, Kris was able to view the life and work of Messerschmidt within the context of the psychoanalytic view of psychosis. Kris understood Messerschmidt's behavior as representing desperate attempts at restitution of an attachment to a reality from which he felt himself to be slipping. Since he doubted the existence of his own person, it was necessary for him to document his sense of being alive by examining himself repeatedly in the mirror for genuine forms of facial expression as a means of establishing a psychic identity. The busts became a concrete form of his new psychic reality. However, because of the hollowness and the disintegration in his affective responses, many of his busts expressed little in the way of genuine emotion. The sculptor concentrated instead on reflex reactions and autistic facial expressions. Among the latter are several busts in which there is marked distortion of the features of the face, i.e., pressing the lips together and elongation of the area around the mouth as if to shut out the demons. Kris noted a relationship between the constrained con-

ciseness of his later work and the likelihood that his adoption of a neoclassical style tending toward formalism was well suited to the detached attitude of the schizophrenic who fears the intrusion of disruptive emotional responses.

Kris was attracted to the study of a psychotic sculptor since, in contrast to the work of someone normal or neurotic, the intrusions of the psychotic process were more likely to be apparent as obvious anomalies within the context of an established artistic tradition. If we can note aspects of the psychosis in the work of Messerschmidt, then it is likely that he is an extreme case of a principle which may be more generally valid. It may be likely that private meanings are attached to a variety of the aspects of an artist's work, including the formal elements for which he has a particular preference. In the case of Messerschmidt, we note the intrusion of products of psychotic ideation, e.g., lips pressed to avoid libidinal incorporation and demon possession. Thus, the work itself can be understood in terms which characterize a progression within a psychotic process.

Kris's study, therefore, is more clearly related to Freud's early work on Leonardo than to his paper on the Moses statue. Just as Leonardo could depict his preoccupation with family ties and illegitimacy in the *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*, so Messerschmidt found through physiognomic studies an opportunity to express his need to deal with his psychosis. In Messerschmidt the psychotic mechanisms influenced the content of his creativity and merged with the intact part of his personality. His character heads are to be understood in the context of intrapsychic activity. Insofar as Messerschmidt late in his life returned to portrait heads in the more conventional sense, he continued to manifest a fine skill as a portrait artist. Within a neoclassical style he created remarkable works in which remnants of his psychotic preoccupations were only dimly present as an undercurrent. One such work, referred to as a portrait of a Capuchin monk, Fessler (Illustration 8) (also known as "a Dominican monk"), depicts an expressive head characterized by the pinched lips Messerschmidt described as necessary in order



8. Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, *The Capuchin Monk* (Bratislava [Pressburg]: Stadtische Galerie).

to ward off the evil demons. In the portrait bust, however, the expression around the mouth is fully integrated and does not detract from the total aesthetic effect of the work. Thus, reactions stirred by a psychotic process may be adapted to tasks of artistic creativity and perhaps even serve as a stimulus to innovation and stylistic developments. What had originally been an excessive stylization secondary to psychotic stereotypy may become integrated within a stylistic development and enhance artistic liberation. It may also be the case that such artistic liberation continues to play a part in self-healing as an adaptive response to the psychotic process.

PRINCIPLES OF A PSYCHOANALYTIC ICONOGRAPHY AND ILLUSTRATIVE STUDIES

The integration of a psychoanalytic approach to works of art can be so seamless that we are occasionally left unclear about whether there is anything "psychoanalytic" about the critical approach at all. A recent study (Posner, 1982) of Fragonard's painting, *The Swing* (Illustration 9), points out that the painting is a depiction of joyous sexuality. The author states that "until very recently the mores of art historical criticism made it difficult to really think about" (p. 82) the sexual meaning of the picture. The artist has depicted the rising tide of sexual passion in a naturalistic scene, which heightens the sense of excitement. A man in the background swings a young woman. As she reaches the crescendo of her swing, her lover extends his arm and his hat in a rigid position, pointing them between her parted legs as she kicks off her shoe to signal the culmination of her movement.

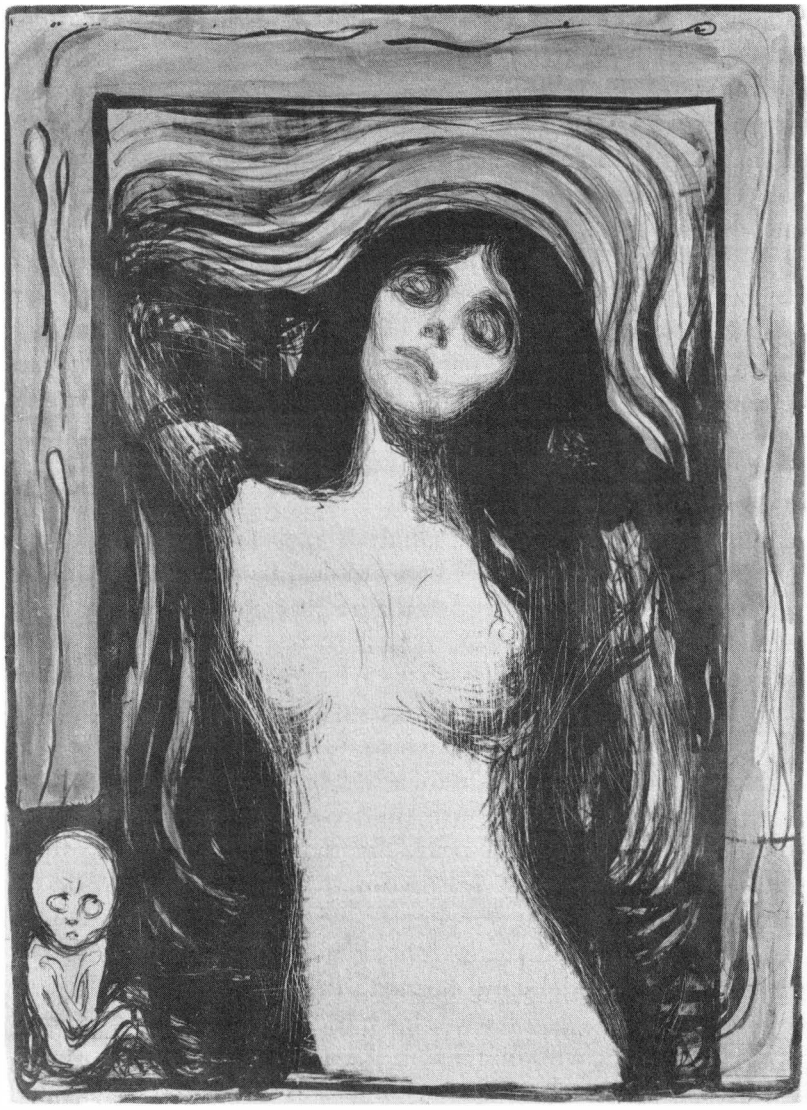
A number of additional components of the painting heighten the sexual theme—the private nature of the setting, the Cupid who urges silence, the act of swinging itself, etc. The apt synthesis of the ideational and the visual content of the symbols provides the basis for the aesthetic response. Posner, in his analysis of the painting, nowhere invokes psychoanalysis by name,

9. Jean Honoré Fragonard, *The Swing* (London: Wallace Collection). Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Wallace Collection.

nor does he refer to Freud's discussion of the hat as a phallic symbol or the shoe as a feminine symbol, as in the *Introductory Lectures* (1916-1917). The implication is that Fragonard and his patron were fully aware of the sexual symbolism, but in the intervening two centuries, this awareness passed into "modern oblivion," to borrow a pertinent recent term (L. Steinberg, 1983). Nineteenth century viewers responded to the work on an unconscious level, finding justification for their pleasure in an appreciation of rococo style and the playfulness of the subject without acknowledging they were viewing a sexual union. The formal devices of the work provide an aesthetic distance, aiding disguise and thus allowing the unconscious content to find an acceptable mode of discharge. It should be noted that in this critical approach, a psychoanalytic view of *The Swing* has little to do with the biographical importance of this particular painting in the life of the artist himself.

When we turn to a psychoanalytic approach to the work of Edvard Munch (1863-1944), biographical factors are once more pertinent. Munch has long been a subject of psychoanalytic interest (Steinberg and Weiss, 1954; Hodin, 1956), and in some ways Munch's expressionist works are even more transparent in their psychic content than Fragonard's. A frequent theme is that of a seductive woman who abandons herself to desire and is highly destructive toward men, who are engulfed by her (Illustrations 10 and 11), or both men and women are hopeless pawns of a blind nature, which through sexuality guides their mutual fate to death and destruction. Recent scholarly works on Munch (Eggum, 1984; Heller, 1978a, 1978b, 1984; Stang, 1979) have provided the psychoanalytic investigator with the opportunity to understand Munch's thematic preoccupation.

The Norwegian painter was born in 1863, the second child of five. His mother, who married at the age of twenty, was twenty-one years younger than her husband and tubercular at the time of marriage. Edvard, the second child and first boy, was followed by three siblings in quick succession, and the mother died of tuberculosis when the boy was five, perhaps pregnant with



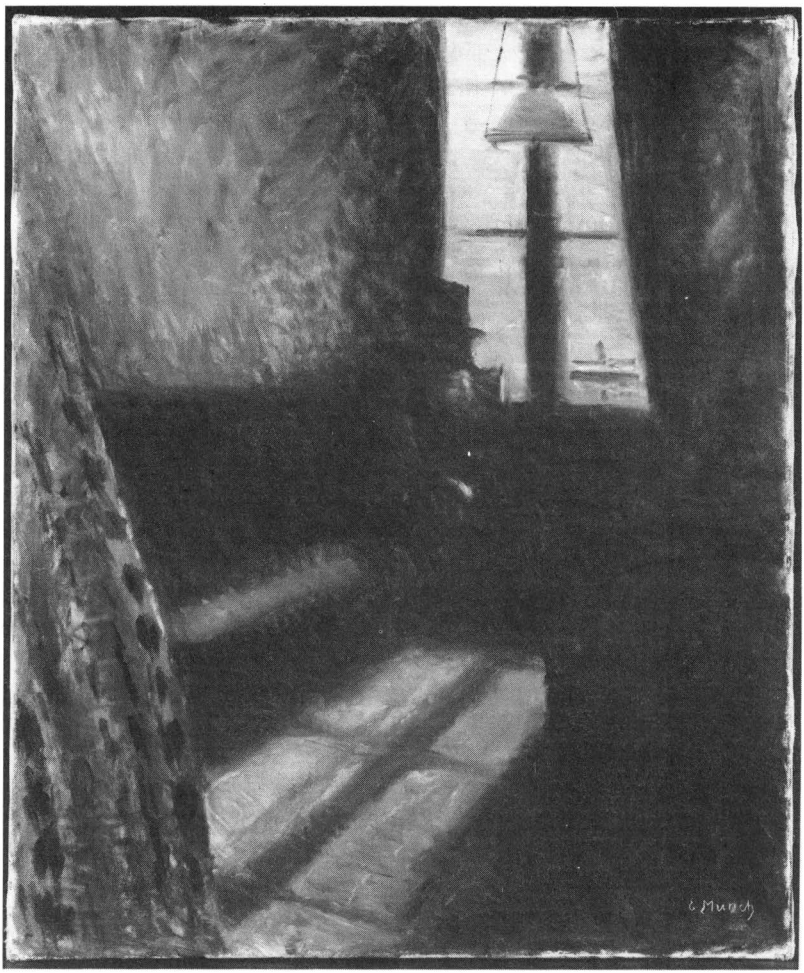
10. Edvard Munch, *Madonna* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago). Courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago.

11. Edvard Munch, *The Vampire* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago). Courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago.

her sixth child. The boy developed a close attachment to his sister, two years older, who also died of tuberculosis when he was fourteen. The mother, at the time of her death, left a poignant letter to the young boy, advising him to obey his strict father, who, following her death, became a religious fanatic and a model of moralistic rectitude. She wrote of her blissful wish to have the young boy join her in heaven following his death. Through his adolescence and early manhood, Munch maintained an intense, ambivalent relationship with his father and allied himself with a Bohemian group in Oslo in defiance of paternal values.

A crucial work in Munch's career was his 1890 painting, *Night* (Illustration 12) (Heller, 1978b). The painting was a reaction to the news of the death of his father and depicts a man sitting in a room, head bowed, preoccupied with mournful thoughts. It is painted in a symbolist style at variance with the naturalistic work Munch had been doing in the previous few years. Shortly after the death of his father and the painting of *Night*, Munch began the most creative decade of his life and produced the body of work for which he is most highly regarded today. In 1907-1908, Munch experienced a psychiatric illness necessitating a period of hospitalization over several months, after which his style changed: it became more decorative and less innovative and emotionally intense. In the last few decades of his life, he isolated himself from social contact, literally surrounding himself with his own work, which he saw as extensions of his personality. He tended to treat his paintings as if they were actual living beings, speaking of them as if they had personalities of their own.

Munch's preoccupation with the aggressive and destructive power of female sexuality was in reaction to his mother's early death following her series of pregnancies. In his view, his father had caused his mother's death by his sexual demands; sexuality itself was a destructive force which led to separation and death. The two most important losses in Munch's early life occurred when his libidinal energies were stirred, at the height of his oed-



12. Edvard Munch, *Night in St. Cloud* (Oslo: Nasjonalgalleriet) Photo: Jacques Lathion.

ipal phase and at the beginning of his adolescence. His mother's frequent pregnancies were seen as the result of his father's overwhelming and destructive sexual demands. Munch reversed the gender of the sexually aggressive partner in his work following the death of his father, in part as a means of handling his own ambivalence and of propitiating his father, who was now seen as not responsible. The theme of the aggressive woman served as a cover for her powerlessness and victimization. It was no longer women who were engulfed, but men who had to defend themselves against women. Women threatened men by offering them a reunion through death.

In *Night*, Munch depicts himself as mourning the death of his father. He appears in the process of grieving, recalling the memories of his recently lost, ambivalently cathected father, and through these memories, recalling the death of his sister and his mother. The mourning experience reactivated the old losses, and it is the working through of these recollections which then leads to a renewed phase of creativity and originality. As he often stated, "I paint not what I see but what I saw." In Munch's view, art thrives on death, and the creation of the work of art itself is an expression of an erotic transformation. The artist becomes truly androgynous by fertilizing himself, i.e., by using memories of his past experiences as seminal for inspiration, he becomes self-generating.

In sum, a view of selected art historical studies, such as those on Fragonard's *The Swing* and on Munch, enables the psychoanalyst to enlarge the scope of the early studies by Freud and Kris. We can consider the range and applicability of psychoanalysis in such studies in order to determine general principles which underlie the studies.

The principles underlying a psychoanalytic approach concern themselves with: 1) the work of art as an expression of the biography of the artist; 2) the work of art as a representation of unconscious psychological content; 3) the aesthetic response to a work of art as a subject for psychoanalytic investigation; and 4) the work of art as a representation of the creative process by which it was produced.

