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Farewell and Welcome

By Robert Michels

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FAREWELL AND WELCOME

BY ROBERT MICHELS

A decade ago, Jay Greenberg introduced himself as the new Editor of *The Quarterly* by pointing out the central role of conversation in psychoanalysis. The clinical psychoanalytic process is based upon a conversation between analyst and analysand; the psychoanalytic profession is increasingly marked by the conversations among the several schools and communities of psychoanalysts, and journals are essential to those processes. In the intervening years, he has demonstrated a remarkable talent for developing and maintaining *The Quarterly's* role in fostering those conversations.

The Psychoanalytic Quarterly was born in 1932. For its first eight years, it had multiple editors, but since 1941 it has one at a time. Jay has been our ninth. He is the first non-M.D. in that role except for Geza Roheim, who was one of the committee of sixteen who led *The Quarterly* from 1939 to 1940. Jay followed a distinguished line. The five most recent—Henry Smith, Owen Renik, Sander Abend, Dale Boesky, and Jack Arlow—led *The Quarterly* for some forty years and maintained its high standards while broadening its scope to embrace multiple psychoanalytic communities. Jay's long interest in comparative psychoanalysis was a natural fit for the next step in *The Quarterly*'s development.

During Jay's tenure, *The Quarterly* has published forty issues with a total of 10,176 pages, which included 290 original articles and 257 book reviews. To provide a more detailed view of the editor's experience I have focused on the last three and a half years. From January 2017 through July 2020, the journal published fifteen issues, comprising 3,485 pages. This included 107 articles and 88 book or film reviews, for a total of 195 items, or 13 items per issue. The articles were selected from 197 submissions which had received 554 reviews. That means a total of 946 manuscripts (submissions, reviews, accepted articles, and book reviews) crossed

the Editor's desk, or about 5 per week. 48% of the submissions and 28% of the published articles were from outside of the United States.

These are important data, but they speak to quantity, not to quality; not to the ideas, the creativity, the imagination that is embodied in the journal's pages. Jay has done an immense amount of work and has earned our gratitude, but more important, he has provided us with rich and exciting experiences as he has guided us through the world of psychoanalytic discourse.

We will not simply say farewell to Jay, as we will welcome him to *The Quarterly's* Board of Directors. As you know, he will be followed as Editor by Lucy LaFarge. Lucy is our first woman editor, except for Helene Deutsch and Flanders Dunbar, who were two of the committee of sixteen from 1939 to 1940. I have a special personal pleasure in rejoining this team of three—Jay, Lucy, and myself. I have known each of them for decades and we worked together on the Editorial Board of *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* until Jay became Editor of *The Quarterly* and Lucy the North American Editor of *The International Journal*. We did a good job—*The International Journal* prospered—and we had fun. I am confident that we will repeat, or surpass, our prior success.

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Editor's Note

By Lucy LaFarge

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EDITOR'S NOTE

BY LUCY LAFARGE

I assume the editorship of *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* at a time when the vision of the analyst, traditionally focused upon psychic reality, must find a relation with massive, unpredictable changes in the external world. How can we contend with such changes individually and as a field? How do we locate ourselves within the flow of events? From what vantage points can we perceive the events we inhabit? How can we communicate these to others?

Freud, of course, encountered the same problem, developing his invention in a century shattered by two world wars. And although this finds little place in its early papers, *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* itself was launched in 1932, during the Great Depression. How then can we begin in the middle of an ever-changing world?

It is useful, I think, to start by considering Freud's advice to the patient, from his 1913 paper, "On beginning the treatment": "Act as though, for instance, you were a traveler sitting next to the window of a railway carriage and describing to someone inside the carriage the changing views which you see outside" (p. 134). Freud's railway image is so familiar to us that it has lost its power, but if we return to it and re-open it to interrogation, we can see that it contains many of the questions that we encounter at the present moment.

Freud appeals to the patient as the observer of the patient's own free associations, derivatives of his psychic reality. The analyst does not have direct access to these; he learns primarily what the patient reports. If we construct a picture in our minds of Freud's image, we see the patient beside the window, looking out at the changing scene, and the analyst beside or behind him, listening, but not seeing out. This image, which views the scene from the perspective of the analyst, captures something essential about the analytic process: what the analyst learns is filtered through the patient's subjectivity. The analyst constructs her

version of the patient and his world from what the patient tells her and what he does not, what the patient sees and what he does not see. Drawing upon Freud's 1912 "Recommendations to physicians practicing psycho-analysis," we would add that the concept of the analyst's "evenly-suspended attention" (p. 110) allows for a filtering through the analyst's subjectivity as well. But it is the patient's associations and actions that ideally stir the analyst's free-floating thoughts.

If we step away from the analyst's perspective though, and look at analyst and patient together, we become aware that the analyst must also be on the moving train. In an indirect way, the image shows the analyst to be blinded to this motion; there is no second set of windows on the opposite side of the carriage through which the analyst gazes. Is awareness of this second perspective necessary for the analyst? Perhaps at quiet times it is not, and certainly, in the early days of analysis, it was of paramount importance for analysis as a field to demonstrate the activity of the patient's unconscious. Freud himself brought to the image of the railway carriage and the windows a host of his own associations. As is well known, he suffered from a railway phobia, which he connected to his early grief at the train journey taking him away from Freiberg, his earliest home (Anzieu 1986). This was also the journey on which Freud shared a compartment with his mother and saw her naked, forever linking train journeys to forbidden oedipal desires (Cohler 2015). In 1913, Freud was midway through the analysis of Sergei Pankejeff, "The Wolf-Man"; Pankejeff's dream, of looking out through a window at a tree with wolves, served as the fulcrum of Freud's model of the importance of the child's witnessing of the primal scene.

In the present moment, I would argue, we analysts are particularly made aware that we are on the same moving train as our patients, caught up in a pandemic to which we too are vulnerable and, as they are, often dislocated from our homes. Like our patients, we must situate ourselves and adjust to unexpected circumstances in a period of rapid social change. The usual analytic frame has been disrupted on both sides as we have left our offices to treat patients remotely. So, we must ask ourselves what it is about the frame—the railway car of the process—that is disturbed in these circumstances and what is preserved. As a quarterly journal and as a community of analysts who

write about analysis, how we can discern and preserve the most important elements of analysis in our writing?

In addition to these existential changes, 2021 brings more ordinary, but nevertheless important changes at *The Quarterly*. The review process has been restructured with the addition of four associate editors: Daria Colombo, Steven Goldberg, Wendy Katz, and Jane Tillman. Rodrigo Barahona will succeed Daria Colombo as Book Review Editor. Hannah Zeavin is stepping down as Managing Editor, and Gina Atkinson will be returning to resume this, her former role.

We are also welcoming new members to the editorial board. Three new members will be joining us from abroad: Sara Collins from the U.K., Marie Lenormand from France, and Sebastian Leikert from Germany. Seven North American analysts will be joining the editorial board as full members: Sydney Anderson, Seth Aronson, Sharone Bergner, Jennifer Stevens, Mark Stoholski, Hannah Wallerstein, and Nancy Winters. And we have inaugurated a new position, Editorial Associate, to introduce young analysts to the journal and our review process. Two new analysts will be joining us in this role: Alistair McKnight and Nirav Soni.

The end of 2020 also marks the departure of a number of editorial board members, including some who have been with the journal for many years. These are: Sarah Ackerman, Salman Akhtar, Paula Bernstein, Jose Carlos Calich, Antoine Corel, Lawrence Friedman, Lee Grossman, Charles M.T. Hanly, Gil A. Katz, Jane Kite, Peter Loewenberg, Eric R. Marcus, Patrick Miller, Gail S. Reed, Ellen Rees, Bruce Reis, Dominique Scarfone, Mitchell D. Wilson, and Lynne Zeavin. It is with great sadness that we report there has been one death on the editorial board: Emmett Wilson who made an invaluable contribution to The *Quarterly*. And finally, we bid farewell to Jay Greenberg, under whose leadership the journal has thrived over the past decade. He will be greatly missed.

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The Experience of the First World War in Wilfred Bion's Autobiographical Writings

By Dominic Angeloch

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THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN WILFRED BION'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS

BY DOMINIC ANGELOCH

All his life, Wilfred Bion attempted to devise a narrative form for an account of the traumatic experiences he went through as a tank commander in the First World War. The body of his autobiographical works, which consists of texts written in different stages of his life and remain fragmentary, documents his desperate efforts to wrest a biography of his own from the most appalling tendencies of world history. As a whole, it testifies for and is the result of a lifelong attempt to understand something incomprehensible, to express something unspeakable, to restore something destroyed. It represents something akin to the primal history of the psychic catastrophe that Bion failed to escape from as long as he lived. The article first provides an overview of these autobiographical and literary writings against the background of a brief account of the external facts of Bion's life. It then undertakes a narrative analysis of the sequences in which Bion tries to find a narrative form for the arguably most terrible event of the entire war which not only was a deeply traumatic experience remaining with him throughout his life, but also resulted in what he felt to be his psychic death. Taken together, these sequences impressively show the painful work of gradually dissolving or at least coming to terms with the

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psychological catastrophe of a paralyzing trauma, the causes of which reach far beyond the individual and the private. The article sets out to contribute to the still unwritten inquiry into the genetic context in which Bion's autobiographical, literary, and theoretical writings figure, together with the concepts and writing strategies embodied in them.

Keywords: Wilfred Bion, trauma, First World War, autobiography, biography, narrative analysis.

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Wilfred Ruprecht Bion was born in 1897 in the province of Punjab, an agriculturally and culturally very fertile region in the northwest of India, which was then incorporated into the British Empire (Bléandonu 1999, Lyth 1980).[1] Bion's father was an irrigation engineer, a very important, well-paid job in the course of the further agricultural development of the country. His mother was in charge of the household. However, Bion and his little sister Edna grew up under the care of an "ayah," an Indian nanny, to whom they apparently had a very close attachment, even closer than to their parents, who in Bion's accounts, as given in the narration of his childhood and youth in the first two parts of his autobiographical fragment *The Long Week-End 1897–1919: Part of a Life* (Bion 2005 [1985], pp. 9–103), appear to be relatively unpredictable and resentful, complicated, and cold. "My mother was a little frightening," Bion writes in the opening chapter of *The Long Week-End* (p. 9), and: "Our mother … was peculiar; it felt queer if she picked me up and put me on her lap, warm and safe and comfortable. Then suddenly cold and frightening" (p. 9). He goes on to characterize the relationship between his parents on the one hand and him and his sister on the other hand as follows:

[1] The information available about Bion's life has so far been largely limited to his own writings, materials, and statements, as well as those of his wife Francesca Bion (e.g. F. Bion 2014 [1994]) and his daughter Parthenope Bion Talamo (2015, p. 299–302). The depictions of colleagues, students, and successors that have been created since then remain, as helpful and insightful as they are, almost entirely within the framework that Bion himself so sketched out. A biography of Bion, which, with the help of archive material, drew an independent, historical-critical—i.e. also source-critical—portrait, is an unredeemed desideratum.

> My mother's attitude was certainly more loving—genuinely loving—than my father's; hers was not an "attitude" at all; his was. She loved us; he loved his image of us. She knew she had two nasty brats and could tolerate that fact; my father bitterly resented the menace of any reality which imperilled his fiction. [p. 28]

Already this small example of the characterization of his parents, riddled with contradictions and ambivalences, may give a first impression of how Bion approaches autobiographical writing. Contrary to what is commonly assumed about autobiography, it is not about the "facts"—people, names, places, etc.—but about himself, his *perception* of the world and his *relations* to the people, names, places, etc. mentioned. This is what is meant when he writes, in a brief Foreword to *The Long Week-End*:

> Many names are mentioned; experience shows that it is impossible to prevent conjecture from replacing gaps with "facts." The "facts" are not of my choosing; they can be so fashioned to serve any aim that the speculator might have. Anyone can "know" which school, regiment, colleagues, friends I write about. In all but the most superficial sense they would be wrong. I write about "me." I do so deliberately because I am aware that that is what I should do anyhow. I am also more likely to approximate to my ambition if I write about the person I know better than anyone else—myself. The book, therefore, is about the relationships of one man and not about the people, communities, groups whose names are mentioned. If I could have resorted to abstractions I would have done so. Such a procedure, without any preparation, would leave the reader grappling with meaningless manipulations of jargon. [p. 8]

Autobiography is not about the mentioned "facts," but about me, my relations to the respective "facts," to my self and my objects, the way of my experience: this definition may seem trivial at first. It is anything but, because it radically rejects any quasi-naturalistic naïve conceptual realism. Bion points out that at first it is not important whether what is "known" is "factually" true; what matters is the—true or false—mode of representation—or (in the case of thought disorders) of misrepresentation—of

emotional experiences (see Bion 1962, pp. 47–49). The focus of the observation is thus on the (mental) relationship between description and the designated (inner or outer) object. What is at issue is both the relationship between a concrete object grasped via sensory perception and the relationship between sensory data and the consciousness attached to them, i.e. psychic qualities (Bion 1962, pp. 53ff). The actual and essential aspects of memory, autobiography, and literature hence are the psychological and narrative processes that precede and underlie all memory, all autobiography, and all literature. To disregard them means to fail the actual subject of memory, autobiography, and literature.

To his great sorrow, Bion's parents sent him away from India, his beloved homeland, to England, his "actual" home country, at the age of eight to complete the compulsory education of the British higher classes. The departure from India filled him with great sadness. It was a final farewell, he was not to return to India for the rest of his life, but the homesickness for the lost land of his childhood accompanied Bion from that moment until the end of his life. To be sent 9000 kilometers away to a country he had never seen before and in which completely different social, societal, and metereological conditions prevailed, was in itself an extremely painful experience for the eight-year-old. The descriptions of the events in the section "England" of *The Long Week-End* (Bion 2005 [1985], pp. 33–103) are oriented towards this shock, its immediate effects and its subcutaneously working consequences, which will only gradually become visible over a long period of time.

The various shocks that this experience triggered in Bion are, quite in the sense of the differentiation he gives in his "Foreword," not so much told explicitly and directly, but rather evoked in the reader via the literary form. The form in which the shocking experience is narrated mimetically reproduces the shocks and upheavals, passes them on to the reader as shocks in the act of reading itself, and in this way brings them into the reader's mind as reading experiences that are themselves shocking, that have an immediate as well as only gradually emerging effect (see e.g. Chapter 1 of "England," pp. 33–35).

Bion describes his school days as an endless sequence of inner and outer struggles, filled with mental and physical viciousness and cruelty, interrupted at best by short pauses for breath or latency phases: "Misery at school had a dynamic quality" (p. 89). In retrospect, it appeared to

him as a single "prelude to war" (p. 93) that was looming on the horizon. In 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, Bion was 17 years old. He would have liked to have studied history at Oxford or Cambridge, but as this was very expensive and his parents did not have sufficient financial means to pay for his studies, he was dependent on a scholarship. He completed the exams for it but did not pass them (p. 92). So, he volunteered as a soldier. At first, he was rejected; only after an intervention of a friend of his father was he accepted as an officer candidate in early 1916. "[S]choolboys of all ages playing soldiers rehearsing for the real thing," he writes about his training, "but never learning that war and yet more terrible war is normal, not an aberrant disaster" (p. 92). As a lieutenant colonel he joined a tank regiment and was deployed on the Belgian and French front.

During the war effort, Bion distinguished himself through extraordinary courage and left the army in 1918 with the Distinguished Service Order and the Légion d'Honneur as a highly decorated war hero. In his autobiographical works, however, he consistently portrays himself as a coward, shirker, impostor, and incorrigible bungler who only survives war and the turmoil of life in general because of having more luck than brains. These are characteristics that Bion attributes to himself not only with the war, but since his childhood, as character-predestined, fixed features that are deeply rooted in his personality:

> Once, when we had been dismissed early, I went to evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral. It was a gloomy day. The non-conformist Sunday had eaten deeply into the soft remnants of my soul; it brought back the queer sense of Doom from my prep school days which had confirmed my fundamental timidity. Many regard timidity as the disposition of a "milksop"—flimsy, wayward, unreliable. In me, it is the toughest, most robust, most enduring quality I have. "All we like sheep have gone astray," but at least Handel's sheep seem to be a cheerful lot. Not so my "'ewe lamb." I was tough, timid, gloomy and infectious. It was a hideous foundation on which to base one's warlike hopes. [p. 111f]

Similarly, in August 1978, shortly before his death, Bion writes: "I was never able to be a soldier—only an artificial representation of a brave man" (Bion 1992, p. 367).

Why Bion reaches such a relentless judgement about himself is something the reader is given more and more precise information about in Bion's autobiographical writings than he could possibly wish for. Or as the historian Sir Arthur Bryant put it about Bion's *The Long Week-End*: "The part about the war is amongst the greatest and most terrifying I have read about the 1914–1918 war. It is a very great piece of literature" (as cited in Britton 2016, p. 30).

The Long Week-End, probably written between 1968 and 1970, after Bion moved to California, is Bion's central autobiographical fragment; the period it describes stretches from Bion's birth to the end of the First World War. It is divided into three sections called "India," "England," and "War," but only the first third of *The Long Week-End* is dedicated to childhood and youth, while the accounts of the wartime period take up two thirds of the book, flanked by the even more detailed account of the same period in Bion's book *War Memoirs 1917–1919* (Bion 2015; Angeloch 2017)—an outward expression of his obviously severe traumatization by the war, which was to remain with him throughout his life and be reflected in various ways in his clinical work, the development of his theory and his writings.[2]

On his return to England, Bion first studied history at Queen's College, Oxford and then medicine at University College London. The second part of Bion's unfinished autobiography, *All My Sins Remembered: Another Part of a Life* (Bion 1991b), begins at this time. After receiving his medical license, he spent seven years at the Tavistock Clinic London, where he trained as a psychiatrist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist. In 1937 he began a training analysis with John Rickman, which was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II, during which time he worked as

[2] See e.g. Boris 1986; Brown 2005; Likierman 2012; Sandler 2003; Symington & Symington 1996; Szykierski 2010. Szykierski (2010, p. 948) states: "A close reading of the Diary and other autobiographical writings allows one to trace the haunting questions that form the roots of the evolution of a unique metapsychology." Souter (2009, p. 796) goes a step further by declaring that "[t]he conjunction of the autobiography and the theory makes available to the reader the radical ordinariness of much of Bion's thinking, and the extent to which it was a brilliant and heroic response to the circumstances of his life. This is not to diminish the nature of his achievement as a psychoanalytic thinker, but rather the reverse. As with all leaps of insight, it takes a special intellectual power and emotional tenacity to perceive and elucidate the shape and structure in the painful formlessness of ordinary life."

an army psychiatrist with traumatized soldiers and as a member of the Army Selection Board. In 1945, Bion continued his training analysis with Melanie Klein. In 1953 he became a member of the British Psychoanalytical Society. Between 1956 and 1962, he was Director of the London Clinic of Psychoanalysis, President of the British Psychoanalytical Society from 1962 to 1965, and a member of its Training Committee from 1966 to 1968—positions which he did not seek but which were offered to him and which he always only reluctantly accepted, as unavoidable obligations. In 1968, he moved with his family to Los Angeles, from where he made numerous trips to South America and Europe to give seminars and supervisions. In 1979, Bion moved back to England with his family; shortly after settling in Oxford, he died of leukemia at the age of 82.

During the last years of his life, Bion wrote *A Memoir of the Future* (Bion 1991a), an ensemble of three novels: *The Dream* (published 1975), *The Past Presented* (1977) and *The Dawn of Oblivion* (1979). Together, the three novels form a science fiction novel trilogy, which Bion has described as a "fictitious account of a psycho-analysis including an artificially constructed dream" (Bion 1991a, p. 4). The one who dreams this dream and analyses it at the same time is Bion himself—it is a dream of his own life via numerous characters, all of whom represent shades of his personality or alter egos, if they are not named directly after himself ("Bion," "Myself" or even "P.A."). Negotiations of the autobiographical here appear time and again and very prominently, but they are cut and woven into the fictional framework in such a way that none of the autobiographical comments and allusions can be taken literally, as they appear in this context. Nor can Bion's trilogy be described as a theoretical work: too unique and unprecedented is the way in which Bion negotiates psychoanalytic (meta-) psychology and epistemology in the mode of a fictional dialogue narrative. It suggests that the "plot" is set in an England that has lost a war and is now occupied by the enemy.

All the characters in this "artificial dream" are—as in dreams in general—to be understood as alter egos, as representations of parts of Bion's personality. They know, discuss, re-present, and illuminate central concepts from Bion's earlier writings; often they also express caustically ironic criticism of these writings. Interspersed and woven into the characters' speeches are numerous reports and reflections on Bion's life—and here especially the war—some of which are taken literally from Bion's autobiographical

writings; in the context in which they are presented here, however, they are exposed as fictional or presented in a distorted way.

A Memoir of the Future thus is a logical continuation of Bion's oeuvre by other means, constituting an "aesthetic turn" (Ffytche 2013) or, more precisely, a "literary turn" (Angeloch 2018); it makes the transition to another, new dimension of self-reflection as science and science as self-reflection, as it had already begun with the founding document of psychoanalysis, Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. *A Memoir of the Future* seems to me to be described best as a kind of autobiography of Bion's unconscious, following the laws of dream logic. It is both a dream and an interpretation of this dream—a "construction" of a fictional psychoanalysis in which these dreams and daydreams are told and interpreted and worked through both practically and theoretically. *A Memoir of the Future* thus is a part of Bion's autobiography, but *of the Future*, in the mode of a science fiction novel, in which reflection on life, work and psychoanalysis takes place as a self-reflecting hypothetical construction of meaning.

THE INCOMMUNICABLE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Narrating, in the definition given by Walter Benjamin, is "the ability to exchange experiences" (Benjamin 1968 [1936], p. 84). For Benjamin, narrative art is craftsmanship. In his perspective, narrative art disappears just as craftsmanship disappeared. For Benjamin, this process, a general social tendency, becomes obvious with the First World War. In his groundbreaking essay *The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov*, Benjamin states:

> With the [First] World War a process began to become apparent which has not halted since then. Was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer, but poorer in communicable experience? What ten years later was poured out in the flood of war books was anything but experience that goes from mouth to mouth. And there was nothing remarkable about that. For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily

> experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body. [1936, p. 85]

For Benjamin, the First World War marked the threshold beyond which the art of storytelling no longer reaches what its essence is: the representation and transmission of experience.

In the following, I want to give an itinerary of how Bion was able to write about what happened to him as a soldier in the Great War, and how he was able to translate what happened to him into experiences in a tremendous, infinitely painful, lifelong effort. So Bion transforms into "communicable experience" (Benjamin 1936, p. 85), what, according to Benjamin's analysis, could no longer be transformed in this way because of its dimension and monstrosity, in short, its entire nature. Bion's autobiographical fragments, I contend, thus inscribe themselves in a series of works by authors and former soldiers of World War I such as Barbusse (1916), Drieu la Rochelle (2012), Owen (1983), Graves (2000 [1929, 1957]), Blunden (2007 [1928]), Céline (1981) and others, whose work succeeds in creating a narrative against and in commemorating the progressive impossibility of conveying experience in all its complexity. In their literary works, they wrest their own history from the most terrible tendencies in history, even if only in fragments, and make it and the experience it contains accessible to themselves and to us. This narrating after the end of narration is their contribution to possibly breaking the spell of the constant repetition and intensification of the catastrophes of the 20th century and preparing the ground for learning through experience from history (see Fussell 2000; Ricketts 2010).

My hypothesis is that in his major theoretical works, Bion acquires the epistemological basis which then, towards the end of his life, enables him to write the unspeakable of his own life (see also Angeloch 2017, 2018; Ffytche 2013; Soffer-Dudek 2015; Souter 2009; Szykierski 2010; Williams 2010). In the following, I will try to show how this is done in detail by means of a narrative analysis of the different versions of the description of one event that took place in Amiens, on August 8th,

1918, and arguably was the most momentous of the entire war for Bion. First, however, to at least a part of the prehistory of this event.

Ypres: Map and Territory

Bion's first deployment site during World War I was Ypres, Belgium. "Wipers" was the name the soldiers gave to the place—after the verb "to wipe," because countless soldiers' lives had already been wiped out in endless trench warfare on this section of the front. Bitter fighting, which had been going on since 1915, and incessant rain had transformed the landscape into a hell of mud, shell holes and body parts of fallen soldiers, in which the soldiers literally sank into the ground, into "a kind of human soup" (Bion 2005 [1985], p. 139).[3]

The British Army's most urgent task in this section of the front was to overcome the Steenbeck, a river behind which the German troops lay and which had previously represented "an insuperable barrier to attack after attack of our armies which were supposed, on August 31st, to have swept on over it and beyond to 'open warfare'" (p. 125). The tank commanded by Bion is to take the strategically important hill no. 40.

During a first reconnaissance before the mission, Bion and his tank crew have recent map material at their disposal. At first it seems to leave no doubts:

> We were walking down a slope supposedly to the Steenbeck from which the ground rose to a series of gentle rounded slopes, one of which was Hill 40. The enemy line, between us and the hill which was to be my objective, was clearly marked on the map as a series of trenches in great depth, redoubts and machine gun posts, all in red and dated the previous day. It was meticulous and a marvel of the work done by the Royal Engineers. [p. 125]

[3] Not only the landscape is transformed into a battlefield, but also the people who move through it lose form and shape. A passage from Bion's *A Memoir of the Future*, to which the shock is also inscribed linguistically, reads like this: "Boo-ootiful soup; in a shell-hole in Flanders Fields. Legs and guts … must 'ave bin twenty men in there—Germ'um and frogslegs and all starts! We didn't 'alf arf I can tell you. Let bruvverly luv continue. No one asked *'im* to fall-in! No one arsed 'im to come out either—come fourth, we said and E came 5th and 'e didn't ½ stink. Full stop! 'e said. The parson 'e did kum, 'e did qwat. 'E talked of Kingdom Come. King dumb come" (Bion 1991a, p. 53f.).

However, the landscape through which Bion walks does not show any similarity to the maps. Bion does not succeed in locating the Steenbeck:

> And now a fresh anxiety—where was the Steenbeck? At this time it was as deeply graven and marked in our minds as the fortifications were clearly delineated on the map.... We looked at the maps again. They were exact and clear; the cursed place where we stood was not. [p. 125]

Instead of a terrain with clear demarcations, as the ordered geometric figures on the map suggest, Bion finds himself in a mud desert riddled with bomb craters without any landmarks:

> As far as one could see, even in the direction from which we had come, was a rolling desert of mud where shell-holes intersected shell-holes. We were in a hollow from which the ground sloped upwards; water trickled from one shell-hole to the next, or lay stagnant at the bottom. [p. 125]

A fellow soldier of Bion asks another soldier about the Steenbeck: "Still grinning inanely he pointed down to the quag where we stood. So, that was the Steenbeck. Quainton then asked where Hill 40 was. He continued to grin but said nothing" (p. 126). The torrential river, really, is a trickle.[4]

The offensive begins. And what does not become immediately foreseeable when looking at the terrain as it is shown on the map, but what should have been obvious when inspecting the real conditions as they are on site, finally arrives: Bion's 40-ton tank gets stuck in the mud.

This first major operational experience was to prove characteristic for Bion in all subsequent missions as well; the experience of the extent of the commanders' irresponsibility and incompetence deeply marked him. Planning was carried out in the military with specialised training and high precision, and logical strategies were developed and executed in a disciplined manner on this basis—only it all took place in such a completely different coordinate system that the points of contact between the reality of planning and the reality of the battlefield had to appear as if freely imagined:

[4] See "Bion's" dream in the "Commentary" to his war diary: "I have described the trickle of dirty water that was the geographical fact" (Bion 2015, p. 201).

> Ypres remained for Bion an exemplar of unrealistic planning and collusive denial by all involved, where a clear blue line on a map represented an evident, bottomless, muddy reality. The psychic elaboration of this disastrous attempt to cross the Steinbeck then became an internal trauma invading his dreams and shaping his expectations. He continued to fear meeting yet another Steinbeck again, in another place, under another name, even when dry terrain and good tank conditions existed, right through to the end of the war. [Britton 2016, p. 31]

Where reality and the image one forms of it cannot be made to coincide in any way, where reality and its perception so blatantly cannot be brought together, thinking becomes useless and action arbitrary. Planning is an illusion and movement with the constant greatest possible certainty of being able to be killed at any moment is not only absurd, but downright insane. For no matter how well trained the soldier is and how skillfully he acts, his survival in the face of the excessive power of weapons which are causing an unprecedented degree of destruction, is always pure coincidence, and the feeling of relative safety, which is necessary to fight on the battlefield, even to be able to move at all, is in fact, considering the real conditions that prevail in the field, nothing more than "a delusion of safety" (Bion 2005 [1985], p. 131):

> As I looked at my map and hands in the tank I felt I was floating about four feet above my self, Allen an interested and unfrightened spectator. This dis-association, de-personalization was a way of achieving security—spontaneous, automatic, but potentially costly as it involved not knowing of the imminence of death. [p. 132]

If, however, the delusion ("dis-association, de-personalization") corresponds better to reality and leads to a more realistic action than any rational consideration, how is reality reflected in experience? Can it ever be transformed into experience under these conditions? How should one be able to report on this, how should these experiences ever be communicated?

Amiens: August 8th, 1918

Bion's last deployment site during World War I was the front line near Amiens, one of the most significant sites of the Great War. In August

1918, a general offensive was launched by the Allied forces led by the First French Army under the command of General Débeney and the Fourth British Army under the command of Sir Henry Rawlinson. 29 French, Canadian, Australian and British divisions advanced on a front of more than 20 miles, from Braches-sur-Avre to the Morlancourt area, against the German positions, which were defended by only ten divisions and five replacement divisions. Thus, on August 8th, 1918, a crucial breakthrough was achieved by the Allies after years of trench warfare. It was the decisive turning point of the First World War. In his war memoirs, German General Erich Ludendorff would later describe this day as the "black day of the German army in the history of this war" (Ludendorff 1919, p. 547). On this one day, the Germans lost about 30,000 men, half of whom were taken prisoner of war. The Supreme Army Command ("Oberste Heeresleitung") asked General Ludendorff for permission to withdraw. Ludendorff initially insisted on defence at all costs, but finally agreed to the demands of his staff officers: the losses were too great, the German soldiers too exhausted, demoralized, and weary of war, and the prospect of being able to hold the front in view of the massive superiority of the Allies—including ten battalions with 360 heavy British Mark IV tanks and two battalions with 96 Mark A cavalry tanks—was by far too unlikely. As a direct consequence of these events, negotiations between the Allies and the Germans were launched shortly afterwards, on August 14, which were to lead first to a ceasefire and then to the end of the First World War.

Seen from the "broad" perspective of the official version of the events, August 8th, 1918 has accordingly gone down in history as a day of triumph. In Bion's description of the event, not only is there no trace of this triumph to be found—on the contrary, for Bion, August 8th is the day on which he lost his psychic health forever in the madness of the First World War and "died": "I? Oh yes, I died—on August 8th 1918, "Bion writes towards the end of *The Long Week-End* (2005, p. 265), and in *A Memoir of the Future* he states: "I would not go near the Amiens-Roye road for fear I should meet my ghost—I died there" (Bion 1991a, p. 257).

Amiens: Map and Territory

Now to the immediate prehistory of the day as described by Bion.

On August 6, the brigadier general gathers all officers of the Tank Corps at headquarters to inform them about the course of the general offensive and the respective strategic goals. Bion fears a similar planning catastrophe as he had experienced in Ypres when crossing the Steenbeck. A staff officer, known for his heroic deeds behind enemy lines, appoints Bion to accompany him on a reconnaissance mission.

In Ypres, Bion had relied on the map material provided to him before the mission and had had to learn from experience that the measurements, although neatly carried out and consistent in themselves, did not correspond to reality. The terrain was of such a nature that the use of the tanks should have been refrained from if these facts had been taken into account, and for this reason alone all measurements, which were made with the aim of moving the tanks in this terrain, were superfluous.

It was therefore not only advisable to get as exact an idea as possible of the area of operation, but it could prove to be lifesaving. Of course, the reconnaissance of the area is associated with the danger of being discovered and killed by the enemy. Correspondingly, Bion is terrified. But the staff officer conducts his reconnaissance calmly—and so Bion's fear of death is compounded by the old fear of appearing as the coward as which Bion saw himself from the beginning, regardless of his actual actions.

Bion tries to overcome this dilemma by taking compass bearings with the greatest accuracy and recording them in the map material—in the hope that in this way he will be able to mask his fear sufficiently to make it appear to be professional military behavior befitting an officer:

> I started to take compass bearings as my way of keeping fear at bay and giving myself something to do; I hoped it looked military. I took bearings of the bridge in relation to the mud track by which we were to approach. I took bearings from the point ten yards beyond the Luce bridge where we were to swing left and take up our battle positions. My companion was very patient. I was grateful to him for not asking why I was engaged on so idiotic a procedure. When I began to take bearings for the rest of the battalion whose right-hand company was A Company on our left, he drew the line at further topological enthusiasm.
>
> We crawled out between two British outpost positions. It was quiet, hot and very peaceful. My companion kept using his

> binoculars. I tried to think of ways of dissuading him from crawling further. At last he thought he had found out enough.
>
> We started back. "You must have got the position of the river Luce mapped out with an exactitude never before achieved." He didn't seem to be trying out his sarcasm on me. Suddenly remembering how glad I had been to know the direction of our frontline trench at Chinese Wall I said, lying, "I often find it useful to know some bearings." [Bion 2005, p. 233f.]

The compass bearings were, in fact, to prove useful—in a way and to a degree that Bion would not have thought even remotely possible at that time.

On August 8th, the day of the mission, a completely unforeseen complication occurs—again, as in Ypres. This time it is fog that suddenly appears close to the dry riverbed of the Luce. Bion once again reproaches himself: if the Luce riverbed does not carry water, one could have known that it evaporated somewhere, i.e. into the air.

The view hardly extends an arm's length. Manoeuvring the tanks seems impossible under these conditions. All of a sudden the compass bearings Bion had taken two days earlier have a significance he hadn't thought possible during his reconnaissance, because he was too busy pretending that the compass bearings were just an alibi that has no other function than to conceal his fear from the heroic staff officer as well as from himself:

> Scared out of my wits I pulled out my lucky charm, the cabalistic figures, supposedly compass bearings, actually a record of my early afternoon fear. A torch made them just readable. I would pretend they were compass bearings, seriously taken for the express purpose of leading tanks. [p. 243]

The compass bearings thus prove to be not only not fiction, but indispensable for movement in a reality that is hostile in every respect. They allow Bion's unit to mark the route with white tape. With the help of these markings it is possible to maneuver the tanks safely through the Luce riverbed. Another unit arrives shortly afterwards and, to Bion's amazement and horror, also makes use of his compass bearings for orientation:

> A Company appeared and took their position from us. No one had taken compass bearings. I wondered how I had got into such a mess. Had I been ordered to reconnoitre the position? The tanks for one army corps were now relying for position and direction on … God knows what. I had not dreamed that my compass bearings would be taken seriously by me, let alone by Corps troops. [p. 244]

Thus, although they prove to be extremely valuable, the trauma of Ypres, which had shown and burnt into his memory the uselessness of any instrument for measuring the reality of war, is so deep that Bion cannot believe the usefulness of his compass bearings for orientation and action in reality, even after they have already been practically proven.

Thinking Under Fire: Measurements in the Fog of Fear

The experiences that the soldier encounters in the field remain inaccessible to any understanding and cannot be transformed into experiences. "Learning from experience" (Bion 2005 [1962]) is impossible. Reality, for the soldier, remains a groping in the fog between fear and anxiety, in which there is no time, no form, no shape, no "linking" (Bion 2007 [1967]), no orientation. The battle situation excludes thinking and forces to literally mindless action. And when something can be thought, reality has such a disorienting effect that not even the most rudimentary certainty of an applicability of these thoughts to reality remains. "[T]he experience of battle is an assault on the mind by internal and external events with which it is intrinsically unable to deal," comments Carole Beebe Tarantelli in a sensitive essay on Bion's notes on the war, which she reads as a major contribution to a more general "theory of catastrophic trauma":

> Beside the constant onslaught of "subthalamic fear" from within and the assault of the barrage from without, sensory experience in battle is an agglomeration of uninterpretable sensory impressions which cohere without the possibility of being decoded … . It was impossible for Bion to rely on the evidence of his senses; it was impossible for him to know where he was; everything was unrecognizable. The battlefield was a bizarre object; it was perceived as a thing in itself, leaving the soldier suspended in a timeless, formless, inconprehensible world. In

> other words, it was impossible to convert sense impressions of both internal and external events to alpha-elements. Verbal thought (and thus sanity, contact with reality, and the ability to learn from experience) depends on the ability of the alpha-function to transform raw emotional experiences into manageable psychic events. But these were experiences on which the mind could impose no truthful explanation, experiences which could not be stored and used in the future, experiences from which nothing could be learned. [Tarantelli 2016, p. 51]

Where otherwise one perception follows another and corrects or specifies the first, Bion shows in an unprecedented way how the regular function of thinking to move in reality is completely disrupted in the reality of war. In the battle situation, different fears take over from one another, but they have lost their normal function, the signal function (Freud 1926d; Nersessian 2013; Rapaport 1952); thinking becomes impossible: "Every train of thought Bion took up was soon dropped; it was impossible to pursue any to its logical conclusion," Bion (2015, p. 233) writes in his notes on Amiens of 1958: "Just as one anxiety broke up, another took its place." If something like thinking can take place at all between constant bombardment, hard work, and total exhaustion, it is dominated by panic and paranoia. "Attention and interpretation" (Bion 2007 [1970]) inevitably go wrong. In the reality of the battlefield, where death is only a matter of time, chance, and statistics, the paranoid thought of an overpowering, omnipresent threat and the compelling necessity of fleeing or at least hiding from this threat is more realistic than the soldier's decision not to flee and fight, even if this decision entails his own annihilation with a probability far greater than that of survival. Paranoid thoughts here correspond better to reality than any "calmly" conceived, rational thought.

Against this background, the dream that Bion dreams during the night of August 8th, the day of the mission after the reconnaissance mission in the deployment area, becomes more understandable:

> I went off to lie on the ground and get some sleep. The ground was hard, but I was tired. So I slept and I had a terrible dream. I awoke just as I was about to go into battle; it was unnerving to find that I was.

> The dream was grey, shapeless; horror and dread gripped me. I could not cry out, just as now, many years later, I can find no words. Then I had no words to find; I was awake to the relatively benign terrors of real war. Yet for a moment I wished it was only a dream. In the dream I must have wished it was only a war. [Bion 2005, p. 237]

The human psychic apparatus ultimately has only one function: self-preservation. The barrage of sensual perceptions on the battlefield, all of which point to a life-threatening danger, can only be rationally processed by indicating and initiating the most obvious action in the face of such a threat: escape. Escape, however, is not an option for a soldier in war. He has to suppress his natural impulses of self-preservation, and instead seek refuge in grandiose, in fact megalomaniacal thoughts that suggest to him the possibility of survival and mastery of the situation, and consciously expose himself to the overpowering danger in such a systematized overestimation of himself, in order not to flee, to be able to stay and fight (Bion 1984 [1965], p. 53). In this way reality becomes fiction and the worst fictions become basic reality.

SWEETING'S DEATH

Panorama of working through a catastrophic trauma

For Bion, the arguably most terrible event of the entire war was the death of the despatch runner Sweeting, who died horribly on August 8th, 1918 at Bion's side and under Bion's command, hit by a grenade. This very young man's death is the culmination of all the experiences of the war's madness that Bion had had up to that point; along with this death, something finally collapses within him, and Bion's self is impaired in a way that cannot be repaired. For Bion, Sweeting's death is synonymous with his psychic death.

Bion has returned many times to this deeply traumatic experience, which was to remain with him throughout his life: descriptions of the same event can be found in the *War Memoirs* of 1919, in the unfinished notes on Amiens of 1958, and in *The Long Week-End* from the 1970s; commentaries and erratic allusions are also to be found in *A Memoir of the Future*. Bion thus tried to describe this catastrophic event as a young

man immediately after returning from the war, after a trip through France with his wife Francesca forty years later and in California at the end of his life.

These texts testify to and are the results of a lifelong attempt to understand something incomprehensible, to express something unspeakable, to restore something destroyed. The gradual success of the description of the event can be retraced via a narrative analysis of the development of these narrative sequences. Significant, however, are the ways in which the first two descriptions fail in comparison to the last in *The Long Week-End*: they shed light on the extent of the underlying psychological, and stylistic, narrative, i.e. literary problems. A close analysis of the narrative sequences in which Sweeting's death and Bion's psychic death are dealt with thus opens up a panorama of Bion's psychic, psychological and literary landscapes.

A comparison of the three narrative sequences reveals numerous differences. They are of a content-related, but above all stylistic nature. In terms of content, the comparison of these three narrative sequences reveals above all deviations, differences, and discrepancies in the way the sequence of events is presented, especially in terms of their causal links. This seems to me to be less due to the time lag and any gradual diminishing of memory that may accompany it (although there are indeed very large, decade-long gaps between these narrative experiments); rather, it seems—exactly the other way around—as if the intensity of memory had increased as Bion's age progressed and the distance to the events increased. With each version of the text, the accuracy and range of the reproduction of details of both the external and the emotional, inner events increases; at the same time, a significant expansion of the linguistic instruments and narrative repertoire becomes apparent. This suggests an increasing working through of those psychological conflicts that were triggered in the depicted events on the one hand, but which are also to be described on the other.

Thus, the horror of the event is at first more asserted, can only be guessed at, than it is presented to the reader through the description; at first it is not really emotionally palpable. Between the psychological meaning of the event and its expression via language lies an abyss that seems unbridgeable. In the second version of the text, much more of the terror and dread, which is only asserted in the first version, is already perceptible; but the description remains inadequate, appears helplessly

repetitive, unbalanced, lopsided. The full emotional and narrative impact is only reached in the version of *The Long Week-End*.

Taken together, the passages impressively show the painful work of gradually dissolving or at least coming to terms with the psychological catastrophe of a paralyzing trauma, the causes of which reach far beyond the individual and private. It also becomes clear that there is a vicious circle at the root of the problem of describing the events surrounding Sweeting's death: Sweeting's death and the circumstances under which it occurred led to the death of vital psychological functions in Bion. But it is precisely these vital functions that are actually needed for a lively emotional and linguistic-narrative grasp of what happened. These had to be developed by Bion in lifelong painful work.

Overview of the External Events

The synopsis of the descriptions in their three different versions results in roughly the following sequence of events:

After crossing the Luce riverbed, the tanks advance towards the German front line. The Germans have noticed the advance of the tanks in spite of the fog and try to stop the advance of the Allied units by opening a barrage of shell and howitzer fire. On their way to the targets, Bion, walking behind the tanks, is accompanied by the young volunteer Sweeting and his brother. They are completely disoriented by the poor visibility in the dense fog and the infernal noise of shells exploding all around them. Sweeting's brother is suddenly nowhere to be seen, as if swallowed up by the ground, probably fatally hit.