1. *The Work of Art as Expression of the Biography of the Artist*

Leonardo's depiction of the Christ Child in the presence of two maternal figures, the interest in the pyramidal configuration, and the depiction of dynamic forces which interlock figures in motion reflect the events of his own early childhood and psychological concerns over his illegitimacy. Munch's preoccupation with death and sexuality in his work, the experience of mourning, the preoccupation with illness, and the fear of engulfment derive from the unhappy circumstances of his early life, the death of his mother and his sister, and the fearful fantasy of a reunion following death. Furthermore, some critical response, although apparently dealing with works per se, may be based on an identification with the artist with whom there is a sharing of personality attributes and conflicts. Walter Pater's (1893) intense empathic response to Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* is based on Pater's identification with aspects of Leonardo's own personality.

It is perhaps the case that with many works of art the biographic approach adds little to our aesthetic response although it may add to our understanding of the elements involved in our response. In some works, however, the artist's personality is so much a part of the work that he seems to expect us to derive a particular effect from our identification with the experiences and conflicts in his life. Van Gogh's portraits of his bandaged head during his hospitalization after his self-mutilation (Illustration 13), or some of the late Rembrandt self-portraits (Illustration 14) draw the viewer into the life of the artist. Here it is difficult to separate biographical reflections from aesthetic response.

2. *The Work of Art as Representation of Unconscious Psychological Content*

Some works of art may be understood in the same way as the manifest content of a dream, i.e., they are interpretable as manifest elements which make their meaning clear because of the

13. Vincent Van Gogh, *Self Portrait with a Bandaged Ear* (Chicago: Private Collection).

14. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self Portrait* (New York: The Frick Collection). Copyright The Frick Collection, New York.

presence of associational links within the work itself. The *Bacchus* and the *St. John* of Leonardo, insofar as they clearly depict androgynous males who have incorporated feminine attributes, reveal primitive fantasies of such polymorphous psychological states. Messerschmidt's depiction of the character heads, with their emphasis on expressive but nonemotional factors, depict the restitution phase of a psychotic process. Fragonard's *The Swing* derives its aesthetic power from its successful delineation, through skillfully placed symbolic references, of a joyful sexual union. Posner's (1982) study is a good example of the unmasking of formal devices in order to arrive at fundamental meanings, perhaps conscious at the time of their depiction but subsequently undergoing repression and repudiation. It is often the case that successful psychoanalytic unmasking will reveal libidinal and aggressive undertones disguised by convenient theological or moralistic references and conventions in order to pass muster as worthy of artistic representation.

3. *Aesthetic Response to a Work of Art as Subject for Psychoanalytic Investigation*

The aesthetic response of a viewer—discounting idiosyncratic factors in the viewer—is the product of an amalgam which results from the personality of the artist, the latent psychological content in a work, and the formal means available for purposes of representation. The quality of aesthetic response varies according to the balance of content and formal factors present. Freud (1905) himself dealt with the aesthetic response in his book on jokes when he pointed out that there is a necessary relationship between pleasure obtained through the appreciation of formal devices in art and the pleasure derived from the gratification of unconscious and repudiated desires. He gave further credit to the formal devices by pointing out that "the notion of art defies expansion as long as the quantitative proportion of unconscious material and preconscious treatment

does not remain within definite limits" (E. L. Freud, 1960, p. 449). The pleasure derived from the means of representation, i.e., the formal devices in the work such as harmony and composition, color and line, light and shape, reflect the ego's capacity to master drive and defense and tendencies toward inner disharmony and anxiety. The art object, considered from this point of view, is a result of successful problem solving, a representation of an ego skill in ordering, expressing, and integrating.

4. *The Work of Art as Representing the Creative Process by Which it Was Produced*

The work of art carries a history of its own creative development. Freud's view of the Moses of Michelangelo suggests that the statue depicts the creative process which brought it about. Current views of art, which see art as self-referential, suggest that the artist is not only engaged in the task of creating but he is also depicting the pathway by which his finished product takes shape (Greenberg, 1961). Artistic creativity depends on transformation of drive components in interaction with ego factors leading to an emergent synthesis.

Ehrenzweig (1967) has suggested that the artist will often include in a work of art a reference to himself engaged in his creative task. The framing *ignudi* in Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling are interpretable as depictions of the artist's creative urge. The increasing freedom of movement in the late *ignudi* compared to the earlier figures reflects the shift in Michelangelo's artistic personality as he worked on the ceiling over the period of several years. Thus, creativity, understood in terms of innate ability, environmental influences, and transformations of primitive psychological states and conflicts, may often be studied through the investigation of works of art which are profound expressions of the endopsychic process that gave them form.

REFERENCES

CLARK, K. (1967). *Leonardo da Vinci: An Account of His Development as an Artist.* Baltimore: Penguin.

EGGUM, A. (1984). *Edvard Munch. Paintings, Sketches, and Studies.* New York: Clarkson N. Potts, Inc.

EHRENZWEIG, A. (1967). *The Hidden Order of Art. A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Imagination.* Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press.

EISSLER, K. R. (1961). *Leonardo da Vinci. Psychoanalytic Notes on the Enigma.* New York: Int. Univ. Press.

FARRELL, B. (1963). On Freud's study of Leonardo. In *Leonardo da Vinci. Aspects of the Renaissance Genius*, ed. M. Philipson. New York: G. Braziller, 1966, pp. 224-275.

FREUD, E. L., Editor (1960). *Letters of Sigmund Freud.* New York: Basic Books.

FREUD, S. (1899). Screen memories. *S. E.*, 3.

——— (1900). The interpretation of dreams. *S. E.*, 4/5.

——— (1905). Jokes and their relation to the unconscious. *S. E.*, 8.

——— (1907). Delusions and dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva. S. E.*, 9.

——— (1910). Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood. *S. E.*, 11.

——— (1914a). The Moses of Michelangelo. *S. E.*, 13.

——— (1914b). On the history of the psycho-analytic movement. *S. E.*, 14.

——— (1916-1917). Introductory lectures on psycho-analysis. *S. E.*, 15.

GOMBRICH, E. H. (1965). The mystery of Leonardo. *New York Review of Books*, February 11, pp. 3-5.

GREENBERG, C. (1961). *Art and Culture.* Boston: Beacon Press.

HELLER, R. (1978a). *Munch: The Scream.* New York: Viking Press.

——— (1978b). Edvard Munch's "Night," the aesthetics of decadence, and the content of biography. *Arts Magazine*, 53:80-105.

——— (1984). *Munch. His Life and Work.* Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press.

HODIN, J. P. (1956). Edvard Munch and depth psychology. *The Norseman*, 14:27-37.

JANSON, H. W. (1968). The right arm of Michelangelo's "Moses." In *Festschrift für Ulrich Middledorf*, ed. A. Kosegarten & P. Tigler. Berlin: de Gruyter.

JONES, E. (1955). *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. II, Years of Maturity, 1901-1919.* New York: Basic Books, Inc.

KOHUT, H. (1960). Beyond the bounds of the basic rule. Some recent contributions to applied psychoanalysis. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 8:567-586.

KRIS, E. (1952). *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art.* New York: Int. Univ. Press.

LICHTENBERG, J. D. (1978). Freud's Leonardo: psychobiography and autobiography of genius. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 26:863-880.

LIEBERT, R. S. (1983). *Michelangelo. A Psychoanalytic Study of His Life and Images.* New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

MACLAGAN, E. (1923). Leonardo in the consulting room. *Burlington Magazine*, 42:54-57.

MÖLLER, E. (1939). Der Geburtstag des Lionardo da Vinci. *Jahrbuch der preussichen Kunstsammlungen*, 60:71-85.

PANOFSKY, E. (1962). *Studies in Iconology.* New York: Harper & Row.

PATER, W. (1893). *The Renaissance*, ed. D. L. Hill. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press, 1980.
POSNER, D. (1982). The swinging women of Watteau and Fragonard. *Art Bulletin*, 54:75-88.
SCHAPIRO, M. (1956). Leonardo and Freud: an art-historical study. *J. History Ideas*, 17:147-178.
STANG, R. I. (1979). *Edvard Munch. The Man and His Century*. New York: Abbeville Press.
STEINBERG, L. (1983). *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*. New York: Pantheon.
——— (1984). Shrinking Michelangelo. *New York Review of Books*, June 28, pp. 41-45.
STEINBERG, S. & WEISS, J. (1954). The art of Edvard Munch and its function in his mental life. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 23:409-423.
TROSMAN, H. (1985). *Freud and the Imaginative World*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Analytic Press.
WOHL, R. R. & TROSMAN, H. (1955). A retrospect of Freud's Leonardo: an assessment of a psychoanalytic concept. *Psychiat.*, 18:27-40.
WOLHEIM, A. (1970). Freud and the understanding of art. *Brit. J. Aesthetics*, 10:211-224.

University of Chicago
Department of Psychiatry
5841 S. Maryland Ave.
Chicago, IL 60637

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Blood Brothers, Siblings as Writers. Edited by Norman Kiell. New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1983. 434 pp.

Theodore Jacobs

To cite this article: Theodore Jacobs (1986) Blood Brothers, Siblings as Writers. Edited by Norman Kiell. New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1983. 434 pp., The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 55:1, 168-193, DOI: 10.1080/21674086.1986.11927134

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1986.11927134

BOOK REVIEWS

BLOOD BROTHERS. SIBLINGS AS WRITERS. Edited by Norman Kiell. New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1983. 434 pp.

This collection of essays, edited by Norman Kiell, focuses on an aspect of creativity that is both fascinating in itself and uniquely interesting to psychoanalysts. In each of twelve chapters, the relationship of a pair of brothers who are writers is explored in an effort to shed light on the influence of the sibling relationship, not only on their personalities, but more specifically on their creative work.

Represented in these studies are a number of brother pairs whose independent achievements are well recognized: Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Aldous and Julian Huxley, Isaac Bashevis and I. J. Singer, Lytton and James Strachey, Anthony and Peter Shaffer, Lawrence and Gerald Durrell. In the case of others—James and Stanislaus Joyce, Oscar and Willie Wilde, Dante Gabriel and William Rossetti, Max Beerbohm and Herbert Beerbohm Tree—it was one brother who, in effect, was the writer of significance. The importance of the other in literary terms lay not so much in his own creative output, as in the effect that he had on his more famous sibling.

In each case, however, the relationship between the brothers exerted a strong and pervasive influence on the development of their careers. As Nigel Hamilton observes in his insightful study of the prolonged, bitter, symbolically fratricidal rivalry between Thomas and Heinrich Mann, "Knowledge of the sibling rivalry of the Manns may not be essential to an understanding of their individual works but it *is* essential for an understanding of their achievement" (p. 71). It is also true, however, as these essays amply demonstrate, that it was the strong feelings of one brother for another that provided the stimulus for and gave shape to some of the most significant works in our literature. In the case of the Manns, Hamilton demonstrates not only that each brother undertook in a number of books to expose and refute the moral and political position of the other, but that one of Thomas Mann's greatest achievements, *The Magic Mountain*, consists of a debate between characters who clearly represent Heinrich and himself.

One of the most interesting aspects of these essays, in fact, is the convincing evidence provided by several contributors for the influence of the sibling relationship on specific novels and plays. In his valuable article on Anthony and Peter Shaffer, the only twins included in these studies, Jules Glenn has convincingly shown how the theme of twinship has permeated and colored the work of each. Howard Feinstein has been equally persuasive in demonstrating how the psychological twinship of William and Henry James became the theme of much of the latter's early fiction and was represented in disguised form in the interplay of fictional characters of both sexes. In a similar vein, Karl Beckson argues convincingly that Oscar Wilde's ambivalent and unresolved relationship with his older and profligate brother, Willie, provided the impetus for and was given dramatic form in one of the greatest of English comedies, *The Importance of Being Ernest.*

It is this kind of material, unfailingly fascinating and instructive, that one finds in abundance in this volume. Whether the subject matter is the abiding resentment of Max Beerbohm toward his older brother, Herbert, the prolonged dependence of James Joyce on his younger brother, Stanislaus, or the father-son relationship that evolved between I. J. and Isaac Bashevis Singer, each of these essays explores psychological terrain that will be unfamiliar to most readers, and it does so in ways that are both illuminating and entertaining. The chapters are carefully researched and well-written by literary scholars, a historian, psychoanalysts, and a psychiatrist with special interest and training in literature. They represent, without exception, a high level of achievement. Informed by psychoanalytic thinking, the contributions are quite astute in their understanding of the complexity of sibling relationships and the way in which such relationships may reflect and substitute for relations with parents. In only one instance, Jean Kimball's study of the Joyces, is there an attempt to employ psychoanalytic ideas directly. This author utilizes a Jungian framework to explain the contrasting personalities of the brothers. The success of this chapter is due less to the use of this framework than to Kimball's vivid account of the parasite-host nature of the relationship.

While the focus of most of the studies is on the relationship between the two brothers involved, the emphasis of a few of the contributions is on the psychology of each in relation to his work.

Thus Murray Sherman's chapter on the Stracheys and Robert Kloss's on the Waughs take up the life of each brother separately and put relatively less stress on the quality of the interaction between them. While this perspective is fascinating in itself and offers us fresh insights into the personalities involved, it is the chapters that focus on the relationship between the brother-writers and which enhance our understanding of the influence of this relationship on their work that make this volume unique.

In the cases of James Joyce and Henry James the critically important supportive roles played by their brothers raises the interesting question of whether, in the absence of such sustaining sibling relationships, their creative work could have been achieved.

For the psychoanalyst interested in the lives of creative individuals, these essays provide invaluable information on the twenty-four writers included. While some of the biographical material on the major literary figures covers familiar ground, there is much here that is not generally known. Of particular interest are the studies of the lesser known brothers and their contributions to the artistic development of their better known siblings. It is this aspect of the collection that makes it so valuable to the student of psychology and literature. For these essays provide a window on an aspect of the psychology of the writer that is often neglected: the impact on literary creation of the relation of brother to brother.

THEODORE JACOBS (NEW YORK)

PSYCHOANALYSE, KUNST UND KREATIVITÄT HEUTE. Die Entwicklung der analytischen Kunstpsychologie seit Freud. (Psychoanalysis, Art and Creativity Today: Development of the Psychoanalytic Psychology of Art since Freud.) Edited by Hartmut Kraft. Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1984. 370 pp.

In his introduction, the editor notes that the newer developments in psychoanalysis have not been sufficiently recognized by the public. When discussing psychoanalysis as a psychology of art, many authors refer primarily or even exclusively to the work of Sigmund Freud. The public seems unaware of such developments in psychoanalysis as ego psychology, object relations theory, and self psychology. This collection of essays is intended to bring to-

gether into easily accessible form representative articles on creativity and art from the post-Freudian psychoanalytic literature. The collection is addressed to artists, teachers, psychologists, psychoanalysts, and all those who want to understand creativity and art as specifically human forms of expression and communication.

The editor proceeds from the point of view that the manifold developments in psychoanalysis since Freud are of such significance that psychoanalysis can no longer be thought of as synonymous with the work of Freud. From the very beginning, psychoanalysts have been intensely interested in the arts as one of the important forms for the expression of human concerns. Leading psychoanalysts have repeatedly returned to this basic interest in the arts that was also of central importance for Freud. However, these further developments have not been sufficiently recognized, and Kraft deems it necessary to acquaint people with the more recent work on the themes of psychoanalysis, art, and creativity.