Bion takes cover in a shell hole in order to get himself and Sweeting out of the line of fire. Sweeting fearfully clings to Bion as he tries to regain orientation in the relative safety of the crater and determine in which direction to move to avoid the barrage and get closer to the strategic targets. Contributing to the confusion is the fact that the row of poplars marking the Amiens-Roye road seems to be in a different location: are Bion's compass bearings wrong after all? Are the tanks not heading towards the German front line at all, but rather alongside it?

At this point, Bion notices that Sweeting is trying to say something—and is horrified to see that Sweeting has been mortally wounded: the force of a shell's explosion has blown his left side off, his guts are exposed: "his thoracic wall blown out, exposing his heart" (Bion 1991b, p. 256).

Sweeting keeps calling for his mother. Desperately Bion tries to calm and to silence the dying Sweeting. Sweeting makes Bion promise to write to his mother and inform her of her son's death.

When the bombardment finally subsides and the fog lifts, Bion's compass bearings prove to be correct after all: what he thought was the row of poplars on Amiens-Roye Street were in fact tall grasses near the shell hole. Bion tries to get a rescue stretcher for Sweeting, but since all of them are occupied, Sweeting has to go to the camp on his own legs.

Sweeting's Death: The First Version from the 1919 War Diary

The first report from the 1919 war diary gives a short, rather sober account of the event: "This incident upset Hauser and me very badly, and we were very sick," Bion (2015, p. 123f.) comments, and: "I mention it in such detail, horrible as it is, because it had a great effect on me." Except that this effect is not conveyed by the text. It lacks content and above all emotional detail.

One must take into account the fact that the twenty-one-year-old's report is intended for his parents, and assume that there are certain addressee-related considerations, deliberate omissions and comments added. Without this reference to these specific addressees, the shape of the text would have been most certainly different.

Above all, however, Bion simply seems to lack the ability to convey linguistically what it was that affected him so much. Bion also expresses this right at the beginning of his "Commentary" of 1972 on the *War Memoirs*, when he, as "Myself," criticizes his twenty-one year-old self "Bion" for having had "a 'very' bad attack of the 'verys,' verily very virulently," which made the war diary difficult to read. His twenty-one year-old self admits: "Looking at it again, I am amazed to find I wrote like an illiterate when I had already been accepted at Queen's" (p. 194). The deficit in expression, however, does not seem to me to be due to a lack of intellectual ability or lack of education, as Bion—habitually harsh or even plainly unfair to himself—asserts here, but rather to the fact that the intensity of the event far exceeds any ability to process it and understand it, let alone to express it in writing in a valid way.

Here is the version of the events surrounding Sweeting's death as Bion gives it as a 21-year-old in his 1919 war diary:

At last we worked things out together and decided we had better shift forward somehow. But the shells were bursting all round us and it seemed impossible to stand up and yet live.

Johnson and I looked up for a moment, and the next thing we knew was that a piece of shell had pierced his arm. We bound it with tourniquet to prevent the blood spouting from his artery, but he was too bad to go on.

The next moment, as I and a runner named Sweeting crouched together in one spot, a shell seemed to burst on top of us, and I heard a groan from Sweeting. The left side of his tunic seemed covered with blood, and as I looked, I discovered that the whole of his left side had been torn away so that the inside of the trunk lay exposed. But he was not dead.

He was quite a young boy and was terrified, as he did not quite realize what had happened. He tried to see what had happened, but I would not let him. I pretended to bandage him, but of course the field dressing was far too small and simply didn't come near to covering the cavity. He kept on saying, "I'm done for, sir! I'm done for!," hoping against hope I would contradict him. This I did, telling him it was nothing—but his eyes were already glazing over, and it was clear that death was even then upon him. He kept trying to cough, but of course the wind only came out of his side. He kept asking me why he couldn't cough.

He gave me his mother's address, and I promised to write. The bombardment was now dying down, so I sent the other runner to take him to the dressing station. He actually walked there with their support and reached the dressing station before dying. This incident upset Hauser and me very badly, and we were very sick.

I mention it in such detail, horrible as it is, because it had a great effect on me. The look in his eyes was the same as that in the eyes of a bird that has been shot—mingled fear and

> surprise. I didn't see then, and I don't see now, why that fellow and many like him should have been taken from their English homes (and their German homes) to die for a squabble they didn't understand and couldn't realize. It was simply the distrust, so frivolously sown by grown-up children who wanted to satisfy their childish ambitions, that led to Hell for us and misery for so many homes. The sooner people realize the criminal folly of their leaders the better. [p. 123f.]

Here, Bion speaks from the perspective of a "we" at the crucial points—and thus obviously tries to ratify the course of events and the decisions that led to this course of events from the perspective of soldiers in general. The brief and relatively sober account of Sweeting's death then flows seamlessly into a reflection on why so many young soldiers from all sides of the war had to die. It leads to blaming the rulers, whose immaturity was the reason for the entire war. A reasoning that may be obvious at first glance, but on closer inspection appears strange because it distracts the eye from the special circumstances of the horrible death of this one individual, who, by definition, had such a great effect on Bion.

And not by coincidence—as becomes clear when looking at the later versions.

The soldier Johnson, who is wounded in the arm by a shrapnel, is not mentioned at all in the following versions, nor is Hauser, whom Sweeting's death also affected, as Bion writes, as if he had to justify or protect himself for being affected himself. Above all, however, there is no mention in Bion's account, as he gives it here in its first version, of Sweeting being under Bion's command at the time he was fatally wounded, and of Bion's idea of taking refuge from the barrage fire in a shell hole, which he assumed to be comprehensive in light of his experiences in Ypres, whereas it actually seems to have been concentrated on the one prominent point where Bion tried to take refuge with Sweeting.

So maybe a significant part of the intolerability of Sweeting's death lies in the fact that Bion at least takes a share of the responsibility for his death, if he does not even consider himself guilty of it? If this were the case, it would be all the more remarkable that the circumstances leading to Sweeting's death are not even mentioned here.

Sweeting's Death: The Second Version in the "Amiens" Fragment of 1958

In 1958, after a train journey through France with his wife Francesca, Bion begins to further reflect on the circumstances surrounding Sweeting's death in a fragment entitled "Amiens." One reason why Bion was able to get closer to the emotional dimension of the events might have been the presence of his wife Francesca, who, in a small note preceding Bion's own account, writes:

> … memories were aroused by our train journey in France on August 3rd 1958. I remember his being visibly moved as he talked of his painful recollections; I became heavy-hearted, thinking of the lost generation of young men and those who were left to carry with them the burden of bitterness and disillusionment throughout their lives. [Bion 2015, p. 206]

In a "Prelude" to his recollections, Bion describes the situation that led him to write the "Amiens" fragment. In the heat of the summer of 1958, the train travels through wheat fields where men work with their upper bodies uncovered. Bion sits with his wife Francesca in the dining car of the train and looks out of the window. The situation is calm, relaxed:

> Francesca sat opposite to me, looking as usual cool, neat, beautifully turned out, with her sweetly smiling face. She studied the menu, and in a moment or two the waiter came up to us, and we ordered our cocktails, which arrived in glasses already frosted with the contrast of their contents and the warm, humid air of this hot summer's day. [Bion 2015, p. 206]

As they enter the outskirts of a city, the fields "disappear," and as they enter the city's train station, Bion realizes: "Amiens—so that explained it" (p. 207). Explained—what? Previously, the train had passed through a flat landscape, in which Francesca had noticed a "peculiar configuration of the ground," about which she had asked Bion. Bion had recognized it immediately, and with the recognition of the peculiar features of the terrain, the terrain becomes a landscape of memory:

> I had recognized at once the signs of shell-holes overgrown with weed. They pock-marked the ground round about some marshy pools, where the willow trees hung green and graceful in the bright sunlight. Still they seemed to be ineradicable, to

> be very little older than the shell-holes had been in the war, where one marvelled at the speed with which they were covered up with weed and willowherb in the period of war itself. What surprised now was that so little further disguise had taken place. [Bion 2015, p. 206]

This recognition could also have come as a shock. But the presence of his wife makes it possible for Bion to confront once again the terrible experiences he had had under "very different circumstances" almost forty years earlier:

> As the train sped through the complex of lines, I said to Francesca that it seemed strange that it was almost forty years ago to the day when I had last been here, and in such very different circumstances. It was a dream for her to be sitting opposite to me—a girl so beautiful, so loving, so near to a dream that I had always thought could never, never come to pass for me. [Bion 2015, p. 207f.]

In the "Amiens" fragment of 1958, Bion not only begins to reflect on the circumstances surrounding Sweeting's death but also begins to raise the question of possible guilt. Of central importance here is the evaluation of Bion's decision to take cover in the shell hole.

Here is the version of the event as given by Bion in 1958:

> He and Sweeting threw themselves into a shell-hole and sheltered, waiting, as they were in advance of their time. Bion felt sick. He wanted time to think. Sweeting pressed himself as hard as he could against Bion, who then realized how frightened the young boy was; certainly, there was reason for fear. The shell bursts were incessant; there was no pause between one and another, and it was now impossible to distinguish now the sound of any guns—it was lost in one colossal storm of sound.
>
> He tried to think: there was this rendezvous … he had to get to Berle au Bois … he had got to get to the *estaminet* at Berle au Bois … he must be at Berle au Bois at 10:15 … there he was to meet Asser … Asser's tank there he was to meet Asser's tank and to give further orders. He tried to think. He tried to keep up against the battering of thundering pressure

of the wind of the explosions against his body. Bion, you ought to know that a metalled road, if that is what it is, is not the place in which to rest. Surely you ought to know better than this. Have you not been told *never* to wait by a landmark, something on which the enemy guns can easily register? Do you not know that map? What are you waiting for? The shellfire is too heavy, I can't move. It's better to wait here. If I try to go forward out of the shelter of this hole, then I shall be blown to bits. I can't move. What are those trees there? He was looking across the way he had come, and there in the distance it seemed, through the lifting fog, that there was this row of poplars, a long straight line of poplars. What could it possibly mean? This long straight line of trees? Obviously, it could only be one road. Surely it must be a main road. It was the Amiens-Roye road. But what was it doing there? Why was it in this peculiar position then? The terrible truth came to him: he must have got his compass bearings wrong. He was sure then that some terrible blunder had occurred. If that was the case, this road would be leading straight into the enemy's lines, and he had launched the battalion tanks not toward the enemy, but across the British Front. He compelled Sweeting to look back and see the road. He asked him what it meant. Sweeting agreed that it must be the Amiens-Roye road. It could be nothing else. Nothing on earth could look so like a dead-straight heavy road, lined with these tall poplars as he knew the Amiens-Roye road to be. Pale with fear, Sweeting again buried himself as deep as he could into the shell-hole, clutching closely to Bion's side for further shelter.

Bion was aware that Sweeting was trying to talk to him. Above the sound of the barrage it was impossible to hear any ordinary speech. Bending his ear as close as he could to Sweeting's moving lips, he heard him say, "Why can't I cough, why can't I cough, sir? What's the matter, sir? Something has happened."

Bion turned around and looked at Sweeting's side, and there he saw gusts of steam coming from where his left side should be. A shell splinter had torn out the left wall of his chest. There was no

> lung left there. Leaning back in the shell-hole, Bion began to vomit unrestrainedly, helplessly. Then, somewhat recovered, he saw the boy's lips moving again. His face was deadly pale and beaded with sweat. Bion bent his head so that his ear came as near as possible to Sweeting's mouth.
>
> "Mother, Mother, write to my mother, sir, won't you? You'll remember her address, sir won't you? 22 Kimberly Avenue, Halifax. Write to my mother—22 Kimberly Road, Halifax. Mother, Mother, Mother, Mother." "Oh, for Christ's sake shut up," shouted Bion, revolted and terrified. "Write to my mother, sir, you will write to my mother, won't you?" "Yes, for Christ's sake shut up." Write to my mother, mother, mother. Why can't I cough, sir?" Gusts of steam kept billowing out from his broken side. "Why can't I cough? You will write to her, sir?" His voice began to grow faint. "You will write to her, Mother, Mother." He fell limply into Bion's arms, now no longer attempting to press himself into the hole. His face, ghastly white, turned up to the sky. The fog swirled as thickly as ever around them. Every moment they seemed to be bathed in showers of bright sparks of red-hot steel from the bursting shells.
>
> Never have I known a bombardment like this, never, never—Mother, Mother, Mother—never have I known a bombardment like this, he thought. I wish he would shut up. I wish he would die. Why can't he die? Surely he can't go on living with a great hole torn in his side like that. [Bion 2015, pp. 244-246]

In this version, written in 1958, the emotional dimension of the event plays a far greater role than in the first account of the 1919 incident, given immediately after returning from war. And what is most striking is that Bion inserts a long section into his account of the Sweeting incident, in which he tries to reconstruct the course of his thoughts as he thought them in the period after the decision to seek refuge from enemy barrage in the shell hole and immediately before Sweeting's fatal injury occurred. In addition to the attempt to find one's bearings in the auditory and visual chaos of constant bombardment and obscured visibility, the series of thoughts is primarily concerned with the question of whether the decision to take cover in the crater was the right one or

whether it was perhaps an unforgivable mistake that could prove fatal because the enemy gunners are known to concentrate their fire on distinctive points in the landscape. It could have been such a fatal mistake because it could have led, albeit indirectly, to Sweeting's death at this point and in this horrible way. The perception that the poplars lining the Amiens-Roye road are at a point that leads Bion to conclude that his compass bearings have produced completely wrong results is only revealed as a visual illusion in the third version of the event.

This second version of the events is also considerably more vivid than the first one because fundamental ambivalences are expressed here: the description of the disorientation, the fear that the compass readings had not been taken correctly, and the doubt about the correctness of the decision to seek protection from the continuous fire in the shell hole.

The aggressive parts of the horror with which Bion reacts to the discovery of Sweeting's fatal wound are communicated here for the first time. Why this aggression towards a dying young man? The conclusion of the account suggests that the life-threatening continuous shelling by the shell barrage was no less serious than Sweeting's cries for his mother and the urgent pleas to write to her and inform her of his death: Sweeting's cries and pleas are bombarding Bion's psychic integrity. The repetition of "Never [...] never, never [...] never" and "Mother, Mother, Mother, Mother" reproduces the rhythm of the impact of the shells near Bion's body and places them in parallel with Sweeting's terrible death cries, which have the same impact on Bion's psyche as projectiles: "Never have I known a bombardment like this, never, never—Mother, Mother, Mother—never have I known a bombardment like this, he thought. I wish he would shut up. I wish he would die" (p. 246).

But apart from that, the repetitions of Sweeting's shouts and questions, with which Bion tries to imitate his deadly desperation, here seem less horrifying than rather tedious to the reader. Even the long series of thoughts in which Bion tries to depict how he struggles with himself fails to really reflect Bion's disorientation; rather, it causes the reader's attention to fade. And these are not the only literary and stylistic shortcomings.

In fact, not only this passage, but Bion's entire 1958 attempt to portray the events in Amiens seems somewhat awkward and clumsy. It

is very likely that Bion also noticed these inadequacies and stopped the entire Amiens report in the middle of a sentence, because he felt that the deficiencies in his presentation—and, even more importantly, possibly also the deficits in the emotional working-through of the events—prevented him from reaching the level of truth he was searching for when he tried to capture his experiences of the war in a valid narrative form.

Sweeting's Death: The Third Version in The Long Week-End

Whatever the specific problems were that prevented Bion from developing this particular form—they have been overcome in the third and final version of the account of the event, as he gives it, again almost twenty years later, in *The Long Week-End*. Bion devotes an entire chapter to the events surrounding Sweeting's death here. Seamlessly embedded in the book's dense, concise narrative, this chapter provides a perfectly clear and extremely vivid picture of the circumstances under which Sweeting's death occurred.

Bion opens the chapter with a reflection that haunted him more and more with each new mission, and now, on the morning of August 8, 1918, immediately before his deployment during the general offensive, imposed a probability bordering on certainty: with each fatal situation that Bion escaped, the statistical odds that he would survive the war had been further exhausted; sooner rather than later, his parents would also receive the telegram informing them of their son's death: "sooner or later my parents would be bound to have the telegram announcing my death; the war had only to go on long enough. Already I had exhausted my quota of chances of survival" (Bion 2015, p. 247). A "premonition" that would come true in a certain way, although—once again—in a very different way than Bion had imagined.

In the fog, the units wait for zero hour; the tanks are at the ready with running engines. Bion looks motionlessly at the rapidly crawling minute hand: "I watched the minute hand motionless, creeping, rushing headlong to zero hour" (Bion 2005, p. 248). Time passes too quickly and painfully slowly at the same time. Then the time has come; the Allied units open barrage fire, in whose cover they advance towards the enemy lines.

In the next moment the tanks have disappeared; Bion and the two runners assigned to him as officers find themselves alone in the fog. They hurry to catch up with the tanks. In contrast to Ypres, the ground on which Bion walks is solid; other than in the muddy desert of Ypres, he moves forward quickly, and it almost seems as if he and the Sweeting Brothers under his command have a specific target they are moving resolutely toward, but in fact it is only a headless movement in the approximate direction of a supposed target, an escape ahead, always away from the ground on which they are standing: "It was almost a run, as if we were going somewhere. We were not; we were only getting away, as far as we could and as fast, from the ground on which we stood" (Bion 2005, p. 248).

The enemy's response to the barrage of the Allies is still to come. The Germans seem to have been taken by surprise by the offensive. But then they open fire. Sweeting's brother disappears without a trace, he probably has fallen. Sweeting and Bion try to escape the enemy barrage, but since it is too dense, they take cover in a shell hole large enough to hold them both. Bion assumes that this place is as good as any other—an assumption based primarily on his experience of the muddy desert of Ypres, but it does not apply here in a way that will prove fatal, because unlike in Ypres, where the enemy barrage covered a very large area, here the barrage is only aimed at a specific point, the area where Bion tried to take cover with Sweeting:

> In this supposition I was entirely wrong; it was based on the experience of Ypres where any shell-hole could be regarded as good as any other. As Carter had said, this was not Ypres and my lack of experience and sheer terror of moving once I had got into the shell-hole led to the most dangerous solution I could have chosen. The shell-fire was intense; lying there in the dark I supposed it to be universal as it would have been in any of the battles I had so far experienced. [Bion 2005, p. 248]

The darkness, fog and deafening noise of the explosions cause a complete disorientation, which Bion tries to neutralize by reflecting at exactly the place that is most unsuitable for it.

As the shelling subsides and the fog clears for a few moments, the disorientation deepens: the row of poplars lining Amiens-Roye Street is

in a completely different place than it should have been according to Bion's compass bearings. Bion's perception leads him to the conclusion that they have gone in the wrong direction, not towards the enemy lines, but parallel to them:

> The trees showed that Sweeting and I were walking parallel to the front, not towards the enemy. I tried to loosen my compass. As far as I could tell we had kept the same direction as the tanks. But the tanks, our whole battalion, had taken direction from this same compass. [Bion 2005, p. 248]

At the end of this series of thoughts is the terrible consequence that Bion's incorrect measurements have sent the entire tank battalion in the wrong direction:

> "If the Amiens-Roye road was behind us the tanks would be enfilading the French advance, and the Canadian Corps would be without armoured support—that is assuming that tanks were any damned good anyway. [Bion 2005, p. 249]

This perception will only later prove to have been a visual illusion; then it will become clear that Bion and Sweeting (whom Bion asks for confirmation of his perception in the second version of the text from 1958) did not see the poplars in the distance, but a row of tall grasses that in the fog merely looked like the trees lining the Amiens-Roye road:

> I looked up. The shelling had stopped. The sun was shining. The fog, the night, had gone. The Amiens-Roye road had resumed its proper place on our left. We were in a shell hole at the edge of a cart track and the track was edged on the other side by tall grasses, not the poplars of the Amiens-Roye road. [Bion 2005, p. 249]

The illusion of a comparatively safe shelter in the shell hole, however, is destroyed in the worst possible way. Bion notices that Sweeting is trying to say something. At first, he feels annoyed that Sweeting is making himself noticed, a bothersome disturbance in his attempt to orientate himself by thinking, but when he sees the expression on Sweeting's face, "horribly anxious, almost ill" (Bion 2005, p. 249) he turns to him. Sweeting asks him why he can't cough—Bion looks down at him and

sees that Sweeting's entire left side has been blown away. To distract him from the fatal wound, Bion applies a bandage, which is of course much too narrow to cover the huge wound. Bion's initial reaction to the perception of Sweeting's fatal wound is largely unfeeling:

> "Sir! Sir, why can't I cough?"
>
> What a question! What a time … I looked at his chest. His tunic was torn. No, it was not his tunic; the left side of his chest was missing. He tried to look. I stopped him. I found his field dressing and pretended to fix it across the gap. And then he saw, under his left arm … . He sank back as if relieved, then started on a new tack.
>
> "Mother, Mother, Mother …" Well, thank God for his damned mother. Now at least I could have some peace and pay attention to the shell-fire. I pressed myself as low into the shell-hole as I could. [Bion 2005, p. 249]

This depiction of Bion's reaction to Sweeting's fatal wounding exactly corresponds to what Bion had described in 1962 in *Learning from Experience* as one of the most important mechanisms of the psychotic psyche: the emotions that flood the psyche and threaten to take the self with them are "so feared that steps are taken to destroy awareness of all feelings although that is indistinguishable from taking life itself" (Bion 2005 [1962], p. 10). The mental numbness with which Bion initially reacts to the event, which is too great and too terrible to process, ensures his psychological and physical survival—at the price of destroying awareness of his own emotions, which act as signals and "messenger substances" between reality, perception and thought. But this destroys the ability to distinguish—between consciousness and unconscious, life and death, subject and object—in the first place. Bion experienced the lifelessness that results from this as the death of his psyche:

> We might speculate that the explosive terror provoked by Sweeting's wound annihilated the contact barrier which separates conscious and unconscious thoughts, thus dissolving the separation between life and death, between him and me, between aliveness and deadness. This left Bion to die

> "unphenomenally … wordlessly, without leaving any trace and thus without dying." [Tarantelli 2016, p. 53][5]

The only reaction in Bion to the continuous calling of the shocked Sweeting for his mother and his incessantly repeated questions about why he couldn't cough seems to be anger:

> Sweeting was trying to sit up. "For Christ's sake … try not to be a damned fool man! Lie down blast you!" My anger must have impressed him even if he couldn't hear. I couldn't hear either but I could see his lips moving.
>
> "Mother … Mother …. Mother …" Then he saw me looking.
>
> "Why can't I cough sir?"
>
> I could not stand it. Those tanks—perhaps they were enfilading the Canadian Corps?—the French First Army without support looking for that joke Englishman who understood French? I began to whimper.
>
> "Sweeting, *please* Sweeting … please, please *shut up*." He shut up.
>
> I knew he would start again. I caught a glimpse of the poplars, waving. There must be a strong wind. Why did it not blow the fog away? [Bion 2005 [1985], p. 249]

Sweeting's calls and petitions are desperate pleas for a "containment" of his fear of death. Bion's psyche is overwhelmed by the mass of events on the battlefield and in his immediate vicinity, all of which are nowhere near comprehensible, and threatens to break under the onslaught of Sweeting's urgent pleading and begging. What cannot be absorbed mentally, must be expelled; but Bion's paralyzed psyche is incapable of both. Bion's body finally acts out the lacking psychological

[5] Tarantelli here quotes Blanchot 1986, p. 32.

reaction: by vomiting, his body tries to evacuate what is indigestible from him. The attempt fails, because what has to be expelled is psychologically life-threatening, but not material:

> "Why can't I cough sir?"
>
> Why can't you cough it away? Why can't … I began to vomit but I had nothing to vomit. [Bion 2005 [1985], p. 249]

In the continuous shelling, Bion perseveres next to the dying Sweeting. The time that passes is timeless because it cannot be determined by any points of reference; the visual sense is suspended by darkness and fog, the auditory sense by the incessant explosions, the inner sense, the relationships between perception, thinking, and emotions, by the overwhelming action. When the bombardment by the shells and Sweeting's cries ceases—"never have I known a bombardment like this," Bion writes in the version of the incidents of Amiens given in 1958 (Bion 2015, p. 246)—and the view becomes clearer, Bion succeeds in an attempt to comfort Sweeting. The attempt is too weak, but it does reach Sweeting to the extent that enough life returns to him so that he can ask Bion to inform his mother of his death:

> "Mother … Mother … Mother," he was muttering. How then could I hear him? I looked up. The shelling had stopped. The sun was shining. The fog, the night, had gone.
>
> The Amiens-Roye road had resumed its proper place on our left. We were in a shell hole at the edge of a cart track and the track was edged on the other side by tall grasses, not the poplars of the Amiens-Roye road.
>
> I was not relieved. "God damn it God! That was not funny."
>
> Utterly exhausted, I said "Sweeting, I'm very sorry. There will be some bearers shortly. They will take you to the casualty clearing station. You've got a Blighty."

> He was too far gone to call me a liar. His eyes were glazed over. Enough life flickered into them at my words for him to say, "You will write to my mother? You *will* write sir, won't you?" He was alive now and urgent. "Sir! You will write to my mother? Won't you?"
>
> "Yes, of course."
>
> "Her address is …"
>
> "Don't. I have it. We have it in the office." (Bion 2005 [1985], p. 249).

"Blighty" is the word used among the soldiers of the First World War to describe an injury suffered; it has a strong connotation of redemption and being allowed to go home. Robert Graves, in his autobiography *Good-Bye to All That*, relates the word "Blitey" to the Hindu word for "home"; he writes: "The men are pessimistic but cheerful. They all talk about getting a 'cushy' one to send them back to 'Blitey'" (Graves 2000 [1929, 1957], p. 94). The word is a mere euphemism, the most essential function of which is to take some of the horror away from the appalling truth:

> If the authorities relied on euphemism to keep the truth from others—the French mutinies of 1917 became acts of "collective indiscipline"—the troops relied on it to soften the truth for themselves. The whole concept of the "Blighty wound" is an example, where *Blighty*, connoting home, comfort, and escape is felt to remove a large part of the terror of the *wound*. [Fussell 2000 [1975], p. 177, italics in the original]

The word "Blighty" thus offers in itself a "containment" for the intolerable reality of a permanent or, in the case of Sweeting, fatal injury. In spite of his exhaustion, Bion extends this "containment" for Sweeting, not only by opening up the prospect of being taken by field medics on a stretcher to the safety of the casualty clearing station shortly, but also, as a result of this very injury, being released from service at the front and allowed to go home. Both know that there is no truth to this,

but that is not the point. What is at stake in this most existential of situations—the last moments before certain death—is comfort and solace. It is not so much the *content* of the words that counts here, but the emotional *substance*; it alone brings support and reassurance.

Interestingly, Bion here prevents Sweeting from providing the address of his mother. While Bion had had Sweeting painstakingly spell out the address twice in the 1958 version, here, he already has it. In this version of the event, Bion knows who to write to. This can be understood also in a different way: Bion not only knows which address to send the letter with the news of Sweeting's death to, but also in which direction his description of the event should go. This may also have to do with the fact that at the end of the chapter the emotions that were missing in the previous versions of the descriptions of the event now find an expression. In the first version of 1919, the account of Sweeting's death ended with a general reasoning about the guilt of military decision-makers and politicians for the death of so many young men on all sides; only a brief remark that Bion and his comrade felt "very bad" transitions from one to the other. In the second version of the text from 1958, the narrative sequence dedicated to Sweeting ends with a remark that tries to deal with the cruelty of the injury Sweeting suffered by doing it to him again: "I wish he would shut up. I wish he would die. Why can't he die? Surely he can't go on living with a great hole torn in his side like that" (Bion 2015, p. 246). To find an expression for what had really happened, Bion had to search for sixty years. "And then I think he died," Bion writes in *The Long Week-End*: "Or perhaps it was only me" (Bion 2005 [1985], pp. 247-250). The coldness and cynicism that the traumatized Bion showed to the mortally wounded Sweeting, pleading for comfort in his mortal fear, has given way to deep sadness. With his narrative remembrance, Bion erects a tomb of language and formulates his epitaph for the young life that was destroyed under his command without him being able to react emotionally in an appropriate way:

> And then I think he died. Or perhaps it was only me. I handed him over to some infantry. "Sweeting, I *have* to go now—to the other tanks …" Thank God he was paying no attention to my drivel. Two men, one on either side, draped his arms over their shoulders and stumbled along with him to

> the casualty clearing station. Sweeting. Gunner. Tank Corps. Died of Wounds. That, for him, was the end. [p. 249f.]

"WE WILL REMEMBER THEM": A TOMB FOR SWEETING

In his *Cogitations*, in an entry from September 13, 1959, Bion deals with the question which parts of the conglomerate of the psyche of patients suffering from psychotic disorders—being only improvised from sheer necessity—can be perceived as real, whether these parts must be understood as a whole as a mere "façade," and if so, what this façade is based on and what it conceals. He comes to the conclusion that the fragments of the destroyed personality of psychotics that one has to deal with can only be understood as merely a hint in the direction of a catastrophe. The difficulty in dealing with patients suffering from psychotic disorders is that the fragments of their destroyed personality together form a conglomerate that serves as a personality, but remain unconnected to each other, without any necessary reference to each other:

> Suppose the patient to be, or to have been, capable of normality: the conglomerate of fragments of personality which serves the patient for a personality can only be regarded as evidence of a disaster. The discussion of such a case is difficult because we are concerned not with the ordinary structures of the human personality … but with the shattered fragments … which have now been reassembled but not rearticulated. [Bion 2005 [1992], p. 74f.]

Bion's various attempts to communicate his experiences to himself and to others, to find a language for these catastrophic experiences with which he returned from the First World War, to make them somehow understandable and comprehensible in a narrative framework, is quite comparable with this characterization. The narrative fragments that Bion developed could not be brought together in a coherent, worked-through text for over sixty years of his life. They had to remain unconnected to each other, because although Bion could always recall them in his memory, they could not relate their meaning to his emotional experience. Emotions, as a processing of what happened on the

battlefield, had been absent at the crucial points—most importantly at Sweeting's death—and had had to be absent to secure Bion's survival. But in order to be able to express the experience in a narratively valid way, the inner events had to be reworked and put into the context in which they should have been in the past. This work of a subsequent rearticulation of the external and internal catastrophes, which had burned themselves into the deepest layers of Bion's psyche as traumas, had to be accomplished first in order to make articulation possible within the framework of an autobiographical narrative—i.e. one based to a particularly high degree on articulated experience. An echo of how painful this work must have been for Bion can be found in his theoretical writings; the fragments of his autobiography in particular show and convey his torment.

It took sixty years of hard work to rearticulate the events of August 8, 1918 in such a way that they could find a truthful expression in a narrative. In *The Long Week-End*, Bion finally succeeded in finding a way to express the experiences of his life and to make them communicable; to develop a language that conveys the events with the greatest possible clarity and is also able to capture the unspeakable, the catastrophic emotional dimension that it triggers. Even inconsistencies and contradictions that lie in the event itself, in its perception or even in the conflictual nature of its inner processing, have now moved into the horizon of the narrative, be it in the form of textual gaps or "blanks" (Iser 1978), which seem all the more productive in the reader's mind during the act of reading because they are sharply delineated in the textual structures and schemes they contain. Breaks and sutures in tone, style or the representation of causality—signs of a lack of internal and external elaboration, as they were frequently to be observed in previous versions of the text—no longer exist here. In the version of the events given in *The Long Week-End*, everything is cast from a single mould.

One of the prerequisites for his success seems to be that Bion had to break free from traumatic rigor mortis, had to escape from his inner "crypt" (Abraham & Torok 1994 [1987], pp. 131, 136) by working through his most painful experiences, which lie at the root of his catastrophic trauma, in order to be able to mourn Sweeting, and with him all the fallen fellow soldiers of his generation, including the young Wilfred, who lost his psychic health on the battlefield of Amiens. "Work

of mourning" is the term Freud coined for this difficult and highly complex, but also highly productive process. It consists of "killing death" (Lagache 1938, p. 695)—and thus finding a name for the remembrance that can then be expressed in memory and living emotions. Already in the introduction to the third part of his *War Memoirs*, the "Amiens" fragment of 1958, and then on several occasions, Bion had called up Laurence Binyon's poem *For the Fallen*, published in 1914, whose fourth verse reads:

> They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
>
> Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
>
> At the going down of the sun and in the morning
>
> We will remember them.

But not until Bion had erected the tombstone for Sweeting in his book *The Long Week-End* and the epitaph that he wrote to him—"Sweeting. Gunner. Tank Corps. Died of Wounds." (Bion 2005 [1985], pp. 247-250)—that he could find a place of remembrance for him and his own "death." The ghost of whose hauntings and visitations Bion wrote in *A Memoir of the Future*—"As far as I am concerned the ideas *hold me* whether I like it or not. I would not go near the Amiens-Roye road for fear I should meet my ghost—I died there. For though the Soul should die, the Body lives for ever" (Bion 1991a, p. 257)—had not disappeared, but had come to rest.

Events that erratically protruded into Bion's life and writing, destroying the integrity of his psyche and affecting and threatening his psychic health throughout his subsequent life, have become communicable experiences. With Bion, the reader now can hear, see, feel, in short: can *experience* what, where and how things happen and what consequences the external and internal events have. Bion's autobiography, as it is now available to us, is the result of the long journey of an infinitely painful but ultimately successful working through of an entire life, with recourse to and fertilization of the entire psychological, historical, literary, narrative, epistemological, psychoanalytical … experience available

to the author. This is also what makes *The Long Week-End*—peak and sum of Bion's fragments of an autobiography—not only a literary chef-d'oeuvre, but, in my opinion, also a one-of-a-kind achievement of a century in more than one respect, still waiting to be discovered as such.

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The Racist Within

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THE RACIST WITHIN

JOSEPH S. REYNOSO

This article demonstrates the author's psychoanalytic method of pursuing racism's various forms, functions, and locations, including within himself, a person of color. It argues that to disrupt racism on any level, we must realize the unconscious motivations every individual has to actively engage in racist ideology. This is due to racism's malevolent efficiency to articulate and structure experiences, such as threat and enjoyment, for both the individual and the group. The paper uses clinical vignettes to show the value of theorizing interdisciplinarily to accurately portray the complexity, contradictions, and intractability of racism's manifestations. It claims that addressing the questions racism poses requires first articulating the particularity of one's active psychic attachment to what racist process provides.

Keywords: Unconscious, racecraft, internal racism, contradiction, anti-racist, children, child psychoanalysis.

During one of my first mental health positions at a psychiatric day treatment program, I was assigned to an Italian American man in his late twenties with a psychotic disorder. After a few weeks as his case manager, a rapport was building. Aside from a severe depression and thought disorganization, he exhibited paranoia and pronounced envy of others. One afternoon, after a 15-minute session of whatever, at that point in my career, I thought passed for therapy, he said to me, "Joseph, let me

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ask you a question. You a paisano?" I was familiar enough with the term *paisano,* used colloquially in different languages to mean brother or countryman. Luckily, without knowing the proper technique, I asked him to clarify what he meant. He said he didn't trust me or the day program at first. Then drawing close, he furtively shared, "A lot of Blacks and Chinese types here … even the doctors. Who knows if they had enough money to go to school?" He explained that after these first few weeks, he felt I was trying to help, and he liked me. He added, "You're easy to talk to, so I figured you got a little Italian blood." At that point, a Taiwanese psychiatrist passed us. The patient lowered his voice and mischievously said, "Wouldn't want to be working with a chink, you know what I mean?" My parents immigrated to the United States from the Philippines, and my grandfather is from the Basque region of Spain. People usually place my Asian heritage, and some identify me as Latino/Hispanic, but I haven't been mistaken for Italian too many times.

I begin with this blatant example of mechanisms veiled in racist practice. Using the historian Ibram X. Kendi's definition, articulated in *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (2016), a racist idea "is any concept that regards one racial group as inferior or superior to another racial group in any way" (p. 5). What can be considered racist in this example is the patient degrading people based on African and Asian descent. Also, his positive attitude toward me is framed ethnically in terms of a supposed shared Italian heritage. A broad definition of racism allows pursuit all of its incarnations, though it departs from its prejudice and power formulation. Certainly, some forms of racism are more destructive than others and some are in positions to exercise more power over others. At the same time, we must learn from what intersectional thinking has taught us about the way power accrues contextually to our multiple identities (Crenshaw 1989; Davis 2016). As Farhad Dalal (2015) reminds, defining racism exclusively as "Power + Prejudice" runs the reifying risk of "speaking of power … as something that could be possessed" (p. 186).

Racism's individual, group, institutional, governmental, systemic, and cultural manifestations interpenetrate. Attempts to delimit racism's residence and functions too specifically only facilitate its persistence. Solely analyzing the "attitudes," "psychology," or even the "psychopathology" of racism minimizes its pervasiveness, treating it as a locatable phenomenon

in categorically racist minds or groups. Isolating racism as an "evil" misapprehends the ordinary everydayness of its practice (Arendt 1963). Placing racism's operation culturally or institutionally positions individuals as passively or unwittingly accepting racist ideologies and policies embedded in a society. This neglects how conscious and unconscious motivations drive racist practice.

This paper has three goals. First, to discuss the importance of widening where and how we look for racist process to better describe the plurality and availability of its functions for all of us. Second, to argue for a more intensive emphasis on the conscious and unconscious motivated activity of racism. Third, to demonstrate methods I have found helpful theorizing racism's efficiency, intractability, and malleability.

I hope to show how beyond psychoanalysis' specific concepts (e.g., projection, splitting, disavowal), its investigative attitude interrogates racism's barbed tangledness as it occurs simultaneously. As a reference point for this mode of thought, one may think of the Lacanian tradition's pursuit of meaning across the interlocking different registers of the Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary. Psychoanalytic thinking, in most of its versions, attempts to describe and re-describe the conflictual and contradictory nature of phenomenal life, acknowledging the limits of completely apprehending its fluidity. The stance necessary to track racism poses questions that may only reveal other more difficult questions.

Before proceeding, let me say that my method in this paper aims to demonstrate the theoretical elasticity required to analyze racism's multifunctionality. The dynamism needed to theorize racism may be best served by investigating it from at least two separate conceptual starting points. Since Freud, psychoanalysis has employed an interdisciplinary approach drawing on art and intellectual sources (e.g., classics, mathematics, philosophy) for language or content to elaborate and ground models. Singular approaches risk affixing an inquiry into racism rigidly to the priorities and tendencies of their discipline and may fail to grasp the malleability of racist processes as it occurs on different levels (see Brickman 2017 or Moten 2008 on the problematic psychoanalytic discourse of race). Borrowing from different analytic orientations and interdisciplinarily brings theories together to, at the least, *triangulate* racist process in order to see it from additional perspectives. Through clinical examples, I will ask how racist states of mind function for various

individuals, who, like all of us, are grounded in a social history of racism. Though I provide formulations, I do so knowing that my attempts to describe racist process just begin to ask the questions that racism phrases for the individuals discussed and society.

RACECRAFT, THREAT, AND ENJOYMENT

In their book *Racecraft* (2012), the historian Barbara Fields and her sister the sociologist Karen Fields claim that racism has more similar properties to witchcraft than often recognized. As they discussed in an interview:

> Racecraft encompasses the fact that the race that is pictured by the subjects as real, in fact is not; it's made to be real and envisioned collectively as something real. … race transforms the act of the perpetrator into a characteristic of the target. Race transforms one person's action into another person's being. Racecraft is a conjuring trick that does not need a conjurer. The onlookers' minds are also conjuring the spectacle for them. … Racecraft does not end with the performer and the illusion appearing on the stage in their rightful being. It's a permanent illusion. [Denvir 2018]

Borrowing from the Fields' language, the following questions can be asked of the first vignette: did the patient perceive an ambiguity in my physical appearance, then via racecraft transform me into an Italian brother or ally in a crowd of African and Asian bodies? Or was this transformation meant to negate his perception of my Asianness, to lessen competitive strivings and aggressive impulses toward me, thus protecting a clinician, who was caring for him and whom he was growing fond of? Perhaps by wishing me Italian, he converted the anxieties of a triangular configuration into something more tolerable, by phantasied narcissistic merger either with me or identifying both of us with the power of Italians as a group, whom he positions superior to Asian/African peoples.

What does the idea of "racecraft" add to an understanding of this psychotic patient? With its associative allusions to witchcraft, the term calls to mind specific historical, group, magical, moral, violent, and oppressive qualities that must be recognized as central to all of racism's

manifestations. For the target of racist abuse, the intense paranoia that drives the racism and infuses the scene of it (Did that just occur?; What is happening?; What's just been done to me?) demands language and ideas that expressively situate it within the societal lineage and history of generational group oppression. The grounding of psychoanalytic ideas in individual pathology may limit its ability to sufficiently address both the ubiquity and particularity of racism (cf., Moten 2008 on the "stance of the pathologist" in approaching anti-Blackness), unless the depth of its clinical perspective is used together with ideas that theorize racism societally. Racism, even when practiced or experienced individually, is a group process and confronts us with, in the words of Dalal (2006), "the I—the me—[that] is constituted at the deepest of levels by and through the power relationships that are part of the social fabric one is born into" (p. 145). Racism cannot be reduced to either the intrapsychic or the social. The individual, on both sides of a racist dyad, is thrown into its sociality in times of threat.

Participation in racism is never passive and always refers to its simultaneous individual, group, institutional, policy, and cultural dimensions. As Todd McGowan (2014) put it, "institutional structures have a historical inertia that seems to operate independent of subjective acts, but in fact they require subjects to actively prop them up at all times" (p.71). The Fields assert that the acceptance of the viability of race as a concept "transforms the act of the perpetrator into a characteristic of the target" (Denvir 2018). Roy Schafer's notions of action language can elaborate racecraft's psychology:

> we must understand the word action to include all private psychological activity that can be made public through gesture and speech, such as dreaming and the unspoken thinking of everyday life, as well as all initially public activity, such as ordinary speech and motoric behavior, that has some goal-directed or symbolic properties. Whether initially private or public, the activity may be pursued unconsciously. [1976, pp. 9-10]

By affixing the suffix *-craft* to race, as in witchcraft, the term racecraft includes the "component of a socially ratified *making* or *doing* and its companion, the socially ratified *belief* that travels before and after it, as input and as output" (Fields and Fields 2012, p. 203, italics in the original). Using this

concept together with conceptions of unconscious fantasy and motivation increases our investigative capacity to understand the particular and general, individual and societal purposes for races (like witches) to be created, believed in and propped up. To use the combined language of Wilfred Bion (1962) and the Fields', racecraft creates a closed system that allows its own consequences to be taken as its verification and cause for further reproduction of racial belief that resists learning from experience.