In order to make the public familiar with post-Freudian psychoanalytic thought and as a baseline for the discussion, Kraft provides an introductory sketch of the origins and development of psychoanalysis until 1939. He follows this with a discussion of the newer developments since Freud's death. A special section is devoted to Freud's conceptualizations about art, with a side glance at the potentials and the limitations of Freud's thinking.

A number of problem areas are outlined as a preparation for the specific essays from fourteen authors whose articles are reprinted in the book. Kraft sees psychoanalysis as a two-person psychology, i.e., as a psychology of relationships. Therefore, according to Kraft, a psychoanalytic psychology of art cannot deal with an isolated work of art taken out of the context of its relationship to the artist, on the one hand, and to the audience, on the other. All of the articles have in common the assumption that behind a work of art one can discern the creatively active artist as well as the effect on the recipient of the work of art. Five specific, though somewhat overlapping, areas are singled out for discussion: 1) investigation of connections between the life history of the artist and the work of art; 2) the contribution of creative activity to the maintenance of psychological homeostasis; 3) conceptualization of the creative process itself, including facilitating conditions and potentials for disturbance; 4) the recent emphasis on investi-

gating formal elements, which can no longer be dismissed as merely an aspect of disguising the content; and 5) the interaction between the artist and his work—which has been largely neglected by psychoanalysis.

Aside from the generalized treatment of "Psychodynamics and Creativity" and of "Art and Psychoanalysis," the discussion is restricted to the fine arts, with emphasis on graphic art and sculpture. The need to be selective forces neglect of certain works and aspects. The special approaches of Jung and Lacan are left out also.

P. C. Kuiper discusses psychoanalytic biography of the creative personality. His chapter is perhaps best characterized by a Picasso quotation: "Why do you think I date everything I do? Because it's not sufficient to know an artist's work—it is necessary to know when he did them, why, how, under what circumstances. . . . Some day there will undoubtedly be a science—it may be called the science of man—which will seek to learn about man in general through the study of the creative man. Often I think about such a science and I want to leave to posterity a documentation that will be as complete as possible. That's why I put a date on everything I do."[1]

The editor has merged various extracts from D. W. Winnicott's work on the concept of creativity and its roots into a chapter that illustrates Winnicott's derivation of creativity from the use of transitional objects and phenomena. Werner Muensterberger's investigation of the creative process and its relation to object loss and fetishism attempts to relate Winnicott's insights to the findings of ethnologic studies, with particular attention to the differences associated with the artist's gender. This is followed by Anton Ehrenzweig's discourse on the three phases of creativity taken from the foreword to his book, *The Hidden Order of Art*.[2] Ehrenzweig sees artistic work as repeating early developmental issues re-

[1] Brassai, G. H. (1966): *Picasso and Company*. Translated by F. Price. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, p. 100.

[2] Ehrenzweig, A. (1967): *The Hidden Order in Art. A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Imagination*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press. Reviewed in this *Quarterly*, 1968, 37:608-612.

volving around the depressive and paranoid positions outlined by Melanie Klein. Hans Müller-Braunschweig gives an overview of aspects of a psychoanalytic theory of creativity. Marshall Bush is one of the very few who grapple with the problem of form in a psychoanalytic theory of art. He proposes that the aesthetic quality, the pleasure associated with form, is related to the principles and ideals set up by the ego for its optimal functioning. Pinchas Noy tackles the same topic in his essay on ego psychological aspects of creativity. Thomas Auchter investigates separation and death as forces in creativity in his "The Search for the Day before Yesterday—Mourning and Creativity." Art is seen as a confrontation with death that takes the middle road of avoiding the extremes either of resignation or of rebellion against the inescapable fact "that we are all condemned to death." Heinz Kohut brings a self psychological approach to his discussion of creativity which may appear "seemingly spontaneously, in the course of many analyses of narcissistic personalities." Its appearance is specifically related to the mobilization of formerly frozen narcissistic cathexes. Anita Eckstaedt studies the fantasies of the four-year-old Paul Klee through a childhood drawing. Humberto Nagera uses letters by Vincent van Gogh for an investigation into this artist's painting. Alfons Reiter brings psychoanalytic perspectives to bear on the work of the German Expressionist, Ernst Kirchner, whose artistic opus is seen in its function as self-esteem regulator for the artist. Hartmut Kraft treats object loss and creativity in the work of the Swiss artist, Ferdinand Hodler. Udo Rauchfleisch attempts a psychoanalytic formulation of the recent artistic movement that has been termed "conceptual art." In a second essay, Kraft writes about the sculpture and environment of the German artist, Mark Prent. It is a contribution to the understanding of the psychodynamic impact of art on the viewer.

An introductory discussion by the editor precedes each article, and the essays are followed by a glossary of psychoanalytic terms and by short biographies of the authors. Twelve black and white illustrations complete the volume. An index would have been helpful but is not included.

ERNEST S. WOLF (WINNETKA, IL)

FREUD AND ANTHROPOLOGY. A HISTORY AND REAPPRAISAL. (Psychological Issues Monograph 55.) By Edwin R. Wallace, IV. New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1983. 306 pp.

It has been fashionable in recent years to argue that Freud's theoretical writing, at least his metapsychology, was rooted primarily in an underlying neurological model. His interest in anthropology has always been seen as a peripheral pursuit, an exercise in extending psychoanalytic ideas beyond the clinical domain in which they were being formulated. Edwin Wallace turns all this around. He argues that anthropology was not only a consuming interest of Freud's, but one that played a significant part in the formulation of some of his major clinical concepts.

As a historical study of Freud's thinking, Wallace's work is an impressive contribution to the history of ideas. The well-argued thesis just mentioned certainly must have an impact on the exegesis of Freud's metapsychology, both for an understanding of its place in the history of ideas and as a part of the rethinking of metapsychological issues that is in progress these days.

But Wallace's work aspires to more than this. Wallace is not only concerned with an evaluation of Freud's use of anthropological sources available to him, but he is also interested in evaluating the impact of Freud's ideas (largely as presented in *Totem and Taboo*) on anthropology since his time. Even more daringly (since it is further afield from Wallace's own historical and psychoanalytic training), it aspires to an evaluation of the validity of Freud's basic postulates about primitive thought in terms of present-day anthropological thinking. In some of these aspirations Wallace succeeds; in others he is less successful. An adequate review discussing all of the issues he addresses would require an essay much longer than the space allotted here. Therefore, I shall leave Wallace's review of the anthropological scene of Freud's time and of Freud's use of his anthropological sources to those who are more qualified to comment on them (except to say that I agree with him that the evolutionist assumptions Freud made about primitive societies did indeed characterize much of the anthropological literature of the decades before *Totem and Taboo*). I shall focus my comments on the topics that occupy the last two-thirds of Wallace's book: his discussion of the reactions among anthropologists to Freud's ideas on primitive society, his attempt to evaluate the issues raised by

Freud's ventures into cross-cultural interpretation, and his postulates about primitive societies.

In chapter three of his book, after having thoroughly teased out in the previous chapter the sources of the anthropological data used by Freud for *Totem and Taboo*, he reviews the various criticisms leveled against the evolutionist school on which Freud principally relied for his source material. In the next chapter, he reviews the anthropological criticisms which have been directed against *Totem and Taboo* itself. Wallace's survey seems reasonably balanced, up to about 1950, except that his reliance on Marvin Harris's textbook on the history of anthropological theory has led to serious imbalances in his evaluation of the current views on evolutionary theory, as I shall elaborate below.

In chapter five, Wallace leaps into the substantive issues brought up by Freud's contributions. First he offers a balanced discussion of the general issues raised when psychoanalytic interpretation is applied to cultures and social institutions. This is one of the best sections of the last half of the book. But he closes this chapter with an assessment of Freud's ideas that he acknowledges will be controversial. Here, despite his cautions, he defends Freud's argument that the institutions and beliefs of primitive cultures—and of some literate, "non-Western" cultures in general, some of which are literate, high civilizations—are based on "childish" patterns of thinking that resemble neurotic fantasy (p. 217). Kroeber, Kluckhohn, and Margaret Mead certainly would *not* have agreed, and his assertion that they would have is surprising. Wallace acknowledges that his assertion is problematic, and he discusses *some* of its problematic aspects, but the chief problem with it is his ignoring the importance of differences between cultures in the deepest assumptions of their thought.

Wallace is a psychoanalyst and a historian; and given his lack of a background in anthropology, the sophistication of his discussion of some issues in the application of psychoanalysis to anthropology is impressive. It is, nonetheless, in this area that, as he says, "I feel most acutely my lack of training in anthropology" (p. 173). His lack of familiarity with anthropology, particularly with recent developments in it, leads him to some serious distortions in his portrayals of current thinking in the field. There are some rather glaring omissions—for example, of a very interesting (and provocative) recent reassessment of Freud's primal horde hypothesis by

Robert Paul,[1] in which he takes a quite different approach from other anthropological evaluations of the topic. (Paul also points out, incidentally, that Freud does not in *Totem and Taboo* take a Lamarckian view of the mode of transmission of guilt for the primal parricide, but rather suggests the possibility of cultural transmission; only later, in a 1917 letter to Abraham, does he opt for the Lamarckian argument.)

A mistake about publication dates leads Wallace into major confusion in his assessment of Lévi-Strauss's views on Freud. The order of publication of the English translations of two of Lévi-Strauss's major works happens to be the reverse of the order in which Lévi-Strauss actually wrote them.[2] The evolution of Lévi-Strauss's thinking on *Totem and Taboo* was thus in just the opposite direction from that which Wallace believes it to be (see pp. 154-155), i.e., toward an increasingly critical stance rather than toward increasing acceptance.

But the most serious distortion stems from an excessive reliance on Marvin Harris's controversial textbook on the history of anthropology. Harris's neo-evolutionary views have been sharply criticized by more psychologically minded anthropologists for their rigid environmental determinism.[3] This reliance on Harris's picture of anthropology has led Wallace to ignore some of the major figures in American anthropology. Clifford Geertz is not so much as mentioned, nor are other exponents of symbolic anthropology, a dominant American anthropological school that has been much more receptive to psychoanalytic ideas than have Harris's "cultural materialists." Victor Turner, a symbolic anthro-

[1] Paul, R. (1976): Did the primal crime take place? *Ethos* 4:311-352. See also, Freeman, D. (1969): Totem and Taboo, a reappraisal. In *Man and His Culture: Psychoanalytic Anthropology after 'Totem and Taboo'*, ed. W. Muensterberger. New York/London: Taplinger.

[2] *Elementary Structures of Kinship* was written in 1949, well before *Totemism* (1962), but was not translated until 1967. In addition, to compound the confusion, the reference to *Totemism* on p. 154 of *Freud and Anthropology* is misdated 1963, the date under which *Structural Anthropology* is listed in the bibliography. The subsequent quotation, on p. 155, is also misreferenced: it is not "elsewhere" but in the same passage as the preceding reference.

[3] E.g., see Fisher, L. & Werner, O. (1973): Explaining explanation: tension in American anthropology. *J. Anthropolog. Research*, 34:194-218.

pologist who profoundly integrated many of Freud's ideas into his studies of ritual,[4] is quoted only for some passing criticism of Freud's tendency to equate primitive beliefs with neurotic rationalizations. A. I. Hallowell, who deeply integrates Freud's structural theory into his thought, and whose 1954 essay anticipates recent psychoanalytic thinking about the self,[5] is cited only for his general comments on Freud's historical influence on anthropology.

One result of Wallace's restricted view of the field is a great exaggeration of the prestige enjoyed by neo-evolutionism in anthropology and of the degree to which social evolution is of interest to anthropologists today. The premise of a restored acceptance of cultural evolution plays a key role in Wallace's argument in favor of the validity of Freud's equating primitive culture with neurotic fantasy. But the revival of cultural evolutionism, even in the modified form Wallace describes, is primarily limited to one sizable but restricted school of anthropology, the "neo-evolutionist" school of which Harris is a primary exponent. Most of its members, furthermore, do not emphasize progressive stages by which one can measure the "evolutionary level" of a given culture or social form, but the adaptive value of a cultural trait in a given environment.

Wallace discusses quite well some of the issues that have been raised concerning the application of psychoanalytic theory to cultural materials. He deals particularly well with the objections many anthropologists raise against psychoanalyzing cultural institutions and institutionalized forms as such: the questions of whether a shared social form, such as a ritual or a belief, can have an unconscious meaning in the same way that an individual's fantasy does, and whether "the meaning" of a social form is necessarily the same for every member of a society. He notes the bridge concepts, such as Spiro's "culturally constituted defensive system," that have been carefully constructed as ways in which one may legitimately apply psychoanalytic insights to understanding how social institutions function. Yet, when, in the final chapter, he comes to evaluating Freud's premises about primitive cultures, Wallace appears to set

[4] Turner, V. (1978): Encounter with Freud: the making of a comparative symbologist. In *The Making of Psychological Anthropology*, ed. G. Spindler. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press, pp. 558-583.

[5] Hallowell, A. I. (1954): The self and its behavioral environment. In *Culture and Experience*. Philadelphia: Univ. Pennsylvania Press, 1955, pp. 75-110.

aside his insightful discussion of the problems involved in interpreting cultural forms psychoanalytically. He wholeheartedly endorses Freud's facile notion—something between a conclusion and a postulate—that the beliefs, rituals, and other cultural institutions of "primitive society" are somehow less rational than those of our advanced civilization, that they are more filled with "primary process thinking" and infantile fantasy.

The problems with this kind of notion are many. It is not easy to compare the degree of "rationality" of arguments in radically different societies; what seems totally "irrational" to the European, arguing from European premises, may make perfectly reasonable sense once the different premises of a different society are understood. It should also come as a caution that the non-Western societies which have been thrown together as "primitive" include such cosmopolitan civilizations as the Inca and Maya, Benin, and the civilizations of India and the Far East. Again, psychoanaysts often implicitly compare religious forms in other societies with the *scientific* reasoning of our own. Comparing *religious* beliefs may lead to a different picture. Does invocation of "animistic spirits" (if one may condense vastly diverse types of indigenous religious forms, not all of which are based on personification of natural phenomena, into a stereotyped concept of "animism") inherently involve any greater degree of "projection" than prayer to a personal god? In the press on any single day, and in the highest policy-making levels of our government, one sees examples of magical and egocentric thinking. Is not the attribution to other societies of foibles that are rife in our own itself a form of projection? Such stereotypes, unfortunately, provide a convenient justification for not making the effort necessary to understand deeply the premises of another culture very different from our own.

Lévi-Strauss[6] points out that *any* culture, viewed through the lens of the premises of a different culture, looks childish to the other. Our thought patterns and emotional comportment look childish to an Eskimo or a Bororo simply because we permit and institutionalize, in our adult behavior, patterns which are discour-

[6] Lévi-Strauss, C. (1947): *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Translated by J. H. Bell, J. R. von Sturmer & R. Needham. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, Chapter 7, pp. 84-97.

aged and disciplined in their children, just as they institutionalize patterns of thought and behavior that are suppressed in our socialization process. Our behavior, our thought patterns, look as "infantile" and "neurotic" to an Australian aborigine as theirs, through the eyes of Róheim, do to us.

Wallace has some important points to make in this book. His analysis of the role of anthropology in the development of Freud's clinical concepts is an important contribution to Freud scholarship, one which should have a significant impact on current discussions of Freud's theories. The final chapter of the book makes the important point that Freud's contributions to social theory did not end with *Totem and Taboo.* Some of Freud's most important contributions to anthroplogy are in such later works as *The Ego and the Id*, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and (yet to be fully appreciated) *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.* Wallace's survey of the sources of Freud's anthropology, and of the early reactions of anthropologists to Freud, are also useful. It is a pity that the climax of the book should be devoted to its weakest point, to a defense of the one tenet of Freud's view of non-Western societies that would best be laid to rest.

WAUD H. KRACKE (CHICAGO)

LE MASQUE OU LE PÈRE AMBIGU. (The Mask or the Ambiguous Father). By Jacques Bril. Paris: Payot, 1983. 233 pp.

The flowering of psychoanalysis in France since 1968 has had a creative impact on French intellectual and academic life. *Le Masque* is one such synthetic essay in the genre of psychoanalytic application. Jacques Bril is a professor of literature at the University of Paris and at the University of Tours and the author of four previous books. His erudition is quite impressive: he has mastered the anthropological, sociological, and psychoanalytic literature on mask phenomena. In writing an archaeology of the mask, Bril grounds the sociocultural dimensions of masks within a psychoanalytic perspective.

Bril explicitly acknowledges his debt to Freud's *Totem and Taboo.* Freud's emphasis on the revolt of the primal horde against the father becomes a subtext in Bril's work. He argues that the universal complex of rebellion, murder, guilt, and reparation are

often condensed in masklike faces. He makes excellent use of the psychoanalytic explorations of Abraham, Ferenczi, and Róheim, and he skillfully employs Spitz's researches on the early mother-child dialogue and Robert Stoller's research on male gender identity. More crucially, Bril's essay demonstrates France's recent discovery of Winnicott and of the English object relations school of psychoanalysis. In Bril's explication of masks, his integration of Winnicott's *Playing and Reality* (not published in French until 1975) shows how an understanding of transitional objects and transitional phenomena, as well as of the psychoanalytic idea of play, can help to decipher myths, religious festivals, theater, and masquerades. Bril also indicates a critical awareness of papers by Melanie Klein. Klein's *Psychoanalysis of Children* and her *Psychoanalytic Essays* became available in French translation only in 1978. (Even Hanna Segal's *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* was not available in French until 1976.)

Bril's psychoanalytic reading of the mask primarily focuses on prehistoric societies with an oral culture. He proposes that the mask is the expression of deep-rooted psychological conflict and is the symbolic projection of ambivalence. Masks, he asserts, have a masculine valence. The fundamental ambiguity of masks stems from an essential cultural and psychological ambiguity about man himself. The mask hides, camouflages, and deceives, while it simultaneously exhibits, reveals, and designates. Masks follow a dialectic of illusion and epiphany.

In oral cultures, crucial forms of knowledge are linked to the face. One learned by looking. Anxieties about birth, developmental turning points, desires, and death were condensed into a mask. A given countenance often harmed and fascinated a viewer. Bril attributes the captivating power of the mask to the sight of the brutal and feared father, a figure who was enormously admired and who was an object of jealousy and murderous rivalry. Masks have a resolutely masculine character, according to Bril's summary of ethnological and folkloric observations. Feminine qualities seem to be ostracized in masks. Bril explains the apparently universal male quality of masks by pointing to the primacy of the masculine role in agricultural societies, in partriarchal families, and in ancestor worship, including such variations on ancestor worship as

reverence for the gods, love of heroes, and idealization of the genius.

In a chapter titled "Mask, Death, and Paternity," Bril distills Freud's and Lévi-Strauss's writings on totemism. Males assumed a dominant role in prehistoric cultures not only because of their role in procreation, but primarily because of their violence. Male domination through force went hand in hand with female submissiveness and renunciation.

To unveil what is behind the cultural enigma of the mask, Bril argues that the mask is a ritual organizer of unconscious symbolization and conflict. The mask, in short, expresses unconscious wishes and desires. Masks allow for unconscious fantasies to be expressed coherently. As an agent of revelation, the mask is necessarily ambiguous. One can assign a multiplicity of meanings to any given mask. Culturally, the mask is a mediating agency, a carrier of linkages, in terms of time and space, primarily because of its psychological role as a transitional object. As a transitional object, the mask facilitates the often difficult task of the male child's disidentification with the "obscure" mother, and thus allows the child entry into the symbolic realm—the realm of oedipal passions and struggles as well as the realm of civilization and renunciation of instinctual wishes.

Ancient societies tended to make the glance at the Father a special privilege. To see the Father was both to celebrate him and to commit a crime against him. It was prohibited to see the Father because such a glance led to forbidden knowledge. Psychoanalysts have long understood that looking plays a crucial role both in sexual excitement and as an invitation to the sexual act. The concept of voyeuristic pleasures and of the eros of the visual sphere has been accepted by psychoanalysts since Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1905. The eye can be considered a metaphorical sexual organ.

Masks provide society with social coherence. The Father, more specifically the glance at the Father, becomes the crucial organizer, the form-imprinter of social law, regulation, and interdiction. Bril argues that the mask is the artifact of facial representation, which objectifies, either exactly or schematically, certain common mental attitudes in a community. This *mentalité*, including unconscious

fantasy, provides a culture with a homogenous cultural atmosphere, though without preventing the development of conflicts or serious internal strife. The paternal force represented in the mask is ahistorical. In this sense, the mask exemplifies the mythic aspiration of a given society.

In a text where the visual plays such a central role, Bril could have enhanced his book by including illustrations of the various masks under discussion. Although he provides some concluding pages on the transformations of the mask in modern urban, secular, and technological society, it is appended as if it were an afterthought. It is clear that the face—of the celebrity, the President, the sports hero—assisted by modern techniques of subliminal advertising and the mechanical reproduction of images, all belong to the mask phenomena in some way. Bril might have updated his study by including some analysis of the contemporary mask.

A recent exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City juxtaposed primitive art and modern art, including works of Gauguin, Picasso, Braque, and Matisse. Many of the objects displayed were masks. It was plain that the moderns had not only imitated the primitives, but at times had stolen major ideas and images. I left the museum pondering whether the category of "primitive" was pertinent (precisely the same ought to be said about "modern"); and I reminded myself that much of the anonymous art of "primitive" societies was as fresh, complex, powerful, and evocative as recognized masterpieces of twentieth century urban artists. Bril's insights into the enigma of the mask can certainly help us to grasp both the continuities and the ruptures, the mythic and the psychological structures, in old and new cultural productions.

DAVID JAMES FISHER (LOS ANGELES)

LIBERATION AND ITS LIMITS. THE MORAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT OF FREUD. By Jeffrey B. Abramson. New York: The Free Press, 1984. 160 pp.

This short, clearly written study of the moral and political implications of Freud's thought subsumes a reading of Philip Rieff, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, and Paul Ricoeur. The title reflects Abramson's thesis that the liberation offered by psychoanalysis is a personal one which, although profound, is incomplete. On

the final page he writes: "Such self-understanding cannot illumine, much less support, the richer aspects of personal character —the virtues of fellow-feeling and friendship, of citizenship and allegiance to a common good. These virtues are realized through politics or not at all." Abramson claims that Freud's writings contribute to this communitarian vision of liberation, but that this aspect of his work is underdeveloped.

The description of communitarian liberation is at bottom a statement about the meaning of life. The vision is attractive, and the virtues extolled are admirable. Since the latter are regarded as completing the human soul, and can be fulfilled only in a political context, then the meaning of life is said to be found in participation in politics. It should be noted, however, that such statements are philosophical in origin and, as such, cannot be refuted or confirmed within psychoanalysis itself.

It is possible, however, to assess the extent to which psychoanalysis supports the view that Abramson's vision can be achieved. He makes his case through a discussion of Freud's writings on group psychology and an analysis of the nature of Eros in Freud's thought. Concerning the first, Freud emphasized that members of a group have a relationship with the leader rather than with each other. Abramson maintains that they can have more meaningful relationships with each other than Freud allows; the self, in other words, can be fulfilled in the group. This, unfortunately, is asserted rather than demonstrated with examples. Abramson also claims (p. 60) that Freud's account of group psychology can help us understand events only when politics go badly. But, in fact, it is offered by Freud as an account of the dynamics underlying group behavior generally. To support his claim, Abramson would need to analyze occasions when politics have gone well and explain them in terms that refute or override Freud's account of group dynamics. The author's effort to link his vision of liberation to Freud's work might have been better served had he provided concrete examples rather than confining his discussion to the work of theorists of political community.

Regarding the nature of Eros in Freud's thought, Abramson claims that friendship (and hence citizenship and allegiance to a common good) offers a form of erotic attachment beyond the antagonisms that he finds govern Freud's treatment of Eros. I would argue, however, that he achieves this point by reading into Freud

an artificial division between the nature of erotic attachments within and without the family. Friendship, just as much as intimate relationships, can be plagued by unresolved preoedipal and oedipal wishes and impulses. Whether it is or is not so plagued is very much an individual matter.

Abramson's careful presentation of Freud's thought is more successful at some points than at others. He is correct in emphasizing that Freud was not a proponent of unrestrained sexual self-expression, but saw health as consisting of mature love and work. But Abramson does not seem to appreciate how difficult it is to overcome unconscious instinctual desires and fantasies in therapy. Nor does he address the problem that the form of self-knowledge generated by analytic therapy is not available to all individuals. How, one wonders, might this affect the argument? His discussion of the oedipal phase is particularly disappointing. He treats it, with justification, as the formative political experience in the individual's life, since it is here that attitudes toward authority figures are first formed. His account is correct as far as it goes: the little boy wishes to possess his mother and hates his father for standing in his way. The mother is given up as a love object because of the fear of castration, and the little boy internalizes parental injunctions as his superego. But the complication that the boy also wishes to possess his father and hates his mother for standing in his way goes unmentioned. The entire episode, moreover, is colored by active and passive impulses whose resolution will affect the individual's responses to authority figures. Although these are crucially relevant to Abramson's thesis, they are not mentioned, much less explored. Here, and elsewhere, this book combines a certain sensitivity to Freud's thought with a failure to comprehend its rewarding complexities.

NELLIE L. THOMPSON (NEW YORK)

PSYCHOANALYTIC REFLECTIONS ON THE HOLOCAUST: SELECTED ESSAYS. Edited by Steven S. Luel, Ed.D., and Paul Marcus, M.D. New York: Holocaust Awareness Institute, Center For Judaic Studies, University of Denver, and KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1984. 239 pp.

The impassioned voice of Elie Wiesel has cautioned us that we "can never penetrate the cursed and spellbound universe of the

survivor." Thus far, attempts of scholars from various disciplines have been less than completely successful. While acknowledging that psychoanalysis "remains an unparalleled science of the irrational," the editors of this important and stimulating volume have sought, in their own words, to dispel notions of a parochial approach and to utilize a more comprehensive study of the Holocaust in order to rediscover the "human center" and to achieve some balance in a universe characterized by Adorno's statement: "No poetry after Auschwitz." A group of distinguished clinicians and scholars, mainly mental health professionals, have contributed essays reflecting individual points of view. Although a number of themes appear with some regularity, there is no pretense at achieving unity or cohesiveness; some issues are met with widely differing opinions. The editors have succeeded admirably in their intention to foster an atmosphere of reflection and "constructive intellectual disquietude."

The book contains three major sections: Ideological and Cultural Perspectives, Differing Views of Survivorship, and A Generation After. It ends with a roundtable discussion of Psychoanalysis and the Holocaust. Each article is prefaced by an informative and skillfully distilled statement that abstracts the essence of the contribution. A valuable glossary of technical terms is provided for those readers who are not completely familiar with psychoanalytic concepts.

The first section begins with a superbly incisive paper by Robert Jay Lifton, "Medicalized Killing in Auschwitz," based on interviews with Nazi physicians, some of whom worked in concentration camps. He discusses not only the perverse qualities which enabled them to see mass murder as a healing and cleansing process but also the "psychic numbing" that allowed compartmentalization and warding off of awareness of oneself as a murderer. In a creative leap, Lifton points out that the distinction between healing and killing has, unhappily, been more fragile than we wish to believe and that we need to understand the impulse of mass murder in the name of a desperate striving for new life and vitality in order to renew a true spirit of healing. It might be added that further understanding of the physicians who declined to participate in the torture and killing and withstood pressures to conform can aid our quest.

John H. Hanson, in "Nazi Culture: The Social Uses of Fantasy

as Repression," examines the role played by unconscious processes in society. This erudite and scholarly essay, encompassing familiarity with history, psychology, sociology, and aesthetics, asserts that sociopathic and genocidal inclinations were socialized in Nazi Germany. The masses were incited to participate in war and in the elimination of racially "impure" peoples in the service of blocking awareness of despair, self-hatred, and crushing feelings of inferiority. A majority of the population was placed in a "pseudo-aesthetic trance" in which the sense of what they had become was lost. Inexorably, Germany became a death factory as military defeat loomed, which was reflected in symbols and cultural imagery. Hanson shows how dangers inherent in a collective search for symbols of power by those who feel impotent and consumed with rage can overwhelm a society whose façade can otherwise appear so civilized.

Raphael Moses, in "An Israeli Psychoanalyst Looks Back in 1983," candidly describes the evolution of personal attitudes toward survivors he encountered as a member of the Jewish Brigade of the British army and the attitude of Israeli society toward survivors who emigrated there after the war. Initial denial and avoidance gave way to awareness, identification, and empathy over a period of twenty years. The use of Holocaust imagery by political leaders to describe the enemies of Israel is seen as a possible reflection of a tendency to repeat a pattern of victimization. The author's balanced tone is clearly evident when he discusses the controversial and complex problems emerging from military action by the Israel Defense Forces and the polarization of public opinion as a result. A consideration of the attitudes described at the beginning of this paper may have been influenced by the perceived contrast between the seeming passivity of the European Jewish community and the activism of Israelis. It should be emphasized that these phenomena appeared in other Western nations and have been characterized as a gap or latency period which has had to be traversed because of a need for both the survivor and the world to forget before the horrors of the Holocaust could be confronted. A plea for a less formal remembrance may seem controversial. Communal respect for the sanctity of the Holocaust seems to have been of psychological value for the survivor, and the injunction to remember past crises and injustices as an important

part of the Jewish credo has helped to maintain intactness during a long and often tragic history. Ritual serves a useful purpose, and to relinquish it would be regrettable.