Returning to the vignette, we can suppose that the patient was feeling vulnerable beginning treatment at a new facility, mistrusting the intentions of both staff members and fellow patients. What gets demonstrated in a high anxiety situation like this is the mind's capacity to use anything at its disposal, including observable differences in skin color and assumed country of origin, to unconsciously organize and manipulate experience. Using a socially ratified belief in racial differences as the psychic language to speak and control fears, an ethnic-racial-class construct reverses the reality of a power differential to doctors. One can attempt to psychically change the nature and source of anxiety, but what is repressed is not forgotten. Perhaps he externalized his insecurity locating its cause in the environment as fear of potential mistreatment by "Black" and "chink" doctors. As the Fields discuss, racecraft conceals the conjurer's use of race to transform another person's being.

Bion (1952) emphasized that we are first and foremost group animals and S.H Foulkes (1964) prioritized our need to belong. The individual racist insult is always bolstered by the phantasied identification with the group, for which it draws on for the history and morality of ethnic-racial oppression. Perhaps this is demonstrated here, as this patient does not demean the doctors of color on the basis of a "personal" idiosyncratic hatred, but rather exercises a prejudice supported by a society of others. The derogation of the doctors of color is a comparative one, with the unstated inference that White doctors would deliver better treatment. That he inserts his Italian heritage to bond with me highlights this implied hierarchy. In other words, in stating that he "wouldn't want to be working with a chink," the patient speaks as a person identified with a larger group, who shares the same social animus and anxiety. He hates in the first-person plural (Moss 2003). A racist state of mind "turns the tables" and allows an individual to unconsciously place himself in an advantageous position in the larger reality of a world, in which

doctors of color suffer disadvantages, including economic, in comparison to Euro-American ones: "Who knows if they had enough money to go to school?" One may recall the oft-repeated quip by Malcolm X in the late 1960's: "What do you call a Black man with a Ph.D.? A n——." In threat, the "I" asserts its social constitution.

Racism's unconscious lazy efficiency lets one explain fear through the false certainty of selected perception (in the environment) of ethnic-racial differences and the negative associations attached to them—including poverty. Conceivably, by making the doctors underqualified and poor, this man projects his lack at least temporarily to them. Interestingly, stripping them of their power leaves him subject to the incompetence he ascribes to them. He could have more simply, and still racistly, thought[1] that doctors of color would not understand him based on an assumption of unbridgeable difference. Likewise, he could have even projected a racism to the doctors to think they might only help their "kind." Instead, his racecraft uses money (its absence) as a justification for his fantasy of the doctors' ineptitude. If safety is the main goal of this racism, this psychic action serves contradictory purposes.

Contradictions in racist logic reveal the disparate unconscious currents and conflicts it structures. As Lacanians (George 2016; Hook 2018; McGowan 2014) have theorized, the coupling of racism and capital in this example is not only an essential reminder of the economics of, but also points to the unconscious enjoyment in, racist process. As McGowan writes:

> Without paranoia about the excessively passionate other, there is no racism. All racist mythology about the other—ideas of sexual promiscuity, drunkenness, body odor, laziness, and so on has its origin in the belief that the racial other enjoys in a fashion that the subject itself cannot and that this excessive passion threatens the subject's own possibilities for enjoying itself. [2014, p. 71]

Conceptions of threat in racism require expansion beyond wishes for safety to envious fantasies of the "other" having access to or

[1] Here and subsequently, I use the term *thought*, as in racist thought, in Kleinian/Bionian fashion, blurring the divide between emotion and cognition (see Spillius 1988).

potentially stealing our enjoyment (Hook 2018). Racial superiority, which undergirds all racist states of mind, implies moral supremacy/depravity as the Fields' theory of racecraft instructs. Moral condemnation often involves the paranoid fantasies of other's excessive enjoyment, as featured in the effort to control women's sexuality in the societal creation and persecution of witches (Federici 2004).

The enjoyment of the other can appear limitless. Perhaps for this man, who was homeless, the confrontation with the phantasied enjoyment of doctors, who are persons of color, is doubly excessive. A possible negation of their enjoyment would show the traces of its registration and repudiation in a racist logic that can be phrased as: these doctors of color are poor, and thus do not enjoy. Their poverty prevented them from going to medical school. Thus, they may not even be fully trained as doctors and are incompetent. They are not doctors, but are Blacks and chinks, and I am an Italian American. These speculations about this brief encounter with a person I worked with many years ago, ever so slightly, introduced some terms I will now use to theorize racism with in the following extended treatments.

FOUR VIGNETTES[2]

I once treated a 10-year-old Latino boy, brought in by his parents for fearfulness and anxiety. Based on recurring themes in the play, my early comments focused on danger and being taken advantage of. Further into the treatment, he became preoccupied with how much money I made. Occasionally, he asked with seeming concern though bluntly, "So, you're not poor?" Each time, it wasn't clear what response he expected or wanted—an observation I shared. The child was from an affluent family and though without any overt indication of race, I ultimately felt there was a racist component to his checking my finances (Davids 2011).

Fakhry Davids (2003, 2011) offers way to think through the motivated activity of a ubiquitous racism. His object-relations model of "internal racism" describes how we unconsciously recruit racist templates as a differentiator of self and other allowing for ready projective

[2] Patients supplied written consent to use clinical information and I have further added disguise to protect privacy.

identification. Though Davids derives the idea of internal racist organizations from the Kleinian John Steiner's (1993) concept of pathological organizations, Davids thinks they develop normatively:

> to help the child bind primitive anxiety, at a stage when it is already sufficiently attuned to reality to have an awareness of real social stereotypes. These are given a new, individually charged, lease of life as they are assimilated to become an integral part of the beliefs about specific others that constitute the racist organization. The fact that these stereotyped beliefs are accepted as true within the individual's social milieu allows their defensive function to evade detection. Internally, its function is to ensure that we never again have to confront, head on, our most dreaded emotional situations. It minimizes the risk of our being exposed to primitive anxiety by building in the possibility that if threatened the ego can, unconsciously, trigger the internal racist. I think of it, therefore, as a universal developmental achievement. It is a psychic structure that forms a bedrock in the mind, a sort of last refuge to stop the absolutely unthinkable from happening, and it is this that gives it its extraordinary power. [2003, p. 7]

Steiner wrote about pathological defensive organizations in psychic retreats that provide desperate unconscious means for certain patients to withdraw from the agonies associated to the depressive and paranoid-schizoid positions. Davids posits the universal availability of an internal racist organization that "works like a pathological organization, defending tenaciously against intense anxiety by asserting its dominance and control … with the projection that lies at its core built on sophisticated awareness of the social meanings of difference in the outside world" (p. 51, 2011). Whether or not one agrees with the normativity of unconscious racist psychic organizations, Davids' ideas provide ways to comprehend the potential role of racism in *all* minds, not just certain ones. In addition, his clinical illustrations address the common experience of being the target of a racist attack that does not explicitly reference race.

What can be considered racist in this child's questions is an assumption of poverty (even if voiced with benevolent concern) associated to my brown skin. My patient may have been aware that his family paid me for therapeutic services, but does this fact lead to questions of poverty? I

wondered would he have been curious about the financial viability of a White dentist or pediatrician. Did he ask about his teachers' salaries or his nanny's? He and his parents reported he didn't. Perhaps, seeing me as poor and brown shaped certain fears. Though I suspected that he was regularly alert to danger in his environment, what made him feel threatened in a way that was constructed racistly? Possibly the ambiguity attached to my role as a "feelings doctor" required both the leveling and certainty that racism tenders. At the same time the racist thought of my poverty could unconsciously permit him to aggress against me and reverse a dominant object relations dyad—of the mighty and the weak linked by fear.

In certain sessions, he directly characterized White action figures as "rich," having "power," and being "strong." My attempts to elaborate or have him describe the opposing position (the not rich, powerful or strong) flustered him. Later, I interpreted that checking and re-checking my finances may relieve fear by establishing I'm not "*that* dangerous of a brown person" if I am not poor. He replied, "yeah, you're like us," referring to his affluent Latinx family. His family's wealth placed him in social situations among other privileged kids. As society reminds us with mundane frequency, wealth does not insulate one from racist aggression. I didn't know whether or where from he literally or figuratively received the statements "so, you're not poor?" and "yeah, you're like us." I did know he was one of the few students of color in his private school year. A colonial/racist state of mind is psychically utilizable for every child at that school, including my patient. Though certain contexts, where observable differences in skin color are more apparent, force some to be likely targets of racecraft.

Though this child's anxiety was overdetermined, let me summarize to say that I hypothesized that its relationship to aggression was central. Our treatment was one of the only places he had to play with aggression. The therapeutic setting allowed him to create the conditions to tolerate his own fantasies of hurting others: in defense, retaliation, and pleasurably. It can be said that this boy entered therapy, similar to the man at the day program, with worries expressed in concerns about a doctor's care. Though his aggression and anxiety were mainly acted out in the play, the checking of my finances not only reflected a fuller engagement in the transference, but an invocation of the overtly social. Under threat,

the boy unconsciously assumed a position in a group of the rich, powerful and strong—and possibly White.

My thinking that his questioning my poverty had a racist element was informed by a number of factors beyond its feeling. These include my understanding of the entanglement of racist-classist prejudice and experiences of such, as well as aspects of the boy's preferences to choose White action figures exclusively and verbal derogation of various things (e.g., clothes, behavior, food, etc.) as "ghetto." We can easily suppose that this boy unconsciously identified with an aggressor attached to fantasies of Whiteness, richness, and power to avoid feeling vulnerable, weak, and scared. Like the man from the day program, racecraft confers a doctor's skin color degraded meaning in a socially ratified way that reverses roles.

Object relations models (Kernberg 1998; Klein 1975) help articulate the confused ensnarement endemic to racist process due to paranoiac and projective mechanisms. One unconsciously locates or moves danger into the environment (the observable social) in a fashion that ensures never-ending oscillating dynamics of attacker-attacked or powerful-weak. In the establishment of an object-representational dyad, the assigned roles are never fixed, they become a viable way of automatically framing interactions, phantasied or real. and part of an unconscious psychic world eluding one's control. For both this boy and the Italian American man, their unconscious move to relieve threat can lock them in a position to experience further phantasied danger from those (doctors) they just psychically discharged from power. This phantasied risk of retaliation from those newly subjugated becomes a further justification for paranoid worry and reliance on the group and the social bond (that provides racism) to contain it.

A crucial difference to consider is the effect of the assumed sameness this Latino American boy may have perceived in his clinician of color. The Italian American man applied racecraft to turn me, an otherwise Asian-Hispanic presenting person, into someone with "Italian blood" to whom he could then express more overtly racist ideas. As countrymen we can decry the foreigner. Instead of saying that the patient's disogranized mind allowed a glimpse into a psychotically distorted racist process, it may be more accurate to propose that he *overtly* demonstrated the kinds of psychological devices involved in racist states of mind for all of us. This child's perception of me as brown like him may have limited an explicit

expression of racism—maybe the closest he could come was checking my finances, which does not literally refer to racial superiority, but hints at his ambivalence about sameness and difference.

I began wondering whether whenever this young patient felt vulnerable in session, he unconsciously employed the thought—*you might be poor*. The condensation of poor-brown-dangerous contains his overdetermined threat with me as the cause. Like the psychotic individual, this action articulates the fear (I am scared because you are poor) but at the same time reduces me in the larger world that we both inhabit (you have less than me). This has the potential to align the boy with a social group reality of Whiteness against a person of color (like himself), the object just aggressed against. Guilt over this assault reflects concern for me but also renders reality to this harm, which can activate paranoid anxiety of my retaliation, thus motivating further attack to control me.

Grounding racism intrapsychically within cultural, economic, group, and historical factors imparts information about the individual that may be obscured. We can use Davids' internal racist model to sufficiently explain how this boy's repetitive assertion/negation/question of my poverty served as a psychic retreat from paranoid-schizoid anxiety and depressive guilt about aggression. Initially, interpreting from this model addressed the ubiquity of this boy's racecraft, but not its particularity. A significant component of the racism in our relationship was that it was between two people with brown skin. What I neglected about his experience is what I gained by opening up our sessions to what adjacent theories told me about the encounter between people with historical legacies of oppression.

Postcolonial scholarship is worthwhile consulting about conflicts between colonized peoples and their inheritances. From this tradition, a proximate interlocutor is Frantz Fanon (1952, 1961), who wrote:

> Whereas the colonist or police officer can beat the colonized subject day in and day out, insult him and shove him to his knees, it is not uncommon to see the colonized subject draw his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive look from another colonized subject. For the colonized subject's last resort is to defend his personality against his fellow countryman. Internecine feuds merely perpetuate age-old grudges entrenched in memory. By throwing himself muscle

> and soul into his blood feuds, the colonized subject endeavors to convince himself that colonialism has never existed, that everything is as it used to be and history marches on. [p. 17, 1961(2004)]

Though my child patient's perception of our relative sameness may have inhibited a more direct expression of racism, we can imagine how our shared membership in groups suffering oppression evokes hostility. "So, you're not poor?" now can be heard at the least as investigating, diminishing, restoring, provoking, caring for, competing against, relating to, and distancing from me—in succession or simultaneously. I needed to hear the racism emanating less from brown skin wearing a White mask (Fanon 1952), and more from a brown face to another brown face.

When a person of color's unconscious racist system sits ready to be deployed at times of threat, its targeting of another face of color may not always be just an identification with the colonizing force but also a wishful avoidance or negation of the existence of the colonizer completely. Expanding theorizing racism beyond dyadic binaries and their reversals depicts further complex layers of racist processes that feature the violence between oppressed peoples for relative positions of vitality. Though carved out through aggression, racism's aim is not always primarily dominance. Unconsciously, a hostile dyad may be set up to avoid the acknowledgement of participation in a triangle where both parties are dominated by a third. The retreat from a wider sociality to a more limited one, may be an attempt to secure safety and/or enjoyment in the convenience of what seems available (see Ruti's 2018 critique on the comforts of capitalism).

Fanon writes about how older blood feuds (between countrymen) may be revived to avoid confrontation with newer insurmountable forces (colonizers). We can analogize to the regression from Oedipal conflicts to pre-Oedipal ones. One struggle unconsciously entered into/revived for the relative contradictory freedom it promises. Maybe this boy tenuously (as he did and undid it repeatedly) used the racist fantasy of me as a poor clinician of color to increasingly tolerate his own aggression toward me and fears of my retaliation. I believe his anxiety eventually lessened due to the reduced intensity of his aggressive impulses and fantasies, which was enabled by the treatment's ability to contain and

describe the destructiveness of this boy's inner life. Possibly, more mutative than my repetitive survival of his destruction and acceptance of his restorative wishes, was receiving and eventual naming his aggression as a racist one. To use Fanon's language, we can imagine my patient needing to successfully draw a knife, cut, not be knifed in return, and heal a countryman ("you're like us") in order to explore the wider world less anxiously.

The following example is of racism coinciding with affection. An obsessionally anxious adolescent patient said that an Asian-American character in a TV show (X) reminded him of me. I heard the positive feeling conveyed X was his favorite character and the transference, at that point, had been mainly idealizing.[3] What can be considered racist here is the transfer of feelings, thoughts, and judgements of one person or group to another based primarily on skin color/ethnic background.

While the adolescent may not have consciously meant to demean by linking X to me by our Asian ethnicity and his positive regard for us, the similarities pretty much stopped there. Unconsciously, he may avoid the dangers of having to openly learn about me by experience (Bion 1961) via the equation: *my Asian therapist is just like my favorite TV character, who is also Asian*. I could not shake the reducing effect of his statement. When I had him describe the resemblance between me and this character, he was limited to grasping vaguely: "there's something about you two." After I later pointed out our shared Asian heritage (though the actor is of Korean and I am of Filipino descent), he explained how his positive feelings extended to most Asians. As I would learn, this preference was partially informed by his parents' positive equivalence of Asians to American Jews, which he was himself. He added, "we both work hard and are very smart and successful."

Breaking the binaries of racial discourse, this example shows how race-based ideology often imposes at least a triadic hierarchy that structures individuals as members of a group lesser than another, but also greater than a third. The adolescent lessens his terror of the suspected menace of others (a worry I later discovered was partially based on being bullied by non-Jewish White kids) by conjuring a third group, Asians,

[3] Previously, I studied the functions of phantasied attachments to relatively famous distant others. I termed these *celebrity objects* (Reynoso 2012, 2013, 2016).

whom the patient can both feel safe with and aggress against. A subordinated group is targeted for vengeance and resentment displaced from a third more powerful group. His affinity for Asians was the cover-up part of an internal racist organization (Davids 2011) letting him evade intense paranoid schizoid anxieties and express sadistic impulses he rarely allowed. My patient unconsciously exploited anti-Asian male stereotypes as non-violent, passive beings to wishfully categorize a group as non-threatening.

Using the Fields' (2012) terms, the act of the conjurer both creates another person's being (the Asian is submissive) and removes all traces of the illusion having taken place: "the action and imagining are collective yet individual, day-to-day yet historical, and consequential even though nested in mundane routine. The action and imagining emerge as part of moment-to-moment practicality…." (pp. 18-19). He employs racecraft to not only change the location of vulnerability (he essentializes me as a member of a weaker group) but cover his tracks in the outer coating of affection by the summoned equation of Jews and Asians—the violence of racialized affection (cf., Chin and Chan 1972). [4] Like the 10-year-old Latino American and the Italian American adult, for this Jewish American boy from a politically liberal family, the triangulated double move of racecraft brings one defined "racial" group closer to identify with, if only then to exclude or exploit this same or another group. Racecraft creates the easy false certainty of seeing and defining group membership to provide kinship, security, and pleasurable aggression without acknowledging one's manipulation of social reality.

A further value of racecraft as a concept to a psychoanalytic discussion of racist fantasy is its moral dimension. Racecraft allows for one to distinguish "the races" on many grounds, including moral wantonness, similar to the religious transgression ascribed when deeming women as witches. The adolescent expressed some shame about not being "tough" enough to stand up for himself against bullying. In a sense, he felt it exposed his and his family's moral failing of being "non-confrontational." Combining this element with Davids' unconscious internal racism model enhanced my realizing his possible psychic retreats into a

[4] Elsewhere, I've discussed the unconscious hatred in the racialized affection of sports fans' idolization of professional athletes (2014, 2018).

relatively guilt/paranoia-free sadism due to an implied moral judgment. Not only can I aggress without fearing the raced other's retaliation (in the case of anti-Asian stereotypes), but due to their moral failing, I am not bound by my normal dictates of conscience or ethics. I have more freedom to enjoy my aggression and perhaps feel the duty to punish.

As mentioned earlier, a Lacanian accent on unconscious enjoyment stretches racism beyond fantasies of aggressive threat, loss, or insecurity. Listening for the enjoyment and not just the safety racism offers elevates the sound of sadism in this adolescent's seemingly affectionate comparison "X reminds me of you." Eventually he declared, "Asians aren't going to make any trouble. They're not going to hurt you. They're really not going to do anything if you hurt them." Not only was this a transferential expression of a relief and pleasure, but a sadistic entitlement he exercised broadly to exploit Asian classmates. Subsequent material also suggested that the patient used his categorization of Asians to displace unwanted impulses toward his parents. Like the previous child, a racialized affinity (here, Asian and Jew) provides outlet for aggressivity, though here with moral judgement. Taken together, we can then hear the adolescent's ongoing positive regard for me as simultaneously: a result of the care he received from me, an idealization avoiding both his aggression toward me and the potential of mine toward him, an attempt to merge with a powerful self-object (Kohut 1971), and implicated in the enjoyment of a transgressive potential to hurt me with no consequence based on racializing me as a submissive immoral Asian. Racism's efficiency to surreptitiously accomplish multiple psychic tasks while concealing the individual's activity contributes to its adhesiveness.

This next case portrays contradictions, inherent to our self-divided subjectivity, enabled a politically progressive patient to exclude groups as romantic and sexual partners based on a belief in racial difference and ethnic superiority. In describing a night out, a Jewish American female patient in her twenties said, "There were a lot of Asian guys around. I'm not that into Asian guys. They don't really do it for me … . . No offense, Dr. R." I rhetorically asked, "What is there for me to take offense to?" She stated a worry that I would not be as helpful to her if she limited the possibility of sexual attraction. This connected to her presenting problems, including a long-standing history of being sexualized in and sexualizing relationships.

In a later session, she used the phrase "no offense" describing her rebuff of a Jewish co-worker's interest. I remarked that the phrase sounded familiar. She elaborated that she didn't date Jewish men. I remarked, "It's as if you've segregated certain categories of men, Asian and Jewish, as not being romantic or sexual to you … . It might be safer to focus on my Asian-ness as a way of desexualizing me … perhaps to regard me and this therapy as protected from sex and exploitation." She replied, "It's like if I'm not attracted to you then I don't worry if you're attracted to me. But at the same time, I want people I'm not attracted to to still want me."

Placing me in a non-sexual class seemed to reverse a fantasy from adolescence with her father, with me in her role. She recalled how he grew distant from her in high school, which she read painfully as him finding her "boring inside and out." Interpreting her racism as an unconscious attempt to secure safety led us to a texture of her relationship with her father that hadn't been clear. It did not, however, address the component of humiliation and cruelty that I heard in her cavalier "no offense." To appreciate the potential sadism, I had to contemplate the form of her racist logic more.

In *Stamped from the Beginning*, Kendi (2016) examines racist elements fixed outside the awareness of people, whom many would consider anti-racist. For example, he argues that contradictory racist and anti-racist thinking can be found in the seminal work of W.E.B. Du Bois. This includes the idea of "double consciousness," which the American civil rights scholar articulated in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). For people of color, it is the alienated "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 17). Kendi sees this as a split between an anti-racist and an assimilationist racist mind. The historian poses that assimilationist racism rejects the essentialist argument of one race being inferior to others but accepts that cultural and societal factors have produced a superiority of certain racial groups over others. Kendi's scholarship implies a psychoanalytic point that anti-racism (like love) is not a pure state but remains in tension with what it opposes.

Returning to the case, this woman entered treatment to address her experience of being sexualized and discarded by men. She claimed that since she wished to be regarded beyond her physical attractiveness, that

she usually tried to remove sexuality from the equation with most men. What became evident from her material, though, was her unwitting efforts to inject sexuality into most relationships. As we would find, since contradictions express irreducible conflicts of mental life, describing them sufficiently just revealed more important contradictions (McGowan 2019).

About her teenage years, she said, "they always liked me … all the Black, M.E., and Hispanic guys in my high school were very clearly into me." We discussed how she may have unconsciously assigned African American, "dark-skinned" Middle Eastern, and Latino men to a sexual exploiter category using the same socially available assimilationist racist ideas of hyper-sexualized Black and brown men she remembered advocating against in her high school activism. Asian men constituted an ambiguous group for her. She did not know if they were potential exploiters (or exploitable), recalling, "I'm not sure how the Asian guys felt about me." We hypothesized that she disregarded and banned them from the realm sexuality and intimacy. She used anti-Asian stereotypes of emasculated desexualized men to prop up her beliefs. She admitted that she never tried to challenge her views about Asians because she felt relieved not having to worry about a whole group of men. Racecraft creates and then seeks its continued confirmation, evidencing the easy erroneous efficiency of racist states of mind. It reminds us how insufficient explanations of racism as ignorance prove since attributing it to a deficit of information or experience neglects active conscious and unconscious motivated resistances to learn, link, or think (Bion 1959, 1963).

As her dependency on me increased, so did her vulnerability and curiosity about how this Asian man felt about her. Her unconscious internal racist system dealt with this anxiety by reestablishing her sense of control and superiority. It was the racial aggressivity that I heard in her "no offense"—as if I wasn't allowed the privilege of having feelings to be offended—that led me to search past her wish for safety from sexuality with a raced group of men (desexualized Asians) to a motivation to hurt them. The patient talked about only feeling comfortable aggressing towards those she perceived as threatening. We would soon discover that, once again the opposite was true as well. In rejecting men of assumed African, Latin-American, and Middle Eastern descent, she presumed their sexual interest in her, unconsciously using assimilationist racist stereotypes against Black and brown men, to justify her aggression

toward them in terms of safety. At one point she shared, "I like not giving them what they want." Harshly rejecting these men felt morally warranted when she posited them as potential exploiters. Conceivably, this patient was unconsciously deriving enjoyment by both racistly categorizing these men as threatening, as well as transgressively subverting her own progressive principles.

I observed to her that she did not associate White skin with sexual threat though her experiences of abuse and abandonment in sexual relationships were contradictorily with predominantly with White men.[5] This led to us thinking of her aggression towards men of color as less about the threat they posed, and more as an unconscious enjoyment of exclusion. The patient's sexual hierarchy racistly positioned European American (non-Jewish) men on top with all other groups trailing behind. She attributed not being attracted to Jewish men to familiarity with family members. In future sessions, her de-sexualization of Jews seemed connected to a fantasy reversing the exclusion she experienced from her father and male family members. Her desire for a relationship with an idealized European-American (non-Jewish) man was a socially sanctioned phantasied way of inspiring the envy of her Jewish male family members.

In her daily life, she actualized this fantasy in ways (e.g., flirting, sexual inuendoes, using touch, detailed description of hook-ups) to evoke visible attraction from *othered* men and then reject them. In treatment, when she did not draw out my visible desire, she felt the humiliation she wished to evacuate. This prompted more attempts to elicit reactions from me, and when those failed, overt ways of hurting me, via racism. As we eventually discussed, she did not want to shield the treatment from sex as initially supposed. She later disclosed, "it's not like I want us to have sex, but at least then I would know you wanted something from me." Instead of attributing the absence of visible desire to my role as a clinician, she linked it to my "Asianness."

We may ask whether it is accurate to say the patient *recruited* a racist state of mind to exclude me. A pernicious value of racism is its

[5] Though the majority of sexual violence in the United States is committed by White men (https://www.rainn.org/statistics/perpetrators-sexual-violence), racecraft is used to morally degrade men of color as feared hypersexualized sexual predators.

capacity to serve as the psychic language that gives form to unconscious aggressions, anxieties, and enjoyments (Chamberlain 2019). For this progressive Jewish-American young woman, sexualizing others racistly was the condition that actualized the possibility of safety and enjoyment in relationships. Saying one's mind, an organization, group, or culture recruits racism to serve certain functions misses that its central unconscious activity may be condensation more than displacement. Just as Kendi shows how racist logic may be used for anti-racist purposes, this patient's attempt to use racist sexuality to not be sexualized does not reduce down to a primary motivation as much as it exposes the condensation processes of mental life that prevent the unyoking of contradictions.

Allowing myself to experience this woman's "no offense" phrase for its fuller dehumanizing potential alerted me to the unconscious enjoyment it was possible for her to derive from racism's exclusionary practice. Choosing to think microaggressions (Sue 2010) in their unconscious extremity more fully positions individuals as "being active, goal-directed, choice-making, meaning-creating, fantasying and responsible," as Schafer writes (1976, pp. 145–146, as cited in Carsky and Chardavoyne 2017). Considering moments with vague racist implications as actions substantiates them and confers them the reality so often disavowed in everyday life. Isn't this specifically the case for the target of racist abuse, for whom figuring out intentions and "first" causes is merely an academic exercise? Interpreting racism does not foreclose its future potential to structure our inner lives but offers the possibility to question our active engagement with it by avowing its transgressive enjoyment. As with any symptom formation, treating racism as an activity we choose also gives us the ability to find another way to cope with our pain, discharge aggression, or seek enjoyment.

Let me use a final case example that involves discovering my own racist state of mind as a clinician of color. A transnational Vietnamese/French patient talked one session about feeling depressed and resentful going to a bar and not meeting any women. He claimed to be more attractive than other people in the bar. What registered with me was that I didn't find the patient physically attractive, a conclusion I had never privately reflected on before. The patient's continued misogyny, arrogance, and entitlement in

recounting this tale fed my overall critical feelings. I saw this disparity in my assessment of the patient's attractiveness and his own perception as an expression his grandiosity.

The next session started in silence for about a minute, with the patient saying he was having difficulty talking. Any comment on his silence was met with more silence. Then the patient looked up and with contempt said, "Look at that face of yours." I asked, "What does my face show?" To which he responded, "I'm not your mirror. Look in a fuckin' mirror." After more silence, he went on to say that my face looked smug and how I had no right to be so. Having conceptualized him as a narcissistic personality (Levy, Ellison, and Reynoso 2011), and as I was used to his occasional barrages of insults. He expressed doubt about my intelligence and added, "You must think you're good looking but, you're not that attractive … you're actually quite unattractive … ugly." Recovering from this, I recalled to him how in the previous session he had talked about going to a bar and feeling his attractiveness went unrecognized by the women there. This was an attempt to draw his attention to the unconscious reversal of the self-object dyad in this session. He denied that his attitude toward me had anything to do with the previous session. When I observed how angry he was with me, he dug in deeper with his insults, calling me an "appalling dresser," "disgusting," and "American." This last term was a particular favorite of his when he wanted to offend me in a shorthand way across various fronts.

Trying to address the projective identification I said, "You had just been feeling miserable about people at the bar not finding you as attractive as you wanted. Now perhaps you're letting me know how bad it felt as well as your anger at them." This and other interventions, including how his harsh critical stance resembled what his father subjected him to, failed. After more silence and more insults, he rhetorically questioned the success of my practice and pondered whether only "minorities" come to see me. I experienced his statement as racist derogation, but luckily, for me, the session and this onslaught ended, which gave me time to think (Farred 2015).

Ogden (2007) points out that Bion's (1962) use of reverie has parallels to Searles' (1979) encouragement for clinicians to use their idiosyncratic private associative responses to give further form and meaning to the patient's experience. Condensing some material,

eventually what occurred to me was that his behavior in the session was perhaps not unprovoked. This led me to question whether he was retaliating not just to some aggression from me previously, but perhaps a racist one. Taking cues from Bion, Searles, and Ogden, I let my mind drift to my own history as a person of color in White-dominated spaces, including bars, classrooms, parties, jobs, and psychoanalytic meetings. I recalled the excuses I and others voiced explaining away racist events when continuous confrontation becomes overwhelmingly exhausting. Further, his conjuring of only "minority" patients coming to my practice underlined the triangular dynamics at play that I had not sufficiently paid attention to. I allowed myself to privately transform his ambiguous statement regarding "minority" patients into a more extreme sentiment, which let me feel the derogation aimed at both patients of color and me as a clinician of color. I have used this technique supervising trainees to facilitate openness to intense positive and negative fantasies occurring in the treatment, including the raw violence experienced by recipients of social hatred.

Interpreting from this stance the next session helped us reconstruct what led to him striking back at me. Almost as an aside, he remembered that I had inquired as to the ethnic makeup of the bar. He had answered dismissively, saying that it was "diverse." I asked what he heard in my questioning the composition of the bar. He wasn't sure. I commented that perhaps he experienced an insult, with my implying that a predominantly White bar would find him unattractive. Inquiring about the skin color of those at the bar, I was consciously asking from an identificatory position and my own history as a person of color in Euro-American spaces. To the patient, conversely, I seemed to be explaining away his feelings of rejection on racial grounds, as if I was saying: *of course, White people don't find you attractive.* I was then able to interpret his offensive during the past session, highlighted by his assertion that only ethnic minorities come to see me, as a retaliation for his unconscious experience of a racist attack by me the previous session. Perhaps instead of joining my patient—from the position of both of us being subject to White racism—I unconsciously distanced myself from the potential of his racist experience at the bar and by doing so identified with the aggressor in not finding him attractive.

Though the patient was of White-French and Vietnamese ancestry, he was by his own estimate, more Asian-appearing. In many respects of daily life, both the patient and I, as Asian-presenting men, are Oedipally positioned in relation to a White arbiter and a third who is preferred to us. A painful irony fueling his rage was that between the two of us, he considered his White-French ancestry entitled him to more of an in-group status than me. Possibly, in my reaction to his story from the bar, he experienced me as either aligning with those at the bar, or assuming a privileged position as the third preferred other to him. His comment about only "minorities" seeing me reverses this and locates me in another triangle as the excluded party, in which White patients prefer White therapists as opposed to me.

I use this example to show a clinician of color's (my own) racist state of mind in a treatment. It also demonstrates the triadic nature of racial dynamics that gets obscured in dyadic models that hinge on projective identification to discuss racist process (Ward 1997). I first addressed his anger interpreting oscillating dyadic self-object representations in the transference, perhaps ignoring the triadic dynamics present. Privately transforming his "minorities" comment into its extreme racist form, though, allowed me to understand the intensity of his anger as a retaliation within a triangular situation. His racing (Leary 2007) me to a devalued brown person in a triangle of White patients and White therapists helped me consider the possibility of my unconscious racecraft in positioning him as an Asian person unloved by White women and the White objects of their affection.

The emergence of my own racist state of mind, as a clinician of color in a treatment with a person of color, cannot not be so cleanly separated from the overt racecraft of the psychotic patient who transformed me into his paisano. As I have said, to interrupt racist practice in any form and level, it is important to struggle against the very method of othering that racism performs. For, if we are unable to recognize racist processes when they occur concurrently and in conflict with anti-racist motivations, we can hardly hope to limit their destructiveness. For those of us who identify as anti-racist, we must look and listen for the racist within. Taking seriously the pervasive embedded devices societies, institutions, groups, and individuals possess to use skin color and physical features to define identity and desire, we must map the malevolent efficiency of

racism in all our psychic economies. The psychoanalytic idea of multiple function allows us to conceive of racism's countless purposes, including the subjugation necessary for imperialistic capitalism, a group's avoidance of anxiety, a person's symbolic tie to a loved parent, or one's unconscious enjoyment in placing racism outside oneself in others. If we aim to upend racist ideologies, however, it is not enough to think of our own racist states of mind as passively resulting from this embeddedness: we must acknowledge our unconscious motivations that adhere us to them.

RACISM WITHIN

Closing this paper attempting synthesis would be an ill-advised effort to resolve the questions racism consistently confronts us with about the inexorable contradictions of both social life and subjectivity itself. Racism does not have one purpose for one person, group, or culture. The racecraft of racism is omnipresent though illusive. The contradictions of racist logic and fantasy crucially show the multiple simultaneous masters racism serves for individuals and societies. For example one can think to the early part of last century, when an Asian-male-presenting person like myself was both feared as a sexual threat to take or lure women away from White men, as well ridiculed as being effeminate and woman-like (Lee 2016); or how Donald Trump stations Mexican immigrants as both greedily taking "American" jobs while simultaneously lazily depending on government assistance.

This paper aimed to model thinking about racism with a kind breadth that allows for a flexible depth of inquiry, but never in a reductive way anchored too heavily or foundationally to one certain theory (and its accompanying predispositions). A multi-model or interdisciplinary approach helps to methodologically limit any claims on definitive comprehension. What I have hopefully demonstrated is a heuristic approach that I have found, and maybe others will find, useful to accurately portray and pursue racism's slipperiness. My overarching goal was to attend to racism's malignant availability for all of us to actively, even if unconsciously, participate in—including my own as a clinician of color. Though I devoted the last vignette to a

confrontation with my own racism, I am aware that it is not isolated to that occasion. [6]

That is the sensibility that informs titling this paper, "The Racist Within." The othering central to racist processes cannot be effectively lessened by methods relying on similar mechanisms of externalization and disavowal. To look for racism "out there" may doom potential reparative efforts into an interminable practice of reversals. We need only scan history's evidence for liberatory progressive changes at the policy level that nonetheless upheld binary structures, leading to severe swings of extremist backlash and reversals in response. More than asserting that we must look internally instead of externally for racism, the title of this paper urges us to look where we would rather not to map our inescapable relationship to racist activity and function. This would even have to include interrogating our own unconscious enjoyment in assuming positions of anti-racist purity in comparison to the overt racism of the extreme White nationalist. Just as psychoanalysis teaches that love is ambivalent, and even when achieved is always already in tension with aggression, any anti-racist position we hope to assume must be thought of in active internal conflict with a racist one it is continuously at odds with.

To quote Ivan Ward, "racist ideologies create a total imaginary world which has real effects in much the same way as religion. Indeed, they are often connected to religions and a rule of thumb might be that if our theories of racism are simpler than our theories of religion then they are wrong" (1997, p. 32). The subject/object/other is always elusive. One of the alluring functions of racism is that it provides a false certainty to troubling questions: why am I anxious, why do I enjoy their suffering, what is disgusting about them, what is exciting about this person, what do they have that we don't, why do they scare me? I can only hope that my limits in understanding the unconscious workings in these vignettes can lead readers to ask better questions rather than offer better answers about the multi-facetedness of racist process and its psychic functions.

[6] I have discussed the inherent exploitative, racist and misogynist aspects of being a sports fan, including reflecting on my own racism and misogyny (2014, 2019).

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PLAY, FREE ASSOCIATION, AND ENACTMENT

BY EUGENE MAHON

In this article I define childhood symbolic play, free association, and enactments as distinct entities despite the important strands of connective tissue that bind them psychologically. To Freud's definition of play being the same as fantasy, except for play's need to use props and playthings to actualize itself, I add action as an obvious but yet nevertheless neglected component of childhood symbolic play. I suggest that the potential for free association begins with the achievement of formal Piagetian cognitive processes in early adolescence, an achievement that needs no props or actions to set it in motion since words and ideas generate further spontaneities in a creative flow of associations. In adult psychoanalytic process, I define enactment, not only in the modern sense of a shared unconscious communication that illustrates the complementarity of countertransference/transference mutuality, but as if enactment could be isolated from its enmeshment in the countertransference/transference milieu of analytic process and viewed momentarily as a transference entity exclusively. I take this point of view to emphasize longitudinally, an individual's action in a developmental sequence, an imaginary developmental line from the six stages of sensorimotor actions that lead to symbolism, to thought as

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trial action, leading on then to symbolic play and to free association in adolescence, free associative communication being the essential core of analytic process despite the ubiquity of enactments that accompany it. I illustrate this imagined developmental line, which leads from the earliest sensorimotor acts to the decisive non-neurotic acts that characterize individuated post-analytic maturity, with psychoanalytic process from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

Keywords: Sensorimotor, formal cognition, developmental line, play, fantasy, enactment.

A four-year-old walks into a psychoanalyst's office and steals his chair. What does one make out of such larcenous behavior in a child?

A twelve-year-old, the same larcenous child only eight years older, walks into a psychoanalyst's office and can now free associate to his dreams and analyze his parapraxes, a feat he could not have pulled off earlier. What has made such a transformation possible?

A fifty-year-old who has years of free associative and most productive analytic process under his belt engages in an elaborate enactment involving a house and a statue, an enactment that eventually is integrated into the entire free associative fabric of the analysis. Why was such an enactment necessary?

This is the topic I plan to explore more fully as we focus on play, free association. and enactment: but first let's begin with a few definitions.

PLAY

Childhood symbolic play, as Freud suggested, could be defined developmentally and psychoanalytically as the equivalent of fantasy. But whereas fantasy proper is a private affair and needs no external, extra-psychic props to set it in motion, play goes public, so to speak, and does need to enact itself with props and playthings, not unlike the way a director sets up the mise-en-scene of a staged drama. To Freud's definition I add *action*, since I believe that, while it may be obvious, the action component of play should not be neglected, just as the action component of analysis as a whole should not be neglected. The access that symbolic

play gains into the unconscious life of a child makes it one of the essential modalities of child psychoanalysis.

That said, the symbolic play that forms the bulk of the clinical examples in this article could be thought of as only one expression of a more fundamental definition of play, which I tried to articulate in 1993. At that time, I argued that it is aim-inhibited action that is at the core of play as it experiments with, and tests out reality before it accepts it and adapts to it. A working definition of play would suggest therefore that play is action that does not seek immediate gratification of desire or the obvious solution of a problem but seems rather to explore alternate or multiple possibilities of experience. Neubauer (1993), using a sartorial analogy, liked to think of play as "trying on" as if reality were a garment that the mind was checking out until it found the right fit. This is close to Piaget's ideas about *play* and *imitation*. He asserted that in play *assimilation* is in the ascendancy whereas in imitation *accommodation* is more prominent. (Piaget believed that all cognitive attempts to understand the phenomenal world use a mixture of accommodation and assimilation in an ongoing attempt to grasp the over determinations of a complex reality.) The symbolic play that child analysts are primarily interested in could be thought of as the mind putting fantasy to the test using dramatic actions with props and playthings as it experiments with nascent psychological reality. If a child's early defensive strategies deal with conflicted affects by repressing them, play tries to displace them onto the dramatis personae of a symbolic theater as a way of dealing with the inevitable return of the repressed urgencies. Childhood could be thought of as a constant tug of war between instinct repressed and instinct evoked again in fantasy and its displacements in the theater of play. Sarnoff (1970) equates psychoanalytic symbolism and what Piaget called secondary symbolism (which the mind is capable of minting in the third year of life) to differentiate it from earlier rudimentary symbol formation (which makes its first appearance in the second year of life). Sarnoff shows convincingly that it is the ability to repress, which gets established in the third year of life, that makes secondary or psychoanalytic symbolism possible. A child pretending that a piece of chalk is also an airplane is different from a child who has repressed the linkage between a piece of broken chalk and his fears of a broken penis when castration anxiety looms. The symbolic play about to be described in this

article deals exclusively with secondary or psychoanalytic symbolism. In other words, it is Freud's definition of play and fantasy being synonymous, except for play's need to represent itself in action with props and playthings, which I am adhering to in this clinical presentation.

FREE ASSOCIATION

The capacity to free associate (which becomes possible with the achievement of formal cognition in adolescence) could be defined as a more developed kind of play that needs no props other than thought itself to set it in motion. In a sense, free association could be defined as the capacity for thought to play with other thoughts without the necessity for, or involvement of, concrete playthings of any kind. This new free associative skill sounds very similar to Piaget's (1963) description of the acquisition of formal cognitive intelligence in adolescence. If the first five years of development are characterized by sensorimotor and pre-operational cognition, followed by operational cognition from six to twelve years of age, formal (hypothetico-deductive) cognition makes its striking appearance in adolescence. Formal cognition is a dull way of describing the new expansive, wide-ranging, philosophical thinking of the exuberant adolescent, an exuberance that at first makes the adolescent believe that he is smarter than the older generation (including his parents) whose old-fashioned ideas have ruined the world. But the point I am stressing is that the acquisition of formal cognition is a prerequisite for the emergence of a capacity to free associate in adolescence. This linkage between Piagetian Formal (hypothetico-deductive) cognition and the capacity to free associate throughout adolescence and adulthood has not been recognized fully, nor stressed nearly enough in psychoanalytic literature in my opinion. The capacity to free associate is not the same of course as the execution of it in the analytic setting when the fundamental rule is invoked by the analyst and free association now becomes subject to the laws of psychodynamic process and conflict.