The concluding essay in the first section, "The Holocaust as Sin: Requirements in Psychoanalytic Theory for Human Evil and Mature Morality," by E. Mansell Pattison, poses some challenging questions. Pattison traces the development of psychoanalytic concepts about the nature of evil and concludes that if psychoanalysis is to be a moral science and affirm the evil of the Holocaust, it cannot simply retain a health-oriented frame of reference. There are perplexing questions to grapple with before one can agree with this position. Significant aspects of psychoanalytic structural theory as it refers to superego development and the economic relationship between narcissism and investment in mature object relations are not sufficiently taken into account in this proposal. The validity of Hartmann's work is acknowledged, but it is criticized for not exploring larger issues of good and evil. A statement is made that traditional Freudian thought saw society as the evil; actually, what Freud emphasized is that man's instinctual drives are "evil" and that human beings pay a price for learning to conform to the civilizing demands imposed by society and the price exacted is the development of neuroses. Ultimately, it seems that Pattison comes close to expressing a wish that psychoanalysis include religious concepts as well as scientific ones. However well-intended Pattison's proposals are, we may have to conclude that complex and intricate issues impose limitations on psychoanalytic theory, and it is difficult to see how emendations can be formulated that extend beyond the realm of science to areas of philosophy and religion.

The next section is more unified. It focuses on various views of survivorship. It opens with Klaus D. Hoppe's article, "Severed Ties," a rich and stimulating contribution by an experienced clinician whose advocacy on behalf of survivors has covered a span of over two decades. He uses his findings as an examiner for the reparations program to describe the emotional stupor and alexithymia seen in victims of persecution; this can result in diminution of the capacity to elaborate symbolic processes. He also addresses the consequences of "matchings" between examiners and applicants of different attitudes, stressing the value of "controlled identification" in enhancing empathy. Despite recognition of the crip-

pling effects of "severed ties," the paper ends on a note of hopefulness.

In a seminal contribution of both clinical and theoretical significance, Henry Krystal addresses problems of the aging survivor who must confront the traumatic past as his life ebbs. The paper, "Integration and Self-Healing in Posttraumatic States," opens with a review of infantile and adult catastrophic trauma. Any discussion of this subject is bound to be difficult and controversial because there is much disagreement about its precise definition among psychoanalysts. A statement that adult psychic trauma is *not* caused by the intensity of stimuli seems puzzling, as the author's own use of the terms "massive" and "catastrophic" suggest that the economic aspect is important. Krystal emphasizes the need for aging survivors to relinquish their outrage in their self-healing process, although this is difficult for them to do, as it would seem to grant the Nazi killers an ultimate victory. He also underlines, as do many others, that the achievement of serenity requires a successful completion of effective mourning, a process denied victims during their persecutions.

Jack Terry's paper, "The Damaging Effects of the 'Survivor Syndrome'," is critical of mental health professionals for labeling and thus stereotyping victims of the Holocaust. The term, "survivor syndrome," was a diagnosis employed as a result of examinations conducted for the purpose of determining eligibility for compensation under the reparations law enacted by the German government. Terry suggests that such a global term of assessment undermines the dignity and individuality of survivors. He also speculates that the examiners involved were lacking in objectivity as a result of their own "survivor guilt" and harbored an unconscious contempt for victims of persecution. His assertion that concentration camp traumatization does not automatically lead to psychopathology is probably correct. Experiences such as the loss of loved ones and the inability to experience a mourning process fully are clearly important in this regard. However, it must be acknowledged that these also are consequences of Holocaust victimization, which can take many forms. Terry in his condemnation fails to distinguish between the compensation examination process and abuses of this process by some bureaucrats, which had indeed represented a form of continuation of persecution. It must also be

noted, with regret, that Terry himself sometimes employs generalizations as he imputes them to others. In calling for greater empathy and self-critical awareness, a respect for individuality, and sound clinical judgment on the part of therapists in the treatment of their patients, he is on firmer ground in his eloquent plea.

The section devoted to the children of survivors begins with "Reverberations of Genocide: Its Expression in the Conscious and Unconscious of Post-Holocaust Generations" by Dori Laub and Nanette C. Auerhahn. This essay is particularly relevant because of its sharpening of the controversy about real events and fantasies in pathogenesis. The authors feel that the Holocaust may create an "in-between" state along the continuum of real and imagined trauma in those who have not been directly affected, and sensitize them to the potential for brutality and aggression. Clinical material is cited to illustrate how the incredible but inevitable realness of the Holocaust can provide an unconscious organizing role for future generations and leave a lasting imprint. This excellent contribution brings further evidence to bear in refutation of what might be regarded as Terry's minimization of Holocaust-induced psychopathological impact.

The sense of process and progression in this section is conveyed in "Living with the Holocaust: Thoughts on Revitalization" by Steven A. Luel, in which he outlines problems faced by children of survivors, who must contend with a past so riddled with tragedy that they cannot savor experiences that can make life enjoyable. He disagrees with the notion that a renunciation of "pain addiction" is disrespectful to martyred victims, and he shows how a shift in attitude can be as revitalizing for the young as Krystal has shown it is for the aged. He cites the work of Hillel Klein, whose studies of Kibbutz families in Israel pointed to group activity and observance of ritual as a healthy way to create an optimal atmosphere for growth and renewal.

In a reflective and scholarly essay, "Jewish Consciousness after the Holocaust," Paul Marcus writes from the point of view of an American Jew, personally untouched by persecution or loss. Using existential as well as psychoanalytic concepts, he considers such issues as Jewish authenticity, the fate of Jewish identity in the Diaspora, dilemmas to be faced in Israel as its citizens move to a new position of power, attitudes to be taken toward the non-Jewish

world, and questions confronting a people, many of whom have felt abandoned by their God. In considering implications for psychotherapy, Marcus recommends that issues about Jewish identity, formerly ignored, should be taken up with patients. He concludes with the sanguine wish that a successful analysis should lead to a flowering of ideals of justice and social responsibility. Laudable as this may be, this goal may be difficult to attain, as suggested by Freud's discussion of mobilization of latent conflicts in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable."

Martin Wangh has long been interested in applying psychoanalytic concepts to basic social problems. His article, "On Obstacles to the Working-Through of the Nazi Holocaust Experience and on the Consequences of Failing To Do So," is of particular significance because it confronts the future as well as the past. He discusses the defenses employed by survivor victims and the outside world in the wake of the Holocaust which have led to denial, numbing, and silence. He also warns that the persistence of and comforting protection provided by such defenses can be very dangerous in the face of the grave threat of a nuclear holocaust. He recommends the enlistment of mental health professionals in efforts to help mankind stem its paranoia and facilitate a working through of unresolved anxieties of past traumatic experiences. Difficult as this may be, failure to deal with excessive complacency may well result in plunging us all into the abyss.

A group of distinguished psychoanalysts participated in an informal discussion, moderated by the editors, an account of which is published at the conclusion of the book. It is entitled: "Psychoanalysis and the Holocaust: A Roundtable." The discussants included Martin S. Bergmann, Sidney Furst, Frances Grossman, and Martin Wangh. The group addressed questions of a wide-ranging nature that referred to absorbing and difficult issues. The reader will find this discussion stimulating, disturbing, and thoroughly worthwhile to ponder.

Luel and Marcus have edited a most fascinating work. This is a book that goes beyond the data-gathering efforts which were necessary in the past. It presents ideas that deserve to be shared with interested readers in general and with mental health professionals in particular. It perpetuates memory, widens horizons, and af-

firms the victory of the human intellect and spirit over mortal ruin.

MILTON E. JUCOVY (GREAT NECK, N.Y.)

LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS. Edited by Edith Kurzweil and William Phillips. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983. 399 pp.

Like a pair of innovative travel agents who are determined to inject fresh life into a tiresomely stale historical Grand Tour of psychoanalysis by designing an offbeat but upbeat itinerary, Edith Kurzweil and William Phillips offer a 400-page, 25-essay whirlwind voyage through psychoanalytic literary studies from the earliest days to the present time. *Natürlich*, we begin with an obligatory pilgrimage to *fin de siècle* Vienna—with ample quotations from the master's revolutionary opus on dreams. With almost equal predictability, the intellectual junket winds (or bogs) down in the Left Bank cafes of Saint Germain in the midst of pretentiously obscure chatter by France's two major modern *magots*, the Lacanians and the semiotic rhetoricians.

It is the places in between the worlds of 1890 and 1980 which give Kurzweil and Phillips's tour its charm and vitality—at least for a stodgy, card-carrying member of the American Psychoanalytic like myself. Such unexpected stopovers as Otto Rank's highly original views on the psychology of creativity and Erich Fromm's deft dissection of Kafka's *Trial* as though it were a dream are entirely new to me.

The tour also permits the psychoanalyst reader to mingle with the natives by providing excerpts from the other side of the intellectual ledger. We get to hear what working writers and academic "lit crits" think about analysis. Judging from the startingly fresh insights that W. H. Auden offers in his analysis of a dream of a morphinist, it might well prove useful for every psychoanalytic institute to have a poet in residence to co-teach its dream seminars. And nowhere is that old game of analyzing the analyst played with more finesse than in Steven Marcus's sharply reasoned study of Freud's literary style and clever use of suspenseful narrative tech-

niques in his *artful* as opposed to *scientific* rendering of his patients' psychiatric histories.

Yet this Cook's Tour has some glaring omissions. Missing from the collection is *any* example from the crucial corpus of works by Winnicott, Kris, Greenacre, *et al.*, that gradually developed what I believe is a central assumption in our present-day psychoanalytic psychology of literature: the Loss-Restitution Hypothesis of Creativity.

As far as I know, the term itself has never been coined by any one author. The hypothesis has its origins in Winnicott's groundbreaking work on the role of the transitional object as a childhood precursor of adult creativity. This was followed by Kris's astute observations on the family romance and Greenacre's in-depth studies of the role of loss and separation during the early childhood years of future artists. Gradually, a series of coherent assumptions about the psychology of art and the artist has emerged in mainstream psychoanalysis.

Stated in its simplest form, the Loss-Restitution Hypothesis claims that the artist is a loss-sensitive, separation-prone individual, both by temperament and as the result of early trauma(s). Because of these factors, he learns as a child to rely upon his ability to create imagery (verbal, musical, visual, etc.) as a compensatory defense against loss and separation. Later, as an adult, the artist is a depression-prone, loss-sensitive individual who uses his talent and ability to create both as a coping mechanism and non-defensively, as a mode of identity formation.

Viewed in these terms, art is a disguised form of nostalgically autobiographical remembering whose commemorative powers seek to defy nature's inevitable forces of death, decay, and loss. It does this by creating something of permanence that may outlive its creator. In this way, creative activity defends against depression while the creative product itself (the play, poem, painting, or what have you) represents a symbolic denial of loss.

Creative activity permits artists to fend off feelings of loss, emptiness, and depression, but their susceptibility can be appeased only temporarily. It can never be totally remedied by the creative process, no matter how successful the product is. In fact, a victorious artistic rendering is little better than a failure. Like Antony's Cleopatra, who awakens appetites where most she satisfies,

the artist's muse holds him in equally paradoxical thralldom. His thirst for permanence is only further incited by the memory of its having been ecstatically quenched. To have known the exhilaration of creating a masterpiece and thereby achieving immortality inevitably evokes a craving for more of the same.

But enough has been said. The main point is that any historical collection of essays that totally ignores the Loss-Restitution Hypothesis of creativity cannot lay claim to being a truly representative sampling of the major psychoanalytic thinking about literature that has been carried out over the past ninety years. Apart from this reservation, however, I find this collection of essays well worth reading.

STEPHEN M. WEISSMAN (WASHINGTON, D.C.)

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

American Imago. XXXVIII, 1981.

To cite this article: (1986) American Imago. XXXVIII, 1981., The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 55:1, 194-206, DOI: 10.1080/21674086.1986.11927135

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1986.11927135

Published online: 20 Nov 2017.

ABSTRACTS

American Imago. XXXVIII, 1981.

Abstracted by George G. Fishman.

A Jungian Critique of Harry Slochower's Paper. Jonathan J. Goldberg. Pp. 41-56.

Reviewing Slochower's paper[1] on Jung's *Answer to Job*, Goldberg reminds us that interpretation is of the mind of the interpreter. In the Jungian view, the answer to Job is an exploration of transpersonal truths. When Jung dreams of a phallus in a temple, it is "the generative energy of the collective unconscious." Similarly, Job and Yahweh, Freud and Jung, explore the mythic boundaries of Father in relation to Son. Goldberg emphasizes that in his view what blocks a person is not conflict, but a stagnating set of premises. "Working through" is realizing new premises, i.e., that the son can seek himself, that God may have to be recreated by every individual, etc. His arguments have a cogent coherence except in reference to Jung's letter to Illing. Jung's casual generalizations about the Jews, even if taken as an exploration of collective symbols, bear a strong resemblance to prejudice, which always has its rationale.

Dostoevsky: Epilepsy, Mysticism, and Homosexuality. J. R. Maze. Pp. 155-184.

The author's thesis is that epilepsy represents homoerotic yearnings in every instance of its occurrence in Dostoevsky's novels. The two main examples are Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot* and Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The evidence cogently supports "homosexual" overtones. However, it does not expressly lead us to the rather classical interpretations Maze offers. He focuses on passive submission mainly as a negative polarity of the oedipus complex. Although he alludes to Dostoevsky's "vain need for unconditional love and acceptance," he does not consider the homosexuality as a possible sexualization of this need. On this account, the otherwise careful analysis suffers.

Virginia Woolf—Her Voyage Back. Louise F. Strouse. Pp. 185-202.

Strouse compares Lily Briscoe's tie to Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* with Virginia Woolf's actual relationship to three other women. These are her older sister, Vanessa, and her friends, Violet Dickinson and Vita Sackville-West. The thesis is that Woolf was in search of the earliest mother-daughter tie, a symbiotic merger. Thus, even though she was thirteen when she lost her mother, her yearnings suggest abandonment by the mother of her earliest childhood. The evidence for yearnings for fusion is abundant. Woolf is amply quoted from her letters and novel. For example, "Could loving as people called it make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? For it was not knowledge, but unity that she desired." Strouse masterfully pulls together diverse sources to illustrate specific variations on the theme of the fantasy of merger.

[1] See, this *Quarterly*, LIV, pp. 511-12, for abstract of the Slochower paper.

The Appeal of *Star Wars*: An Archetypal-Psychoanalytic View. Martin Miller and Robert Sprich. Pp. 203-220.

Contesting the mainstream critiques of *Star Wars* as being fluff in the service of commercialism, the authors argue instead for the film's attainment of many of the qualities of successful myth and fairy tale. The viewer is allowed to identify with an archetypal hero, Luke, who is attempting to resolve oedipal conflict. A diversity of themes and ideas are considered: the family romance suggested by Luke's adoption; the transcendence of Obi-wan; the negative oedipal relationship of R2D2 and C3PO; the Buddhist quality of the Force; the presence of a subliminal history of American film heroism, e.g., Hans Solo's resemblance to a Humphrey Bogart character. The analysis is warmly serious and successfully vindicates the appeal of this delightful film.

Milton's *Paradise Lost*: Eve's Struggle for Identity. Shari A. Zimmerman. Pp. 247-268.

This article begins: "For the last three centuries Milton's Eve has been viewed largely through a male lens which sees femininity as vain and seductive, as well as infantile and dependent." The author contends that this Eve is much more complex. Extensive selections from the poem are cited to suggest that Eve was engaged in a struggle for differentiation and selfhood which could only be achieved by simultaneously struggling toward a balance of being with Adam and being without him. After all, she has fusion literally foisted upon her. She is Adam's rib, a reflection of his self. Set against this merger is the option for finding her true self. It begins with a mirroring of her appearance in the water. This episode has been interpreted as evidence of Eve's vanity. Zimmerman offers a footnote to Lichtenstein and views it as a symbol of primary narcissism. She must find herself *apart* from Adam. She achieves this in her separate viewing of the world. The culmination is her enticement by Satan who is none other than a projection of her autonomous desires. Once she is committed to this path of finding herself, the serpent is an inevitability. The apple of knowledge affords the cognitive structuring for an independent external reality. Eve then feels the isolation of autonomy and superiority. She co-opts Adam's innocence in order to rejoin him. But the old form of merger is no longer possible between two individuated beings.

On Aggression. The Psychological Fallout of Surface Nuclear Testing. Martin Wangh. Pp. 305-322.

The author speculates on the psychological effects of widespread public exposure, in print and broadcast media, to images and facts concerning atomic explosions from 1945 to 1963. He calls on a variety of sources, from Sybil Escalona's extensive survey of children to Wangh's own more informal interviews with young adults and colleagues. In individual settings and group discussion, the "strontium 90 generation" admit that they live under a significant pall of nuclear anxiety. A feeling of "What is the use?" is always latently present. Wangh thus turns to the curious finding that despite the prevalence of anxiety over the potential holocaust, it is seldom raised in psychotherapy or analysis. Various reasons for this are discussed. Wangh speculates that affective consciousness of nuclear threat violates the

foundations of a stable treatment situation, i.e., the ability to believe in a therapist who can contain and control chaos. He offers a clinical illustration. This paper is invaluable in at least broaching the problem of locating the many emotional hideouts of nuclear anxiety.

Artemisia Gentileschi's *The Murder of Holofernes*. Marcia Pointon. Pp. 343-368.

Pointon analyzes the shock of this gory painting by the seventeenth century female artist. The painter herself had been raped prior to the commission of this work. She also married and gave birth to a daughter. Pointon suggests that both events form a poignant context for understanding the violence of the work. She believes that the posture of Holofernes in the painting depicts a birth. His arms are likened to the V shape of a woman's legs during childbirth. His bloodied head and its anguished expression are analogous both to the fetus and the mother in pain. Pointon writes that the seducer is punished with the pain that might have befallen his victim if she had conceived. The sexual reversal accounts for part of the shock effect of the imagery. Other factors contributing to a sense of visual dissonance are also discussed.

Ernest Jones's Hamlet Interpretation and Nevile's Translation of Seneca's Oedipus. Wolfgang F. H. Rudat. Pp. 369-388.

Rudat states that his purpose is to compare Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with Nevile's translation of Seneca's *Oedipus* (published in 1581). His point is that conventional criticism (such as that of Brockbank) directed against reductionist psychoanalytic interpretation of *Hamlet* is itself in error. It overlooks the possibility that the omnipresent oedipal allusions in *Hamlet* are there because Shakespeare was indeed alluding to *Oedipus*, by which Rudat means the version translated by Nevile. The possibility is compelling. Seneca's version features the ghost of Laius pursuing his own revenge against his son. Rudat points out that the father-ghost of *Hamlet* does not just reveal Claudius' incestuous crime but similarly torments Hamlet for his own unconscious triangular desires. The careful analysis provides substantial evidence that Shakespeare may indeed have *meant* to fuse the tragedy of the Oedipus theme with the suspense of the plot from the *Historia Danica*.

James Dickey's *Deliverance*: Midlife and the Creative Process. James W. Hamilton. Pp. 389-406.

Dickey was thirty-nine when he left advertising and conceived of the plot for *Deliverance*. Thus midlife crisis spawned the novel and became its content. In the novel four men in canoes, all between thirty-five and forty-six, are about to have a hard look at themselves. Hamilton uses excerpts from the novel to illustrate Levinson's four main polarities: (1) young-old; (2) destruction-creation; (3) masculine-feminine; and (4) attachment-separateness. These constitute the guideposts for successful arrival into middle age. The author carefully documents his assertions. The result is a fine article which should prove to be of interest to students of adult development.

Psychoanalytic Study of Society. X, 1984.

Abstracted by John J. Hartman.

A Case of "Brain-Fag" Syndrome: Psychotherapy of the Patient Adou A. in the Village of Yosso, Ivory Coast Republic. Paul Parin. Pp. 1-52.

The term "brain-fag" syndrome describes a condition found among African students related to their inability to continue their studies. Previous work has explained this as due to cultural changes stemming from Europeanization. Western psychiatry has described this syndrome in terms of hysteria, depression, borderline syndrome, or identity conflict. Parin carefully describes a case of a young Anyi man from the Ivory Coast whom he effectively treated in eighteen sessions of psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy. The author uses this case not only to point up the inadequacy of previous attempts to explain this syndrome but also to demonstrate the effectiveness of the psychoanalytic model in understanding and treating this man. In particular, the author contends that a "negative" outcome to the oedipus complex made this young man vulnerable to neurosis when his encounter with a European-style education led to conflicts.

Eskimo Social Control as a Function of Personality: A Study of Change and Persistence. Arthur E. Hippler. Pp. 53-90.

The thesis of this paper is that methods of social control as well as attitudes toward and behaviors within the criminal justice system are best understood in terms of a "cultural personality" which is defined as "the whole of the unconscious concerns and interests, defenses, and coping mechanisms that characterize the members of a cultural group." The author attempts to sustain his thesis using the continuity of Alaskan Eskimo approaches to the resolution of disputes. Extensive discussion of Eskimo "cultural personality," as revealed in psychological tests and other personality studies, serves as background to descriptions of the Eskimos' response to the changing legal system imposed on them by the American government beginning early in this century. Hippler contends that Eskimo reactions have remained continuous in ways consistent with their "cultural personality," despite drastic changes in the judicial system.

The Cult Phenomenon: Psychoanalytic Perspective. W. W. Meissner. Pp. 91-112.

Meissner follows Max Weber in distinguishing a church from a sect. He describes the cult phenomenon as the tendency within a religious organization to form factions that are at odds with the established organization. He seeks to demonstrate that such deviant religious groups become repositories for psychopathology. Some of Kohut's ideas about pathological narcissism as well as Meissner's own work on the paranoid process are utilized to show some of the pathological uses of the member-leader relationship in a cult. While many types of historical and modern cults are referred to, the major focus is on the cargo cults of Melanesia and the snake-handling cults of the southern United States, to illustrate the specific narcissistic and paranoid mechanisms involved. Meissner concludes that cult beliefs sustain a sense

of inner cohesiveness and identity which have become stronger motivating forces for members than only libidinal and narcissistic ones.

Freud and Religion: A History and Reappraisal. Edwin R. Wallace, IV. Pp. 113-162.

This paper offers a concise history of Freud's thinking and attitudes concerning religion, a discussion of the problems inherent in these views, and a critical reappraisal. Freud diagnosed religion itself as pathological. The author traces this theme through a number of Freud's writings, in which Freud compared religion to neurosis, psychosis, and infantilism. He seems to demonstrate that Freud's views were influenced by emotional factors. He mentions Freud's ambivalent relationship with his father, with Judaism, and eventually with his psychoanalytic colleagues. In his critique of Freud's position, Wallace cites Freud's failure to include institutional, adaptive, and historical factors in his views. He concludes that psychoanalysis became for Freud a "positive community" which had to ignore other "positive communities" such as organized religion.

An Outcome Study of Intensive Mindfulness Meditation. Daniel P. Brown and Jack Engler. Pp. 163-226.

This is a study of three groups of meditators whose different degrees of experience permitted an investigation of stages of development toward "enlightenment." Thematic Apperception Tests and Rorschach protocols were administered to an inexperienced American group, a Western advanced group, and an Asian group of masters of Yoga. The authors assert that their findings imply that in the masters' protocols "intrapsychic structure has undergone a radical, enduring reorganization." There was no evidence of conflict in sexual or aggressive drives. They conclude that meditation is not a form of therapy but rather a means of personal "liberation."

Les Sanson: An Oedipal Footnote to the History of France. Laurie Adams. Pp. 227-248.

In this study of the Sanson family, who carried out capital punishment in France for two centuries, the author uses the family's memoirs to propose an oedipal interpretation of the motives of the family for maintaining this profession, particularly their attempt to ally with royalty. French society's continued approval of decapitation and its fascination with the Sansons are also interpreted in terms of the oedipal paradigm. This paper attempts to interweave the individual motives of the Sanson executioners with the historical changes occuring in France that culminated in the French Revolution.

Oscar Wilde and the Masks of Narcissus. Karl Beckson, Pp. 249-268.

Beckson attempts to understand Oscar Wilde from the viewpoint of current psychoanalytic work on narcissism. The focus is on Wilde's concept of dandyism, particularly as it is portrayed in *An Ideal Husband*. In a somewhat disorganized way, the author ranges broadly over Wilde's life, including his relationship with his father and mother, his sister's death, his love affair with Bosie, and the eventual trial for

homosexuality. The author's intent is to tie all this together through an understanding of narcissism and its relationship to masochism.

The Passion of Lucretius. Charles P. Ducey. Pp. 269-300.

In a well-organized and scholarly paper, Ducey argues that Lucretius' philosophical poem, *De Rerum Natura*, can serve to demonstrate unconscious motivation in a work of genius. Specifically, he uses close structural and textual scrutiny of the poem to demonstrate how the Epicurean theory of the universe serves as an adaptive attempt to resolve the poet's unconscious conflicts relating to oedipal issues. This indictment of passion derives from conflicts surrounding a primal scene fantasy leading to a sadistic interpretation of love and sex that permeates the poem. Structural and psychoanalytic interpretation of style and imagery show the various ways in which the primal scene fantasy is worked over with the goal of resolving the conflict, only to have it recur in the end.

The Author and His Audience: Jean Genet's Early Work. Stanley J. Coen. Pp. 301-320.

Jean Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers*, a novel, *The Thief's Journal*, an autobiography, and *The Maids*, a play, form the basis for this paper about the relationship between the narrator-author and the reader as audience. Coen is not concerned with the author in reality but with fantasies involving the author-reader relationship as they are evoked in the readings of the works. The thesis that emerges is that of an "implied author," preoccupied with the closeness and responsiveness of his audience. Coen sees this as an attempt to control and dominate the reader through alternations of seduction and shock. He traces the "implied author's" fears about his destructiveness toward others and himself. The sexuality and overt perversion is seen as serving a defensive function against feelings of depression and annihilation. This analysis is done within the consistency of the texts, not by comparison with the author's actual life. The idea that the relationship between a perverse author and his audience may approximate a perverse sexual experience is discussed but not completely accepted.

Charles Ives and the Unanswered Question. Stuart Feder. Pp. 321-352.

This is a study of *Premonitions*, a short piece for chamber orchestra by Charles Ives. Feder traces the themes of Ives's aggression and guilt toward his father as the crucial factors in his periodic lack of productivity. *Premonitions*, the author argues, marks the creative death of the son which coincides in chronological age with the actual death of the father.

In Pursuit of Slow Time: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Contemporary Music. Gilbert J. Rose. Pp. 353-366.

Rose asserts that the experience of time has become drastically different as a result of the perception of the possibility of worldwide destruction. He argues that contemporary music can be used to illustrate this change in temporal experience. He discusses Charlie Parker's bebop jazz and Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone

atonal music to support this idea. To further illustrate his thesis, he adds a clinical example of time confusion.

Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic. XLVII, 1983.

Abstracted by Sheila Hafter Gray.

Countertransference Hate. Raymond G. Poggi and Ramon Ganzarain. Pp. 15-35.

A twenty-four-year-old single woman with a history of multiple hospitalizations for borderline personality disorder characterized by hyperactivity, low frustration tolerance, quasi-delusional thinking, and impulsivity, which had proved refractory to treatment, related to her new psychiatrist with an attitude of hostile derision of all his psychotherapeutic and pharmacotherapeutic interventions. The psychiatrist, along with other members of the hospital staff, found himself responding to the patient with hate which interfered with the treatment program. Consultation revealed the role of the patient's deep envy in perpetuating this anti-therapeutic attitude in both staff and patient. This was mediated through projective identification, by which the patient projected on to the psychiatrist and others the split-off, depreciated parts of her own self. The patient then attacked these projected elements, which were now experienced in the guise of the therapist's empathy, objectivity, and therapeutic skills. The origins of this defensive pattern in the patient's early yearning for and envy of a distant and unsatisfying mother could then be explicated. When the patient's contemporary disavowal of her oral dependency was understood in this light and worked through by the staff, interventions could be made to avert yet another negative therapeutic reaction. The authors include a detailed theoretical discussion of the psychodynamics of envy in the negative therapeutic reaction.

Teaching and Learning Short Term Dynamic Psychotherapy. Meir Winokur and Haim Dasberg. Pp. 36-52.

The authors present a method of teaching a technique of brief dynamic psychotherapy through a seminar conducted in accordance with the technical and dynamic principles which characterize that therapeutic model: advance planning, a focused goal, and a time limit aimed at enhancing the motivation of the participants. Twelve sessions are recommended. In the first, a learning contract is established concerning reading assignments, classroom presentations, and time. The next four sessions are devoted to the study of the relevant literature on theory, case selection and evaluation, definition of focus, technique, and termination. During the middle phase, subgroups participate in the actual evaluation of a patient, and if brief psychotherapy is to be prescribed, the subgroup completes the diagnosis and formulation of the case, the definition of the focus, and the outlining of a treatment strategy. Their findings are then presented to the full group for discussion. After just a few such sessions, the authors find, students begin to experience feelings of both competence in and ambivalence toward this new treatment modality. The ambivalence generally takes the form of quasi-intellectual resistances, which are addressed, along with more overtly emotional resistances, as expressions of group dynamics. This format, the authors state, permits the instructor not only to impart objective infor-

mation but also to deal with the students' resistances to this form of treatment. These take on special significance when the student therapists have had substantial experience with long-term treatment. There is no discussion of termination, nor is there any information on the long-range efficacy of the method.

The Impact of Difficult Patients upon Treaters. Rogers J. Smith and Emanuel M. Steindler. Pp. 107-116.

Difficult patients seem to be those who tend to put stress upon the physician's narcissistic balance through their extremely demanding or extremely seductive behavior in the relationship. The authors believe that the problem of the difficult patient is actually the problem of the difficult doctor-patient relationship. They offer some practical suggestions for withstanding the impact of such patients, which they group under the rubrics of perspective, detachment, and confidence. Management of the physician's personal vulnerability is essential to a successful outcome. Peace of mind of those specialists whose practice tends to foster one-to-one isolation with patients—dentists, dermatologists, ophthalmologists, otolaryngologists, and psychiatrists—is particularly at risk. It may be maintained through enhanced communication with peers. Modification of patterns of practice and psychotherapy are suggested to combat the adverse effects of stressful medical practice.

Intersubjectivity in Psychoanalytic Treatment. Robert D. Stolorow, Bernard Brandchaft, and George E. Atwood, Pp. 117-128.