ENACTMENT

My definition of enactment is idiosyncratic and narrower than the current, modern definition that views enactment as a shared entity that

results from the inevitable enmeshment of countertransferential subtleties that complement transferential communications throughout the entirety of the analytic process. I am trying to isolate the transferential component of the process to illustrate a long imaginary developmental line stretching from sensorimotor acts, symbolic acts, the action component of symbolic childhood play, the trial *action* components of thought expressed in language, the *action* component of latency games, leading on to the establishment of a capacity for free association in adolescence, and the crucial role of free associative process in adult analyses, accompanied by enactments that express what the free associative process alone cannot always accomplish. If one continues this imaginary line beyond the range of the analysand's experience in psychoanalysis, that line would include the decisive *actions* that maturity triumphs in, in a post-analytic period free, or relatively free, of neurosis. Isolating one component of analytic process from its enmeshment within a host of others is like trying to isolate the hydrogen molecules in water from the oxygen molecule without getting one's hands wet! I am introducing this definition of enactment as a retreat from the exclusivity of adult free associative process as the *activity* mode inherent in play is enlisted again to enact and represent fantasy that could not be accessed through free associative process alone. In this way of thinking. it would seem that exclusive free associative process is not always enough to satisfy the urgencies of the mind and that enactments intervene at such times to express deep affective unconscious material that free association alone cannot reach or register. Clinical examples illustrate this argument followed by a discussion of the complexities raised by this way of thinking about child and adult psychoanalytic process and their mutuality of influence.

I begin with the aforementioned larceny in what I am calling phase one of a biphasic analysis.

Phase One

Adam, a European child, was four years old when his family first consulted me. An extremely intelligent, exuberant, delightful child, who spoke several languages fluently, he worried his parents when he began to strike out at peers in school for no apparent reason. His sudden outbursts of aggression did not seem to be provoked: their random nature

puzzled teachers and parents alike. Both parents were intelligent, sensitive, caring, mature adults. The only traumatic event in Adam's life seemed to have been the dismissal of Grasiena, (a fictitious name) a housekeeper who had once spilt tea on Adam's head "by mistake." The parents wondered if that traumatic event might have been at the root of Adam's aggressive symptom in some mysterious way.

Let me begin in the midst of some early analytic process that highlights Adam's capacity to use play to his advantage. Adam left his mother in the waiting room, dashed into the analyst's office and sat on the analyst's chair. This was a new game, which was a tribute to the several months of analytic process that had preceded it. The four-year-old, who began the analytic journey with tentative footsteps, was now comfortable enough to steal the analyst's chair and even comment a little on the theft. He beams when the analyst suggests that he is pretending to take over the whole world and be big like his doctor and maybe even order people around, especially fathers and doctors. In this "humorous" mood he asks the analyst if he would like to hear a joke and then proceeds to tell what he thinks is a joke but might not qualify as such to adult ears.

Q. Why did the chicken steal the bagpipes?

A. Because he wanted to have a perfect house.

Since this did not sound like a joke, the analyst tried to get more information about its origins and developmental function for the child. Eventually it becomes clear that this joke began its psychological life as a dream that subsequently became a joke as the dreamer tried to play with it in a waking state. When a child awakens from a dream s/he may play with its contents the better to fathom the strange oneiric phenomenon s/he has just experienced. Like playing *dead* or playing *cops and robbers t*his could be called *playing dream* a phenomenon that I have described elsewhere (Mahon 2019). The analyst was not sure if his young patient fully understood what bagpipes were. But as clay was manipulated into the shape of the primitive musical instrument, producing an object decidedly like a scrotum with an erect penis, it became clear that he not only knew what bagpipes were but also sensed their symbolic phallic possibilities. This became even clearer as the "phallus" got chopped from the "scrotum" in repetitive attacks on the clay instrument. There was

further corroborating associative evidence in drawings in which father's initials were erased and the patient's own initials preserved. A further variation on that oedipal theme in script showed father's name erased with the word "no" after it, and the patient's own name preserved with the word "yes" after it. At moments such as these, Adam would leave the office to check on his mother in the waiting room. It is clear that his play, playful and humorous as it seems, is also an expression of unconscious content that is quite anxiety provoking. He readily agreed with the interpretation of his flight from playroom to waiting room as a wish to reassure himself that his mother could still love him even when he played out murderous wishes against her husband. He even gave the analyst a "star" for this interpretation.

In a subsequent session, Adam "steals" the analyst's chair gleefully and the game of theft begins again. At one point he returns the chair to the analyst, saying "I don't want your chair, I want your job." When the analyst wonders aloud what he will do without his job, Adam reassures him that he will get his father's job. The link between father and analyst and their jobs becomes obvious in this striking example of transference. The theme returns to the chicken stealing the bagpipes, the joke he had made up out of a dream. Does he make jokes up all by himself, the analyst muses? "Yes" and he demonstrates. "I'll steal your chair. I'll take your job." This mock-serious threat is presented as a playful joke. At this stage of development is pretense synonymous with the comic? The play scene shifts to the construction and destruction of an elephant made out of clay. After making the body, trunk, limbs, and tail, the whole construction is torn apart limb from limb. Going behind the analyst's chair, Adam "knocks" on his head. "Oh, you've become a head knocker. A new job, eh?" the analyst asks playfully. Next minute Adam is fixing the analyst's shoes, saying he has many jobs—destroyer, fixer, head-knocker. The wish to castrate and undo the castration seems obvious. This is all playful, even comic. At one point, Adam makes spells, writing scribbles on paper and chanting gibberish that will make doors open and close magically. "The spells are like jokes, or different?" the analyst asks? "They are the same" Adam says, "but spells don't have any words." The analyst muses aloud: "Jokes and spells are wonderful. What would children do without them?" Adam responds immediately: "If the parents took all the jokes away and hid them in a closet, the children could get

them back by being good." Adam's definition of spells as being the same as jokes except that "spells don't have any words" is a remarkably insightful observation of a very young, but nevertheless very astute, observer of child psychology. I will return to Adam's definition later in a discussion of enactment.

When this phase of head-knocking, chair stealing analysis ended, Adam seemed to have explored enough of his aggression in his play in the analytic process. There were no more incidents of aggression in school. Adam had many friends. He had become a reformed larcenist, had entered into the relative sobrieties of latency with aplomb. His parents believed that all was well, and that Adam could leave analysis for now and always return when or if the need for further exploration became necessary.

Phase Two

The five-year interval between the two phases of Adam's analysis, while seemingly "latent" was nonetheless packed with existential incident, psychological struggle, and achievement. Adam wrote to the analyst a few times about his progress and about his missing the analytic relationship. The analyst responded to these communications. When his grandfather died, Adam wrote about his love for the man and the sadness of his loss. Much moved by this letter, the analyst replied in a letter that contained the idea that "love is the great wheel that turns the universe" even when sadness and loss darken its contours for a while.

After that communication, the analyst didn't hear from Adam until his parents, sensing that he needed to return to analysis, called for a consultation. Subsequently, it became clear that Adam had had a very difficult time with his grief over his grandfather's death but that he wanted to deal with it "on his own."

In the first session he described a sense of academic ennui, which he knew was only the tip of an iceberg of deeper psychological suffering—i.e. his shattered sense of self-esteem. The academic issue was perhaps an easier point of entry into a resumption of analytic collaboration: reflecting on his recent academic slump, he complained that his teacher, Mrs. B favored the other children and seemed to be unappreciative of his efforts while praising those of his peers.

"Do you suppose that there might be a Mrs. B inside you as well as outside?" the analyst asked testing the waters.

"You mean that the problem is inside me, but it colors what's outside? But why would that be?"

Adam went on to describe the interior of his mind as a kind of Supreme Court ruled by a triumvirate—Boss One, Boss Two, Boss Three. Boss One was severe, totalitarian, unrelenting; Boss Two was empathic, decent, fair; Boss Three, instead of being cruel inside like Boss One, was cruel to others. "But Boss One and Boss Three work together" Adam asserted knowingly. He wished he could be rid of both of them and be guided by only Boss Two.

Adam's ability to describe a tripartite superego system seemed astonishing, given his age. It was clear that Adam could free associate to whatever topic he introduced: parapraxes and dreams were no longer beyond his analytic reach. In my experience when a young child has a parapraxis pointed out to him it is often experienced as if he was being chastised for making a mistake. He cannot reflect on the verbal mistake as an opportunity to explore the quirky workings of the human mind. Adolescence is another matter. Now Adam had no trouble acknowledging his mistakes (parapraxes) and being fascinated by them. I will cite two examples only. Meaning to say, "I want Boss Two to comfort me" he actually said, "I want Boss Two to confront me." When I suggested to Adam that Boss One seemed to have usurped Boss Two's agenda, he was amazed at the sneakiness of Boss One. When I suggested further that Boss One seems to think that Adam shouldn't be comforted, he was impressed by the notion of such conflicted warfare going on in the far reaches of his mind. In another striking parapraxis Adam was attempting to describe the new covenant he had forged with his teacher but instead of covenant he said convent, which seemed like a place he certainly did not associate with a trusting covenant. He was amazed that his unconscious mind could influence his verbal execution in such a manner.

He was equally comfortable examining his dreams, which he remembered and recounted often. The following dream illustrates this newfound capacity dramatically:

> "I am in a grungy room. The wall paint is peeling. It's a motel called The Sands of Time. There's a centipede in the bedclothes. I try to smash it. The softness of the mattress seems to shield it. I tip it onto the floor the better to smash it against the hard surface of the floorboards."

Adam begins to free associate to the dream as if this were natural and expectable, given his newfound linguistic and cognitive spontaneity. His first associations led backward in time to the memory of a centipede on his wall when he was five years old and how he awakened and called his father. Then the associations led to current events: a friend teasing him with a rubber snake—like a centipede with jaws. He was angry, not with his friend, but at the centipede: "Anti-centipede, anti-Semitism" he mused, enjoying his mastery over these big words, as well as the aggression contained in them. He knocked the head off his friend's rubber centipede and then began to reflect on Boss One. Could Boss One be anti-centipede, anti-temper? It was temper that first brought him to analysis. He could now reflect on the components of that temper more insightfully than ever. Not only had tea been spilled on his head by Grasiena, the original head knocker, but the family had moved from a beloved home to one that took time to get used to. The analyst suggested that Boss One could intimidate him by implying that it was his own temper, his own cockiness that caused him to lose his home and bring the wrath of Grasiena down on his head, but Adam needed to dismiss such interpretations at this point. Any connection between penis and centipede was flatly rejected.

The analysis of dreams seemed to be stirring up genetic memories. A complex dream led to many new insights.

> "A nuclear power plant. About to blow up. Trying to keep the lid on. Hitler and Mussolini dividing up the spoils of Italy. I let them have the whole country except for Venice, Milan, Siena. In the cabin of the train where the negotiations are being held, a guard has a gun, but it's pointing toward the ground."

This dream was not only analyzed immediately but returned to, over many sessions, as the associative process reviewed its contents again and again. In the immediate analysis that followed, Hitler and Mussolini

seemed like obvious stand-ins for Boss One, the ego, uncomfortable with its explosive power plants and conflicted downward pointing guns, trying to at least hold onto some psychological territories. In subsequent analyses of this same dream, Adam would associate Siena with the nanny Grasiena, wondering if he had felt guilty that she was fired on his account. In this context he remembered another earlier dream from the third grade: "A large number six is chasing me around. I'm running away from large numbers."

Among the many associations Adam had to this dream, six = sex was the most humorous. And the topic was no longer off limits. He had seen a movie in school of a baby being born ("a bloody thing coming out of a swollen hole") and he had discussed erections with his father. He had thought they (erections) were signs of disease and that menstruation was "peeing blood." He was quickly relieved when his father explained the real significance to him. His mind began to wander. He did humorous imitations of a Chinese man and of Ghandi. He realized that he was putting great distance between the sexual topic and his newly enlightened self, as if Boss One were saying "Don't think these dirty thoughts in the U.S.A." His defensive humor reminded the analyst of the joke he had introduced into the first phase of analysis many years ago.

Question: Why did the chicken steal the bagpipes?

Answer: Because he wanted to have a perfect house.

When the analyst told him the joke of his younger self, he was amused, saying, "But that joke doesn't have a punch line." He immediately supplied two witty punch lines that turned the formerly incomplete joke into a formally achieved rendition.

Question: Why did the chicken steal the bagpipes?

Answer: Because he wanted to sing and be supper!

Or alternately:

Answer: Because he wanted to research his Scottish origins.

The gulf between a five-year-old's understanding of humor and a twelve-year-old's is strikingly illustrated here, but more importantly, when the

analyst asked Adam if our recent understandings could shed any new light on the five-year-old's joke, he immediately and enthusiastically replied, "Yes, oh yes. If Boss One insists that the dirty sexual stuff has no place in an American mind (a perfect house), then he would have to hire a chicken to steal the dirty stuff (bagpipes=five little pipes sticking out of a big bag, get it?) and make off with it to keep the house picture perfect!" In a sense, Adam had been tricked and bushwhacked by a one (Boss One), a five (five phallic pipes sticking out of a bag) and a six (sex) but he was beginning to turn the tables on Boss One and retrieve his libidinal and aggressive developmental potential from a bad joke certain unconscious numbers had been playing on him.

Adam's aggression, relatively free of Boss One's tyranny, began to make its appearance socially and also in the analytic process, especially in the transference.

A dream that stumped both analysand and analyst with its minimalism he eventually figured out. The dream depicted the color green followed by the color black. The two colors kept replacing each other sequentially throughout the dream. That was the total content. Suddenly Adam stumbled on a clue that made the dream less impregnable. The analyst's chair was green! Perhaps the green represents Adam's alliance with the analyst against the dark forces (the color black in the dream) of Boss One. Then Adam turned the tables on such analytic smugness, such comforting alliances: "Of course it could be that I'm on the side of blackness, destroying your chair, the seat of power, stealing it like in the old days." On another occasion he felt comfortable enough to ridicule the analyst's curiosity. He had remembered a dream he had at age seven:

> "I woke up in a dream. The dream was about the *Tale of Two Cities*: 'It was the worst of times, it was the best of times.' I tore out the last pages of the book."

The analyst, betraying his own interest in dreams within dreams suggested that if the dreamer imagined that he had awakened in the dream, then the rest of the dream must have been a dream within a dream. Adam pounced, ridiculing the analyst's philosophical pedantry: "Oh, you mean it could be a dream within a dream, and what's happening right now might not be happening at all. Is reality really reality or is all

existence a dream?" Adam was demonstrating his newfound comfort with aggression, which could be turned on the pedantic analyst whom he was not afraid to ridicule.

Adam's burgeoning capacity to compete academically and socially with his peers led to the recovery of an important memory: a song he had made up when he was three. The words were: "You just can't wake up the sponge." It was clear to Adam that the sponge, like the bagpipes, was a reference to the penis. He talked about an expression four-year-old children use when talking about the penis: "Sometimes my eleventh finger points." The analyst offered a tentative formulation: "So could Boss One be the singer of the song "Don't wake up the sponge?" "Would you buy that?" "Yes, I would" Adam declared emphatically and exploded with a salesman's voice in a most humorous riff: "But the real question is would you buy the knife that can cut through aluminum?" This humorous riff is dynamic of course, the knife that cuts through aluminum suggesting that the castration theme runs pretty deep. In a sense, Boss One is trying to protect Adam from this anxiety. Boss One was invented for defensive purposes after all—to beat the feared castration to the punch by incorporating the threat into the structural system of a tripartite mind with a severe superego calling the shots!

Let us leave Adam for now: my only purpose in this clinical summary of the analysis was to illustrate what a fine use of free association a young adolescent is capable of as his Piagetian formal (hypothetico-deductive) cognition kicks in.

ENACTMENT IN AN ADULT ANALYSIS

Etienne was 50 when analysis began. A most accomplished man whose talents spanned many disciplines (he was a physicist, an artist, a talented violinist) had become depressed when yet another honor had been bestowed upon him. He had been awarded a prize for an original article on quantum physics published in a most prestigious forum. Getting depressed when he might feel elated was a pattern he had noticed. He knew that it related back to childhood, to *formative* relationships as he put it. He was an only child, born in France just before the onset of the Second World War. His mother was a renowned librarian of whom it was said that she could locate any book title in a vast Parisian institution in a

matter of minutes. He was always proud whenever he depicted his mother in that way. His father had been a heroic resistance fighter during the Vichy regime, who had however become seriously depressed after the War, toppling from celebrated hero to dysfunctional apathetic depressive in a matter of months, or so it seemed in the many retellings as the analysis proceeded. Talking about his father always shamed him more than saddened him. He had memories from age five of his father as an exuberant, celebrated man; the transformation of his father into an empty shell of his former self was an emotional devastation for Etienne, a psychological devastation whose dimensions could only be fathomed as the analytic process deepened and darkened before working through secured its many achievements. In those memories, an oedipal five-year-old began to pull his punches as magical thinking made him believe that such a debilitated father would never survive the child's magical knockout punch. The feeling that he was happy to have his mother all to himself given the dilapidated state of his father aroused an unconscious guilt in him that at first, he knew only through its manifest somatic equivalents.

As this was reflected in the transference, Etienne seemed unable to let himself be curious about the analyst in any way. Whether the analyst had a wife or children, or a personal life of any dimension, seemed off limits. It became clear to Etienne over time that his attitude was entirely defensive: if he developed no curiosity whatsoever about the analyst, he could avoid all contact with the real living breathing man he came to see five times a week. But as this defensive posture was interpreted again and again it became impossible for Etienne not to realize the amount of psychological energy he had housed in this defensive attitude. And so, he would try to force himself to be more personal with the analyst, but this aroused so much anxiety in him that he would retreat almost as soon as things became personal. Whenever he allowed himself to feel loving or hateful feelings towards the analyst, he would immediately have thoughts of leaving, phobic retreat seeming like his only recourse. And yet he would never miss a session: he was a dedicated analysand and knew that analysis was his only chance to "straighten himself out." It was as if he needed to keep the analyst as unresponsive as the father became after his emotional collapse. Etienne could then play the role of bewildered child who related to the father as an absent figure rather than a

breathing, living entity. It was almost inconceivable to Etienne that he could horse around with his analyst in an aggressive manner or be tender with his analyst in quieter moments. It is out of this kind of emotional stalemate that a most significant enactment emerged.

To describe the whole analysis is not possible in a restricted space and I only want to focus on this enactment that at first drew little attention to itself. Etienne had grown up in Paris living there for the first 25 years of his life until academic achievement led to an opportunity to accept a post at a major American university, which Etienne agreed to despite his profound attachment to his country of origin. So, Etienne and his wife began to discuss acquiring a cottage in the south of France that would allow them to reestablish an architectural foothold in their beloved homeland. This had been a dream of Etienne's that surfaced often in the analysis as he mourned the father that he loved for the first years of his childhood and had to make peace with the shell of a man who replaced him once chronic depression struck and never relinquished its hold on the tragic man. Etienne's sadness and anger were profound and only found a place in the transference whenever Etienne had to swallow the reality that uncovering the sorrows of the past did not always undo them.

One significant recurring fantasy in the analysis had a strange connection to a work of fiction. It had to do with a beloved childhood reading experience. Etienne had read *The Count of Monte Cristo* as an adolescent and had subsequently become a fan of the many movie adaptations of the novel. Whenever he had an opportunity to view a new rendition of the novel on the screen, he would watch it obsessively, especially the relationship that developed between the incarcerated priest who was digging himself out of imprisonment in the Château d'If only to discover that all his digging led to Edmond Dantès' cell and not to freedom. But it did allow the two men to form a friendship in which the priest (Abbé Faria), a *father* in more ways than one, teaches Dantès swordplay and gives him an education in philosophy and the classics as well. Meanwhile, the men resume their digging hoping to escape eventually now that they can pool their efforts.

Etienne believed that the Château d'If was a kind of hell that the two men were incarcerated in, but whether Dumas was making a reference to Dante's *Inferno* was unknowable, no matter how compelling the

analogy might seem. What is known is that Dumas called his character Dantès. To continue with the summary of the plot: their digging eventually leads to the Abbé's death as the tunnel collapses on him. Before he dies the Abbé tells Dantès where the treasure of Monte Cristo is located. The dead Abbé is placed in a body-bag that will be thrown into the sea from the heights of the Château d'If for burial. Dantès realizes that if he takes the place of the Abbé in the body-bag he can finally escape if the masquerade goes undetected. And escape he does and proceeds to take revenge on his enemies. The plot is well known and what I want to convey is Etienne's use of the novel to fashion his own unique fantasy. Etienne imagined the Abbé as his debilitated father restored to health and accompanying Etienne throughout his development as devoted teacher and caregiver. What was so striking about this fantasy was that Etienne imagined himself as occupying the dead body of his father when he died, a debilitated body restored to health through the ministry of fantasy, a resurrected body that would keep Etienne company throughout his developing years—something he had never experienced and longed for after his father's emotional collapse.

His father's depression had led to a downsizing of the original family estate, a relocation to less opulent surroundings, and had also led to Etienne's disappointment that he felt could never be resolved by endless rehashing in analytic process. Etienne complained that analytic process, deep as it was, could not reach the roots, which were beyond the reach of words. At such moments he imagined that a child without words might be able to reach the roots by playing.

Exploring this theme frequently Etienne announced the idea of establishing a foothold in France again while still living in the United States. There was a fantasy attached to this decision that would only become clear after Etienne had allowed himself to explore its depths and unconscious meanings. Eventually he was able to realize an unconscious wish that was painful to accept: maybe this concrete act of relocation could magically restore his father's health at least in fantasy and somehow reanimate the analysand's own identity as well. This was analyzed from many vantage points, but Etienne did in fact acquire a cottage in Provence and would indeed be elated when he arrived there with his family and imagined his grandchildren inheriting the house eventually and life going on from generation to generation. There is one

fascinating detail in this account that has a most genetic significance. While living in Paris as a child, Etienne and his schoolmates would pass the famous statue of Montaigne in the fifth arrondissement. The children knew that by rubbing the right shoe of the bronze statue of the great philosopher luck would be bestowed on them as they took their academic exams. Sometimes Etienne would pass the statue alone, rub the right shoe and imagine that Montaigne was actually alive and communing with the imaginative boy.