The difficult doctor-patient relationship, rather than the difficult patient, is discussed by these authors also. This stems directly from their view of psychoanalysis as a science of the intersubjective, focused on the interaction of the subjective worlds of the observer and the observed. Transference and countertransference take on equal importance in this system. The authors believe the most common difficulties in treatment occur when conjunction of these subjective worlds escapes psychoanalytic scrutiny because it reflects a defensive solution shared by patient and analyst, and when an unrecognized intersubjective disjunction leads to chronic misunderstanding of the patient. The implications of this approach for the understanding of negative therapeutic reactions and for the treatment of patients with severe archaic psychopathology, e.g., borderline states, are clarified in detail.

The Antisocial Personality. Herbert C. Modlin. Pp. 129-144.

This is an overview of the diagnosis and treatment of individuals who are often described as "psychopathic" or antisocial. The author points out that different nosological systems use these terms to refer to behavior, personality, or character. He suggests it is clinically appropriate to think of a true personality type and to differentiate this from other mental disorders, such as mental retardation and organic, hypomanic, or histrionic syndromes, which may also lead to antisocial action. Episodic dyscontrol and hysteria are two psychological categories which are of special interest to the psychoanalyst. While biological predisposition may be important, psychodynamic factors should not be minimized by the psychiatrist. Sociopaths are found to come from grossly disturbed, unstable, or chaotic families. The unstable and defective early relationships lead to the development of faulty ego and su-

perego structures. These patients can therefore benefit from the same sort of long-term dynamic psychotherapy that is employed for treatment of any severe character disorder. The first therapeutic task is to help the individual experience the character style as ego-alien and to accept the role of patient. The remainder of the treatment follows established principles.

A Psychodynamic View of Character Pathology in Vietnam Combat Veterans. Joel O. Brende. Pp. 193-216

The author summarizes and compares our knowledge of the psychopathology observed in Vietnam veterans with that of veterans of World War II. Clinicians must be aware that the primitive character pathology exhibited by Vietnam veterans is a defensive response to the specific experience of Vietnam combat. Defensive splitting, denial, and projective identification are frequently observed. The author attributes this to the special stress of the Vietnam combat situation, which led to loss or distortion of self-identity, the development of "splits" in the self-system, and pathological killer-victim identifications. Many Vietnam combatants found a temporary solution to their anxiety, fear, and helplessness in an illusion of being an omnipotent survivor. This helped conceal the victim-self identify; but the primitive nature and fragility of this defense left the individual at risk for the emergence of self-destructiveness and other victimization behavior in later life. Those who could develop a "protective self" might have functioned adaptively in combat, but they were at risk of "survivor guilt" if those they aimed to protect were in any fashion harmed; they also retained a propensity for outbursts of massive aggression. The repressed memories of unresolved traumatic events involving abandonment, "betrayal," dehumanization, loss, near-death experiences, and survivor guilt, will be encountered in the course of treatment along with typical post-traumatic symptoms.

Some Observations on Recurrent Dreams. Paul R. Robbins and Farzaneh Houshi. Pp. 263-265.

Of one hundred twenty-three university undergraduates who participated voluntarily in a study on dreams, sixty percent reported that they experienced recurrent dreams. These were uniformly anxiety dreams in which the dreamer was being threatened or pursued. The individuals who reported such dreams tended to be more depressed, to have more problems of adjustment, and to have more physical symptoms than those who did not. Many subjects reported spontaneously that their recurrent dreams began in childhood. These observations conform with psychoanalytic theory concerning the nature of the dream process.

The Self and Object Relations. John D. Sutherland. Pp. 525-540.

The author offers a detailed case presentation to introduce some questions about the psychoanalytic theory of the person, or self. Speaking from the point of view of the British school of psychoanalysis, he describes the central issues in the functioning of most patients as derivatives of a struggle to establish and maintain a coherent unity of the self, which provides a powerful motive for psychotherapy. Elements of this process include the need to accommodate valid expression of the needs of the subselves through fantasy or through merger with the dominant self,

the self-system's active initiating role in the environment, and the whole area of object relationships. Once the dominant self is established as an identity, it is aggressively defended even when the wish to alter that self brings the individual to treatment. Such change must therefore be accomplished not through direct personal challenge but through a process the author describes as a "field change." Reviewing the contemporary psychoanalytic theories on this subject, the author concludes that the self is best conceptualized as an open system developing and maintaining its identity through social relatedness. The therapeutic task is to achieve greater integration of the self-system by reducing the separateness of the subselves. Negative, or partial, therapeutic reactions frequently derive from the need to preserve a particular subself which had been established defensively in the context of actual relationships within the family. The appropriate theoretical model for psychoanalysis must therefore emphasize social over biological forces in the development of the individual.

Contemporary Psychoanalysis. XIX, 1983.

Abstracted by Ronald F. Krasner.

Expressive Uses of the Countertransference. Christopher Bollas. Pp. 1-34.

Occasional, judicious, more direct use can be made of the analysts's transference to facilitate the expression of certain elements of the analysand's psychic life. Bollas contends that often what the analyst feels (his internal response to the analysand) is how the patient "uses" the analyst. The analyst can then experience how the patient feels: "in order to find the patient you must look for him within yourself." The goal is appropriate selective expression of some of the analyst's subjective states of mind. This transformation of the analyst's own feelings into verbal representations that can be mutually considered is crucial in the analysis of some sicker patients not amenable to "classical" psychoanalysis. To this end the analyst must establish a "countertransference readiness," which is a mental neutrality and a creation of internal space where these feelings can be registered and recognized. Clinical examples illustrate Bollas's ideas.

A Critique of So-Called Standard Psychoanalytic Technique. Samuel D. Lipton. Pp. 35-46

Reply to Doctor Lipton. Mark Kanzer. Pp. 46-52.

Suggesting that Freud did not change his technique after his analysis of the Rat Man, Lipton claims that codification of stereotypic and rigidified procedures in "standard analyses" can obscure the patient's capacity for establishing an object relation with the analyst. If this occurs, the patient may appear sicker (have a narcissistic disorder) than he actually is. To illustrate, Lipton uses excerpts from a case report Kanzer designated as illustrative of standard technique. Lipton asserts that in the hour reported Kanzer pre-emptively inferred the meaning of some behavior and associations and used the consistent silence of the analyst to hide the prematurity of his conclusions. Lipton also felt that the patient had become too compliant and that this element of the transference went unanalyzed because of the analyst's

silence. Lipton says that silence may extend beyond listening into the realm of withholding relevant ideas in the name of standard technique. Kanzer, in a short reply, points out that the brief pauses in the reported hour contain resistances analyzable only because the analyst had been listening very carefully. As for the activity of the analyst, Kanzer rejoins, "The aim of an interpretation incidentally is to overcome the resistances of the patient to free association, not to keep him company by conversation."

Control Analysis. Helene Deutsch. (Introduction by Paul Roazen.) Pp. 53-67.
An Appraisal. Miltiades L. Zaphiropoulos. Pp. 67-70.

Several questions regarding the psychoanalysis of candidates in a psychoanalytic institute are addressed. Roazen's introduction sets the stage with a historical overview of the subject. He emphasizes Deutsch's insistence on avoiding dogma and dictum in psychoanalytic technique. Deutsch's article discusses the difficulties of the Budapest group, where the training analyst was also the control analyst (supervisor). The various roles of the supervising analyst are enumerated and discussed. Finally, Deutsch introduces the concept of control (continuous case) seminars. In his appraisal, Zaphiropoulos suggests that the supervising analyst may check on the way a candidate has learned and uses theory. In addition, "the supervising analyst can work as a catalyst for the candidate's work with the patient without becoming either the patient's or the candidate's analyst."

Unformulated Experience. Donnel B. Stern. Pp. 71-99.

Stern defines unformulated experience as "mentation characterized by lack of clarity and differentiation." The process by which this occurs is different from Freudian repression, according to Stern, because repression refers only to whole formed memories that are purposively kept out of awareness. What has never reached consciousness cannot be banned from it. After a brief discussion of some of Sullivan's theories which touch on this concept, Stern takes up the constructivist point of view from cognitive psychology as put forth by Neisser. Memories and thoughts are constructions. Like visual perceptions, these constructions may or may not be "perceived." Establishing this concept, Stern goes on to describe the role unformulated experience has in the creative process. Unformulated experience leading to creative disorder is positive, while unformulated experience held in place (defensively) as familiar chaos is pathological. Curiosity attends to unformulated experience, and psychoanalysis is not a search for hidden truth, but "is the progressive awakening of curiosity, a movement from familiar chaos to creative disorder."

Janusian Process and Scientific Creativity. Albert Rothenberg. Pp. 100-119.

Niels Bohr, the Danish physicist and contemporary of Albert Einstein, was instrumental in unearthing the secrets of the atom. His creative thought processes in establishing the important and influential principle of complementarity are studied in this paper. Rothenberg contends that the process of Janusian thinking is central not only to Bohr's discovery, but also to the creative process in general. He reports conducting more than 1700 hours of research interviews with sixty Nobel and Pul-

itzer Prize winners and winners of the National Book Awards, as well as with other major literary, artistic, and scientific prize winners. Janusian creative process is defined as the simultaneous conception of two or more opposites. These opposites or antitheses are posited as existing side by side and being equally operative, valid, and true. Faced with the seemingly unsolvable paradox of the electron possessing properties of both particle and wave, Bohr proposed in 1927 the Principle of Complementarity. The idea that two mutually exclusive sets of concepts are both necessary for a complete description is not a concept of synthesis, simultaneity, or alternation. In a psychological sense, Janusian process is an ego function of secondary process. In creativity, the individual employs this, a non-Aristotelian logic that does not reconcile conflict, but preserves it. As Bohr's co-worker Heisenberg stated, "That was perhaps the strongest experience of these months—that gradually I saw that one will always have to live under this tension. You could never hope to avoid this tension."

Some Difficulties Teaching. Ralph Crowley. Pp. 130-133.
Reflections. Stephen A. Mitchell. Pp. 133-140.
Teaching Sullivanian Interpersonalism. Gerard Chrzanowski. Pp. 140-152.

In the first of these three essays on teaching interpersonal psychoanalysis, Crowley broadly points out that the difficulty in teaching Sullivan results from the current lack of care, interest in, and respect for persons in the society. Other difficulties stem from the passage of time since Sullivan wrote, the taking for granted of his initiation of the object relations position in this country, the emergence of new "stars," and our tendency to seek secure theoretical positions which tell us what to do rather than encouraging us to think. Mitchell proposes that Sullivan is rarely credited for his contributions to theory, such as the concept of the interpersonal field, the workings of anxiety, and issues of self-esteem, or for his contributions to technique, such as the principle of participant-observation in its application to the problem of countertransference. As to the reason for this disregard, Mitchell suggests that Sullivan's difficult prose style and his lack of integration and formalization of his works based on his wariness about the misuse of theory are responsible for the wide-spread misunderstanding of his legacy. Familiarizing the student with texts rich in clinical material and exposing them to the importance of the oral tradition in regard to Sullivan's contributions are suggested as ways to overcome mistaken impressions and omissions. Most important, Mitchell asserts that Sullivan's work should be presented in a balanced historical perspective that does not compete with Freud's contributions. Chrzanowski believes that teaching open-ended constructs based on a broad foundation of epistemological and clinical considerations of implied validity offers many difficulties to the student. This transactional model defies specific formulae. A sketch of the authors' experiences of teaching Sullivan in different cultures is presented as an example of the interpersonal approach as a point of view, not as a specific theory of therapy.

Some Implications of Self Psychology. Howard B. Levine. Pp. 153-171.

Levine examines self psychology in light of its implications for the practice of dynamic psychotherapy. The selfobject concept, selfobject transferences, and em-

pathy are explored. People and things that one might use as extensions of the self, for the purpose of maintaining a psychological equilibrium, are designated as selfobjects. The need for and defenses against relatedness to selfobjects constitutes a major source of psychopathology. In psychotherapy, two types of selfobject transference arise. The idealizing transference is one in which the therapist is seen as a source of tension regulation. "An important function then of the therapist in the mirroring transference is to shore up and reflect the patients' perceptions of their selves so that they can have assistance in the development of a sense of conviction that what they perceive about themselves is in fact so." Because of these transferences a special relationship to the patient must be provided in empathic appreciation of the patient's selfobject needs. In conclusion, Levine identifies three major contributions of self psychology to the theory and practice of psychoanalysis: (1) the formulation of the selfobject; (2) the development of a pertinent clinical language; (3) the understanding of narcissistic transferences.

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly

ISSN: 0033-2828 (Print) 2167-4086 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upaq20

Meeting of the New York Psychoanalytic Society

NOTES

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the colleagues other than our Editors who graciously agreed to read a number of papers which were submitted to us during the past year. Invaluable service was rendered to *The Quarterly* by: Dr. Leon Balter, Dr. James J. Bernard, Dr. Barrie M. Biven, Dr. Allan Compton, Dr. Carl P. Davis, Dr. Laurence B. Hall, Dr. Samuel Hoch, Dr. Theodore J. Jacobs, Dr. Richard G. Kopff, Jr., Dr. Eugene J. Mahon, Dr. Edward Nersessian, Dr. N. John Pareja, Dr. H. Gunther Perdigão, Dr. Morton Shane, and Dr. Sherwood Waldron, Jr.

MEETING OF THE NEW YORK PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY

October 23, 1984. MODES OF OBSESSIONAL THINKING: CLINICAL ASPECTS. Arnold Z. Pfeffer, M.D.

Dr. Pfeffer described, illustrated, and explained nine modes of obsessional thinking. They are magical thinking, doubting and indecision, digression, rambling, circumstantiality, procrastination, retraction, repetitiousness, and rumination. The essential conflicts involved in these modes of obsessional thinking include the positive and negative oedipus complexes and regression to anal sadism. The superegoid conflicts are intense, and in these conflicts the ego especially uses typical modes of obsessional thinking. These defensive measures effect an avoidance of affects and their associated impulses. Also, these modes of obsessional thinking constitute significant resistances in regard to the basic rule as expressed in free association. The analysand may experience the basic rule as controlling, which becomes connected with toilet training; the thinking process, in part, represents the process of defecation, and thoughts represent feces. In this connection, anal-sadistic superego conflicts and varieties of obsessional thinking are aroused in the transference.

DISCUSSION: Dr. Francis Baudry felt that Dr. Pfeffer's work on the modes of obsessional thinking was particularly valuable because of the role that thinking disturbances play in obsessive disorders. There is, however, a blurring of boundaries between some of the obsessional traits mentioned by Dr. Pfeffer. A sharper differentiation could be made between disorders of thought and patterns of communication. Dr. Pfeffer has written mostly about the latter. The reintroduction of the topographic model may assist us in making a better differentiation between resistances and reluctances. The adaptive aspect of resistances must be dealt with first from a technical point of view.

MEETING OF THE PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK

April 9, 1984. ON THE NARCISSISTIC AND HOMOSEXUAL COMPONENTS OF FEMALE SEXUALITY. Joyce McDougall, Ed.D.

Dr. McDougall's interest in the homosexual aspects of female sexuality first arose from her analytic work with several homosexual women and then extended to include the homosexual components in heterosexual women and in the analyst as well. First, Dr. McDougall discussed Freud's contributions to the understanding of female sexuality. While Freud should be credited with the revolutionary step of taking the sexuality of his female patients seriously, his formulations on female sexuality cannot be considered his strong suit, a judgment shared by Freud himself and perhaps reflected in the fact that he waited until he was seventy-five to publish his first paper on the subject.

Dr. McDougall organized her paper around a discussion of two of Freud's concepts about female sexuality: 1) the change of zone from clitoris to vagina (or "anatomy is destiny"); and 2) the change in object from mother to father. Regarding anatomy as destiny, Dr. McDougall emphasized that there are three factors besides penis envy which are significant in the little girl's developing sexuality: 1) because the girl's genitals are not as visible as the boy's, she must wait until puberty to gain an equivalent narcissistic confirmation of her unique sexual identity; 2) the vagina as orifice is equated in the unconscious with the mouth, anus, and urethra, an equation that gathers to it the masochistic and sadistic fantasies attending those zones; and 3) just as the little girl has difficulty in visually conceptualizing her genitals, so she has difficulty with the bodily location of her sexual sensations. The confusion about the location of sexual sensations takes on special importance with the advent of parental prohibition against masturbation. The female child fears that in retaliation for the oedipal wishes accompanying masturbation, her mother will attack the inside of her body, a punishment akin to death. Dr. McDougall emphasized that the girl's fantasies of bodily injury are not necessarily conditioned by her sense of herself as an "already castrated male." The little girl has her own sense of her sexual body arising out of her particular erogenous sensations. Her fears and confusions, however, make masturbation a difficult topic for the female patient to explore analytically. Dr. McDougall presented a brief clinical vignette to illustrate these points.

A young woman psychiatrist who suffered from a variety of psychosomatic manifestations sought analysis because she felt she was not as effective with her patients as she might be. She doubted the importance of Freud's libido theory and his theory of infantile sexuality. While Dr. McDougall understood her patient's psychosomatic symptoms to be related to archaic sexual and body fantasies, it was not until the patient reported a dream in the fourth year of analysis that she was able to remember anything about her childhood sexuality. The patient dreamed: "I was picking flowers in the garden outside the house where I lived as a child. I was dancing with delight when my cousin George appeared in the doorway, and I awoke with a scream." Her associations to her cousin revealed that he had fondled her when she was a child, and then years later, when she was twelve and he was twenty,

he was electrocuted in the bathtub. The associations also revealed that the patient was convinced that her cousin had been masturbating in the bathtub and that this had caused his death. The patient then said she had never masturbated in her life but that she was sure the analyst did not believe her. The analyst replied, "Of course I believe you. Otherwise you'd be dead!" By way of this interpretive joke, an approach was made to the patient's fear that masturbation brought death. Her sexual life with her husband improved and her psychosomatic problems abated as a result of continued analytic exploration of her sexual fantasies and her primitive fantasies of bodily fusion with her mother.

Dr. McDougall then raised the question of how the little girl's homosexual attachment to her mother is integrated in the adult heterosexual woman. Homosexual desires in children may be seen as having a double aim: first, to *possess* the sex organs of the same-sex parent along with the parent's powers and privileges; and second, the desire to *be* the parent of the opposite sex. Homosexual libido is invested in the life of the adult woman in at least five ways. 1) Self-esteem is enhanced when the daughter can invest her early love for her mother and the mother's female body in her own self. 2) The wish to be the other sex finds expression in the capacity to identify with the pleasure of one's sexual partner, which adds to the pleasure of both partners. 3) A mother's love for her son may involve a feeling that she owns or partakes of part of his body and his masculinity; correspondingly, she projects her own feminine narcissistic wishes upon her daughter. 4) Intellectual and artistic achievements combine masculine and feminine elements in the "putting forth" of symbolic children. 5) Homosexual feeling divested of conscious sexual aim contributes to the warmth of close friendships.

Finally, Dr. McDougall related a clinical vignette dealing with the relationship between female analysand and female analyst. Madame T. was thirty-five years old when she came for analysis of multiple, crippling phobias. Dr. McDougall focused on the patient's fear of being alone at night; the fear would be followed by an overwhelming sense of terror which regularly led her to call her parents and announce that she was coming home for a few days. With the analyst's encouragement, the patient tried to find a scenario to fit her panic. "Someone" was planning to force an entry, a man who would kill her as she resisted his attempt to rape her. When the patient was finally able to acknowledge that this scene was a fantasy of her own construction, related to childhood fantasies about her father, the terror diminished but was replaced by compulsive masturbation.

Another important aspect of the analysis centered on what the patient experienced as her mother's repeated attempts to increase her dependency via invitations to visit, etc. Despite her awareness that in the analysis the mother represented an internal object for the patient, the analyst found herself disliking the mother and viewing her as a "real cannibal" who was preventing her daughter's recovery. In the second year of analysis, the patient reported that she had gone to visit an older woman friend, but had become panic stricken when she realized she would have to cross an empty boulevard to reach her friend's house. She got around the fear by backing her car up a one-way street in the wrong direction, which allowed her to park nearer the friend's house, although it made her arrive late. The patient's associations led to images of her mother as devouring and omnipresent, particularly at

the times when the patient might have been awaiting her father's approach. The analyst then had a dream which was seen to have been triggered by the patient's remark about reaching an older woman via a forbidden street. In the dream the analyst was late (as her patient had been) for an appointment with a beautiful Oriental woman to whom she wished to submit sexually. Self-analysis of the dream led the analyst to remember an Oriental patient who had once consulted her, a patient whose name was virtually identical to the analyst's mother's name. The analyst's own mother had been the opposite of Madame T.'s: she had been busy with her own activities and undemanding of her daughters. Connecting her dream with Madame T.'s session, the analyst realized that she was envious of her patient's close relationship with her mother. The analyst's own repressed homosexual wishes for her mother had prevented her from seeing Madame T.'s positive desire to be the exclusive object of her mother's love. The analyst's newfound openness to her own homosexual wishes allowed her to fully explore Madame T.'s longing for erotic closeness with her mother. No longer deaf to the homosexual tension between mother and daughter, the analyst was able to help the patient toward a less conflicted identification with her mother, and with this came a greater acceptance of her own body and femininity.

DISCUSSION: Dr. Harold P. Blum praised Dr. McDougall's vivid clinical presentation and then focused his attention on present-day reassessments of earlier concepts about female sexuality. The concept of change of organ and change from active to passive assumes the female genital to be a divided genital involving the separate erotic and reproductive zones of clitoris and vagina; the current conceptualization of the female genital assumes it is a complex unity. The change of organ concept allowed for a bisexual paradigm, but it saw femininity as derived from a primary masculinity. The older concept of change of object actually described a developmental transformation from preoedipal to oedipal organization, and from dyadic to triadic object relations. Our explanatory framework is quite different today. Dr. Blum felt that Dr. McDougall's clinical presentation confirmed that her patient's narcissism was not a separate line of development, but was caught up in preoedipal and oedipal development. The patient, who appeared pursued by an overinvolved mother, was actually defending herself against her homosexual attachment to her mother. In addition to being a source of conflict, "latent homosexuality" has normal and adaptive aspects. Dr. Blum stated that "when bisexuality is normally organized so that the homosexual component is latent, subordinate, and sublimated, . . . it enriches the personality and the range and depth of our empathy." He took exception to Dr. McDougall's description of the early mother-child relationship as the mother "seducing" the child to live. While recognizing that Dr. McDougall did not literally mean seduction, Dr. Blum preferred Winnicott's concept of the "good enough" mother because it includes nurturance, empathy, and concern. He also questioned Dr. McDougall's reference to "identification" occurring in the first months of life; he would place it among later developmental events. Dr. Blum praised Dr. McDougall for her candid and illuminating examination of her countertransference. The analyst's countertransference here became a stimulus for self-

analysis, which opened new areas of awareness to the analyst that became relevant to the patient.

MICHAEL D. GARRETT

MEETING OF THE PSYCHOANALYTIC INSTITUTE OF NEW ENGLAND, EAST

June 11, 1984. THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE: A PSYCHOANALYTIC REVISIT. Samuel Silverman, M.D.

Dr. Silverman presented his paper as the first in a series he plans to write on this subject. He narrowed consideration to a specific situation in which there is a "correspondence" between the unspoken thoughts of the analyst and spoken thoughts of the analysand, without any direct means of sensory communication. For many years, Dr. Silverman was aware of a particular phenomenon which occurred in some analytic hours. He would find himself briefly but intensely preoccupied with a personal train of thought and soon after would hear the patient reproducing the basic theme or key words of what had been preoccupying him. At first, Dr. Silverman dismissed these occurrences as coincidences, but he remained puzzled by their frequent intrusion into his analytic experience. This was particularly so during times when he was preoccupied with intense thoughts related to events in his personal life and also when he experienced sudden physical symptoms during an analytic hour. Relatively undisguised references to these would appear "almost immediately" in the patient's associations, although the physical symptoms were not necessarily experienced by the patient. Dr. Silverman noted much later in his exploration of this issue that the correspondence could be disguised, as, for example, when it appeared in a dream or in a transference derivative. Are these events to be understood as coincidence, or subliminal sensory perceptions on the patient's part, or thought transference?

Dr. Silverman discussed the fluctuations in Freud's thinking in regard to telepathy, as described in the major articles in which he addressed the subject directly or indirectly. Dr. Silverman stated that some people had misinterpreted Freud as being a convert to telepathy, but that in fact he was not. Freud, however, was not as disassociated from the idea of telepathy as Ernest Jones would have had him be. Freud did recommend that analysts study the *modus operandi* of telepathy in the analytic situation. Thus far, very few analysts have.

Dr. Silverman reported on studies by earlier contributors in the field, including Hitschmann, Helene Deutsch, Fanny Hann-Kende, Zulliger, Burlingham, Saul, Hollos, Schilder, Servadio, Eisenbud, Rubin, and Gillespie. Hitschmann, Deutsch, Hann-Kende, and Hollos each pointed to the set of circumstances in which the analyst is preoccupied with a pressing personal matter and the analysand picks up the preoccupation and repeats the content to some extent, in essence saying, "Pay attention to me." The event is experienced with surprise by the analyst. Energy which is connected with the wish that is being repressed but released accounts for the intensity experienced, according to Hollos. Deutsch's work has been criticized as

merely being intuitively empathic. According to many parapsychologists, true telepathy is a nonsensory and completely nonverbal experience. Servadio, Eisenbud, and Pederson-Krag, each of whom presented cases which they felt demonstrated telepathy, were criticized by the psychologist Ellis as prejudiced believers. He considered that what they called telepathic could be attributed to chance or coincidence. Saul claimed that the telepathic powers professed by his analysands were neurotic symptoms rather than true telepathic power. They contained a great deal of projection and identification.

Dr. Silverman next recounted how his interest in thought transference was stimulated by rereading the chapter titled "Occultism" in Volume 3 of Jones's biography of Freud, after which he paid greater attention to the possibility of this phenomenon in his practice. He then presented some clinical vignettes demonstrating an uncanny correspondence between the analyst's private thoughts and the almost immediate subsequent associations of the patient. He candidly discussed some of the reasons for his preoccupation and his search for any way in which he may have communicated to the patient any details about what he was thinking. He could not account for any thoughts being communicated by direct sensory means. The number of his clinical examples has grown to be in the hundreds. He stated that with time, "correspondence could be noted in all patients." As to whether these correspondences represent thought transference, he would have to defer his opinion, with the promise of further study. His early impressions suggested the importance of additional exploration of the role of correspondence in transference and countertransference as well as in mutuality of experience, past or present, fantasied or real, in analyst and analysand.

DISCUSSION: The participants congratulated Dr. Silverman on his courage in bringing to their attention this controversial subject. Many comments were directed toward the nature of the relationship that emerges between analyst and analysand, the common analytic language that develops, and the emotional resonance that is very similar to the sensitivity developed between mother and child. A number of discussants saw these trends as reflecting the regressive aspect that is part of the analytic process. Dr. Evelyne Schwaber emphasized the analyst's inattention, with the "correspondence" arising in the context of the analysand's efforts to re-engage the analyst. Dr. Arthur Valenstein stated his position of general resistance to the idea of telepathy but noted that he had had several "correspondence" experiences that indicated some kind of mutual subliminal repression between analyst and analysand which approached what is called thought transference. Comments were then offered which supported the idea that there may be more than five senses—a sixth sense that perhaps lies in the realm of proprioception, a sense that blind people, for example, rely upon greatly to recognize other people. This sense may account for many of the subliminal cues communicated between analyst and analysand that might explain some of the correspondences. Dr. Jerome Sashin again mentioned the distinction between correspondences and true telepathy. The participants did not reach a definitive position on the matter and will await further elucidation from Dr. Silverman in the near future.

ROBERT F. KENERSON

The Annual Meeting of THE AMERICAN PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSOCIATION will be held May 7-11, 1986, at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill Hotel, Washington, D.C.

The 15th Annual MAHLER SYMPOSIUM will be held on May 31, 1986, in Philadelphia. For further information, contact: Selma Kramer, M.D., Department of Psychiatry, Medical College of Pennsylvania, 3300 Henry Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19129.

The San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute is pleased to announce that the recipient of the ANNA MAENCHEN AWARD IN CHILD PSYCHOANALYSIS for 1985 is T. Wayne Downey, M.D., for his paper, "Within the Pleasure Principle: Child Analytic Perspectives on Aggression," which has been published in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*. To compete for this award, qualified child analysts or child analysts in training may submit papers at any time. The Award Committee may also select a paper from the published literature. Papers are to be submitted to: Calvin F. Settlage, M.D., Chairman, The Anna Maenchen Award Committee, The San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute, 2420 Sutter St., San Francisco, CA 94115.

The DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY OF HILLSIDE HOSPITAL, New Hyde Park, N.Y., and the NASSAU COUNTY CHAPTER OF PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY are sponsoring a seminar titled "The Bomb, the Mind and the Future: Challenges for the Mental Health Professional." The seminar will take place at Sloman Lowenstein Auditorium of Hillside Hospital on March 7, 1986, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. It is open to all mental health professionals. For further information, contact: Debra Mohr, Office of the Dean of the Clinical Campus, Long Island Jewish Medical Center, New Hyde Park, N.Y. 11042. Phone: 718-470-8650.

Art Therapy Italiana will hold its 3rd Annual SUMMER INTENSIVE TRAINING INSTITUTE IN CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY in Italy in August 1986. For further information, contact: Marilyn La Monica, 450 45th Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11220.

The 3rd Annual Convention of THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF DREAMS will be held June 26-29, 1986, at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. For further information, contact: Dr. Alan Moffitt, Department of Psychology, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6.

The 4th World Congress of the WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR DYNAMIC PSYCHIATRY will be held conjointly with the 17th International Symposium of the DEUTSCHE AKADEMIE FÜR PSYCHOANALYSE (DAP) e. V. March 14-18, 1986, in West Berlin. The title of the Congress will be "The Androgyny of Man." For further information, contact: Lehr- und Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Akademie für Psychoanalyse (DAP), Wielandstr. 27-18, 1 Berlin 15, Germany.