When Etienne and his family acquired the cottage and were assembling the décor and furniture Etienne suddenly realized that he had the talent to make a replica of the Montaigne statue out of terra cotta and place it in his living room as if the essayist/philosopher were holding forth as the family convened. He sculpted the statue and affixed a Montaigne quote to the base of it: "Je peins le passage," by which Montaigne meant that he painted the transient states of his own inner life. There was another quotation of Montaigne's that Etienne liked to cite as a description of psychoanalysis: "The world always looks straight ahead; as for me, I turn my gaze inward … I take stock of myself, I taste myself … . I roll about in myself" (p.xvii). Before returning to the US, after spending some time in his beloved house, Etienne would talk to the statue in a playful manner as if suggesting to the inanimate object that it should watch over the surroundings while the family was away. In analysis, Etienne developed the idea that the creation of the statue was an enactment that was designed in some concrete way to fill in the space in his psyche that trauma had robbed him of when his father became depressed and dysfunctional. The enactment—as Etienne called it without fully realizing the import of the word in current psychoanalytic theory—had a significant transferential meaning as well. Etienne was aware that he always pulled his punches when anger towards his analyst was about to emerge. It was as if he fused the image of the depressed father (whom he could never feel comfortable criticizing or attacking verbally) with the analyst, who though quite sturdy in reality was turned transferentially into a frail object as unstable as the father of his childhood and early adulthood. The house and statue seemed to represent in fantasy a sense of a father restored to health, a strong, healthy father that could not only absorb the oedipal blows but, actually cherish and promote them as developmentally crucial and expectable.

The enactment seemed to be an "acting out" of what Etienne dared not say directly to the analyst and yet as the two streams of analysis (the free associative and the enacted that seemed sequestered at first and not integrated into a seamless free associative process) flowed beside each other, and as the analysis proceeded, a cross-fertilization of the two began to emerge. For instance, when Etienne returned from France to resume analysis each September, he would sometimes comment on the analyst's interventions saying Montaigne would have said it differently. Or when leaving the analyst to go on vacation Etienne might comment, "I won't miss you: I'm going to see my father (Montaigne)." This allowed the enactment, which was split off at first, to become more and more integrated into the whole momentum and flow of the analytic process. At times Etienne would say that it was crazy to imbue a lifeless statue with such animated energy when he was actually talking to a real live flesh and blood analyst that he often tried to de-personify and make into a statuesque inanimate object. The recurring interpretation of this defense (de-personification or what Bion [1959] would call destroying the human linkage [delinking] between one object and another) made the defense unnecessary over time as the affects the defense was attempting to disavow became more tolerable and negotiable. Eventually the enactment became so integrated into the free associative process that it ceased being a split off emotion at all. Termination occurred sometime later and Etienne was proud of his ability to express positive and negative affects towards the analyst without feeling the dire consequences he once imagined. I have not done justice to the complexities of the whole analytic process from start to finish, focusing on one feature of the process only in the service of illustrating the argument of the paper as a whole.

When the analyst asked Etienne if the Monte Cristo fantasy had any connection to the Montaigne enactment, Etienne seemed puzzled at first and then said something quite remarkable, which I can only paraphrase: "I suppose they are the same. I did not know how to grieve my father when he died because he did not die biologically. He died emotionally and I did not know how to conceptualize such a death. I think the fantasy of the escape from the Château d'If in the body-bag of a dead man and the sculpting of a statue that first haunted me as a child have the same core meaning. I wanted my father to overcome the

emotional disability that took him away from me as a child. The fantasy of his return to me must have gotten started when I was five years old, but it remained an unknown fantasy until I sculpted a statue of Montaigne and placed it in a home. I was bringing my errant father home without realizing it."

Years passed and the analyst was happy to get a call from Etienne asking for a few follow up sessions to share something most significant with the analyst. Etienne explained that for many years, returning to the cottage in France had a deep significance as if he were playing out something ghostlike with his father. What he wanted to share with the analyst was how surprised he was on recent trips to France to discover that the beloved cottage and the tutelary spirit of Montaigne ensconced in the cottage had lost most of its uncanny significance for him. The overdetermined agency of the enactment had become clear to him. He was aware that the idealization of the father housed in the Montaigne statue was also a denial of the actual father's chronic disability. He still loved the house and the statue, but its uncanny nature seemed to have vanished. As Delia Battin and I observed in 1981 in a study of screen memories, the enactment's loss of its uncanny stature could be compared to the way a screen memory, having been rehashed and reworked into the organic process of an analysis, tends to lose its uncanny significance, its energies rerouted back into the mainstream of free associative process.

DISCUSSION

I have presented three examples of analytic process that at first glance may seem to have no obvious connections with each other and yet I want to suggest that there is a kind of theoretical seamlessness that connects all three. At first, I want to focus on Adam's newfound capacity to free associate, which is such a marvel of introspective verbal gymnastics when compared to his earlier play. What we see in adolescent free associative analytic process is the capacity for thoughts to play with other thoughts thereby eventually exposing the depths of the hidden unconscious mind and its myriad fantasies. Fantasies that suggest to Adam that the expression of sexual or aggressive wishes has no place in the USA are exposed and can be repudiated by the enlightened mind. When Adam pretends to steal the psychoanalyst's chair, he is not fully aware of the desire to

steal father's or analyst's penis or wife, but he senses that his act is transgressive even if housed in the comic. The unconscious fantasy of stealing the *equipment* of his father or analyst can be represented in play and eventually in language when enough analysis has been done to make Adam comfortable with transgressive wishes and expressions. He may never be allowed to act on such wishes except in the aesthetic theater of sublimation, but he can be liberated from internal assaults on himself for even thinking of such things. One is reminded of Little Hans' conversation with his father about dunking his sister in the bathtub and his being told by his father that a good boy doesn't *do* such things, insisting, in a glorious retort, "but he can *think* them" (Freud 1909, p. 72).

If Hans or Adam is not allowed to *do* or to *act,* he is allowed to *think.* Freud maintained that thinking was trial action, which suggests that after enough thought civilized action can be *actualized.* This suggests that action can be defined as neurotic and socially forbidden *or* action after a period of deliberation that could be sanctioned and even celebrated without social or internal censure. In that sense, psychoanalysis could be thought of as a long period of trial thought expressed in countless free associations that eventually allow mature self-enhancing action and repudiation of self-destructive options to actualize themselves. Adam's seemingly gratuitous acts of violence against his schoolmates could be recognized as an expression of anger at Grasiena who not only spilt tea on his head but had done violence to Adam's sense of trust in a caretaker as well. By taking playful action in his relationship with his analyst Adam learnt how to represent the trauma and defang it all at once.

It is worth spending a little time on Adam's choice of the analyst's chair as the item to be pilfered. In play with props and playthings, Adam might have set up a drama in which a robber steals the chair of a man whose house he has just broken into. The analyst observing such play might suggest that the robber must have needed a chair for his own house. Adam might suggest that the police will surely catch the robber soon when the alarm goes off. In fact, this is typically the way such larcenies are rendered in *displacement* by the child at play. Adam chooses to ignore such displacements and opts for a more in your face crime involving the analyst more personally. Why? Now there is a significant preamble to the stealing of the chair. The concept of stealing had already been introduced in the dream/joke about a chicken stealing bagpipes.

Displacement is the perfect disguise: a chicken orchestrates the bagpipe larceny. Adam himself is not the perpetrator. His alter ego the larcenous chicken is. So, it could be argued that Adam having first introduced the concept of bagpipe theft in defensive disguise as *displacement* now is daring enough to represent the crime in transference which is of course a *displacement* also but displacement in a new key that invites commentary if not retaliation from the analyst. This displacement in *transference* becomes one of the most important portals of information in adult analysis. It is less organized into a full-blown transference neurosis in childhood (though cases have been described, see Harley 1971), but it is nevertheless a significant phenomenon as Adam's analysis suggests. It takes a bit of daring for a child to playfully steal an analyst's chair and such daring should not be glossed over or left unanalyzed.

Without the action of working through analysis would be an aesthetic enterprise with no tangible practical result for the analysand. In 2012, I argued that there was an analogy between working through and play that had been neglected (see also Winnicott 1971). I argued that play is not only a re-presentation of fantasy in dramatic action but a rigorous *tester* of it as well. What I want to emphasize is that play is not just the avatar of the fantasy, it is the constructive critic of it as well. Play doesn't just represent the fantasy; it puts fantasy through its paces, so to speak. Similarly, working through attempts to put insight to the test, suggesting that when fantasies are exposed and insights are understood behavioral and characterological *change* should be manifested in future thinking and behavior, or else analysis risks being a mere intellectual exercise that exhibits no tangible results.

Etienne's analysis was almost exclusively an exercise in free associative analytic process. Through free associative work he had unearthed a most pathological identification with his father's depression, which manifested itself in Etienne's great difficulty in celebrating his own successes rather than routinely sabotaging them. And yet something was missing which the enactment was an attempt to address and fill. "*The words had not gotten to the roots,*" Etienne would remark, reflecting on the enactment after the event. As the enactment unfolded it became clear that a trove of unconscious material ("the thoughts too deep for tears") was emerging, not in free associative process exclusively but in something much more akin to play in which props (a house, a statue) became the

essential elements of the unfolding. Free association did eventually expose the raison d'être of the enactment, which had less to do with reason than with the most deeply repressed emotion. Etienne's father had changed from functioning hero to dysfunctional depressive when Etienne was five years old and engaging in robust, at times murderous, oedipal play with his father, which had to be put on hold indefinitely when the father's emotional collapse stirred up magical fantasies and unconscious theories in Etienne. He developed a magical sense of his own culpability, engineered through the unconscious ministry of a savage superego. It became clear that Etienne needed to build a "pretend" father out of clay before he could put his relationship with his actual father to rest so to speak. As Conrad Stein (1961) has argued, and I paraphrase, Etienne had to "resurrect his father" in effigy and then kill the man metaphorically without unconscious eternal retaliation. Etienne was under a spell that enacted itself without words so that it could reach and express what the repressed roots needed to articulate. He needed the prop of the actual statue to realize his goal.

And what goal was it that Etienne could not reach without the enactment? There is no question that Etienne had identified with his father's depression as a pathological compromise that helped him to resolve the Oedipus complex as a child. Identification, along with repression, are two of the most important defensive strategies for bringing the Oedipus Complex to the kind of relative "dissolution" that makes latency development possible (Mahon 1991). A healthy father and mother who afford the child's sexuality and aggression the developmental playground to express itself in, rambunctiously and exuberantly, pave the way for a "normal" adaptive resolution of the complex. A healthy father and mother who love each other have resolved their own Oedipus complexes throughout their early development and are therefore most sensitive to the child's conflicts. They react with love and understanding when the child becomes phallic and competitive and wants to steal the bagpipes (penis) of his father. This attitude of tolerance and sympathy makes them ideal objects for the child to identify with as he abdicates his oedipal desires in the interests of détente and developmental progression. An unresolved Oedipus complex with its attendant nightmares and anxieties would drain the child of all the energies that are needed to maintain the structure of latency and promote the kind of intellectual

industry that advances learning and makes it possible for the post oedipal child to imbibe the fruits of his culture wherever he lives. In Etienne's case, by identifying with the defeated father and the seemingly triumphant mother he resolved the Oedipus Complex in a neurotic way that made it impossible for him to embrace his extraordinary accomplishments without fearing dire neurotic consequences. By identifying with a debilitated man, he tried to beat a neurotic sense of consequence to the punch by defeating himself before it could.

Most of this work was done by following the lead of dogged free associative process as it exposed the architecture of the neurosis. As a child, Etienne was a master builder with blocks: in school he would construct elaborate buildings. The blocks were so tightly packed together no light could get through. Etienne would compare his adult neurotic mechanisms to this block-building of childhood. No matter how many times analytic process explored the blueprints of neurotic architecture, the integrated building blocks would never surrender to the exploratory process and allow the structure to be deconstructed. "We don't seem to be getting to the roots," Etienne would say accusingly, frustratedly. It was out of such defeatism that the enactment sprang, and I am trying to understand and articulate how the enactment, in concert with the free associative process, brought about a change.

I would like to suggest that the enactment's reliance on illusion ("I commune with a statue I sculpted in a house I built") resurrected or recreated a version of his father that mental illness (chronic depression) had robbed him of. In early childhood, there had been the experience of a healthy father that Etienne believed he may have transformed into a deadened father through the ministry of his oedipal instincts, expressed magically in the fantasies of childhood. The count of Monte Cristo fantasy and the enactment with house and sculpted statue of Montaigne seemed to work together. In the Monte Cristo fantasy, he climbed into his father's deadened body and, thrown from the cliff of the Château d'If of neurosis, escaped to freedom. He threw off the mind-forged manacles (Blake 1794) and embraced mental health instead. But the Monte Cristo fantasy observed on a movie screen seemed too passive. The enactment, by comparison was decidedly active. A house needed to be built. A statue needed to be sculpted. The enactment took hold of the fantasy, as Freud had suggested, dramatized it with props and

playthings (a house, a statue) and made the fantasy palpable and functional. In a similar manner, Freud believed that dreams needed to be interpreted, so that the insights gleaned from the dreams could lead from repudiation of neurosis to adaptive living. The Monte Cristo fantasy suggested that identification with a dead man could lead to a daring escape plan, or in oedipal terms, Etienne must kill his father metaphorically so that he can then identify with the father who actually survived the aggression and then became *usable* in a Winnicottian sense. Winnicott (1969) has argued that until one can express aggression towards a loved object, who survives the aggression one is merely *relating* passively to the object rather than *using* the object in the commerce of emotional social life. In that sense, Etienne's enactment is entirely analogous to Freud's definition of play: the enactment gives shape to the fantasy in the same way that childhood play dramatizes the unconscious or preconscious fantasy of the child.

This is not unlike Adam needing to steal the actual chair of the analyst, Adam as chicken needing to steal the actual bagpipes so that he could play his dream/fantasy and have a perfect house. Now as the larceny gets analyzed, Adam will learn that an imperfect house is what analysis offers, perfection being a defense against the imperfect affects and conflicts of the human condition. Etienne's creation of the statue of Montaigne put him in touch with his father in a way that years of free associative process had prepared him for but could not engineer exclusively. The enactment returns to the action language of play to derepress affects too deep for tears and words and get to the roots in a way words sometimes cannot. As Etienne relates to the statue over time affects become available that can be studied free associatively. Enactment in that sense becomes an ally of the free associative achievement. When Little Hans's father admonishes Hans for *doing* certain things Hans is willing to forgo the *doing* but not the *thinking*. I am suggesting that sometimes the *doing* is necessary to jog the *thinking* out of its repressed elective ignorance.

The concept of play is at the core of the three modalities I have focused on in this article. All three are attempts to force unconscious fantasy out of hiding: childhood symbolic play utilizes props and playthings to lure unconscious interiority out into the open so that it can be better understood in the child's enacted dramas. Free association, I have

argued, is thought playing with other thoughts without the need for any concrete assistance from any other source other than the playfulness of thought itself. This glorious free associative playfulness that characterizes most of adult psychoanalytic process can enlist enactments to assist it when some unconscious material cannot be accessed through the free associative channel alone. After enactment has dredged up the depth psychology that could not be reached in any other way, the content of that enactment now becomes the property of insightful free associative, playful process and the mind has become further enlightened. From this perspective it is clear that enactments can enrich psychoanalytic process when their unconscious urgencies are understood and enter the conscious mainstream and momentum of free associative working through.

I suggested earlier that isolating enactments, in the manner that I have, does violence to the rich complexity of interweaving elements of countertransference and transference that characterize the modern psychoanalytic conception of countertransference enactments, introduced by Jacobs in 1986 and elaborated upon by others since then (Ellman and Moskowitz 1998; Jacobs 1986; Katz 2014; McLaughlin 1991) I have isolated the transferential enactment elements from their unconscious countertransference elements since I wanted to focus on the developmental aspects of the individual analysand exclusively as I tried to imagine the progression of his mind from early childhood to maturity. Having isolated the transferential enactments from their enmeshment with countertransferential attitudes and affects at first, I attempt now to describe the complementarity of the analyst's countertransference responses to Etienne's enactments. Earlier I mentioned a sense of stalemate that characterized certain phases of the analytic process. Etienne had worked hard and diligently throughout the years of exploratory analysis. And yet he believed at times that despite all of the new insights, he was not free of the ghosts of the past. The analyst sensed that this was no stalemate but an actual genetic replica of the father's depression and the son's identification with it. The idea of dis-identifying with this ghost made absolute intellectual sense to Etienne and yet accomplishing this analytic feat seemed beyond his powers. He joked at times that only a séance that could get him in actual contact with this ghost could eventually wean him from it. The analyst knew that he was being criticized and that it was crucial not to be defensive. The analysand's humor was in

evidence when he suggested that we needed a round table and darkness and not a couch as we proceeded to stage the seance. The anger, though cloaked in humor, seemed palpable and essential. Etienne had worked hard and yet we had not unearthed enough of the depth psychology to free him. When he did achieve moments of genetic insight through the elucidation of the transference, he couldn't appreciate the achievement. Satisfaction and pleasure seemed to differentiate him from father too much, a differentiation that was experienced as disloyalty. This led to a sense of guilt that was often experienced as somatic pain rather than guilt itself. Etienne realized that guilt as *affect* was almost impossible for him to tolerate. It seemed obligatory to transform it quickly and irrevocably into pain and suffering.

So, the stalemate was really rich in its analytic meanings despite the sense of failure that it reflected and represented for Etienne. It was in such a psychological climate that house and statue began to take shape in Etienne's imagination. The analyst sensed that it was important not to interpret this sublimatory zeal since Etienne's excitement was palpable as if the child had finally found a way out of the Château d'If of childhood depression. The analyst felt like a father or mother at such moments of creative excitement, a facilitating parent who knows how to promote creativity rather than compromise it in any way. The analyst's countertransference was basically that of a parent who is in no way competitive with the child's developmental program. Quite the contrary: the child's exuberance, which houses sexual and aggressive competitive phallic and oedipal sublimated components within it, needs holding and facilitation and promotion. The countertransference could be called nourishing and positive at such junctures. To return to the metaphor of water: if it is impossible to isolate from water its hydrogen from oxygen molecules without getting one's hands wet, I hope my belated inclusion of counter-transferential elements into the over-determined complexity of Etienne's analysis has restored the flow to a process that must have seemed incomplete without it. If "all serious daring starts from within" as Eudora Welty suggested in her literary autobiography *One Writer's Beginnings,* it is the psychoanalytic mining of all the unconscious and enacted complexities of that interiority that unleashes the daring, making action, conviction and courage possible as play, free association, and enactments pave the way.

While I have been imagining a developmental line running through the complexity of psychological process from its most inchoate origins in sensorimotor acts to its most accomplished maturities in post analytic individuality, no student of psychological development would argue that such an evolution is linear. Progression and regression run *pari passu* throughout the life cycle. "By indirections find direction out" Shakespeare suggests in *Hamlet* and psychoanalysis itself is indeed a regressive modality that uses regression in the service of progression, uses indirections to find direction out. If the great goal of analysis is to restore the analysand's sense of his own *individuality* to him or her after the deepest exploration of unconscious forces that often need to disown or disavow individual agency and responsibility (Poland 2017) there is no question that individuality is not a developmental given or fully formed entity from the beginning. A facilitating environment (Winnicott 1965) is essential whether it be parental facilitation in childhood or analytic facilitation throughout analysis. If this influence is crucial it comes with anxiety as conflict is engaged throughout the life cycle. If there is an anxiety of influence (Bloom 1997) in literature, there is certainly an anxiety of influence informing every chapter of development. Without facilitating (and non-facilitating, pathological, perverse) influence the complexity of life and its tortuous development would be unimaginable. That said, the goal of analytic work is to help the analysand understand and dissect the influences that have shaped him or her. I have tried to describe the fabric of influence as instinct and defense shape it, as play, free association and enactments expose it and lead to great insights as the courage that exposure requires proceeds, falteringly to be sure at times, throughout the life cycle. If a chicken steals the bagpipes, he is engaged in an act of larcenous self-expression that only play, free association, and enactment can help him to understand fully so that he can claim what he wants without stealing it. He may not get a perfect house, but he will clear his name and claim the full stature of his identity.

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Racker and Heimann on Countertransference: Similarities and Differences

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RACKER AND HEIMANN ON COUNTERTRANSFERENCE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

BY ALBERTO STEFANA, R. D. HINSHELWOOD, AND CLAUDIA LUCÌA BORENSZTEJN

Both Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein recognized the existence of countertransference but distrusted its clinical use. This idea was the one that prevailed until the late 1940s, when Heinrich Racker in Buenos Aires and Paula Heimann in London played decisive roles in reinstating countertransference. More specifically, both Racker (in 1948) and Heimann (in 1949), independently of and without contact with each other, claimed the importance of countertransference for signifying the transference and unconscious processes that the patient re-enacts in the analytic relationship. The context in which their ideas were developed allows us to recognize differences within their common view of countertransference as a useful tool in psychoanalytic work. In this article, we present the development of both Racker's and Heimann's ideas on countertransference and attempt a comparison of similarities and differences of those ideas and put them into a historical and clinical-theoretical context.

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Keywords: Paula Heimann, Heinrich Racker, countertransference, history of psychoanalysis.

INTRODUCTION

A purely intellectual interpretation of symbolic meanings of dreams and other symbols began to be undermined with the publication of Freud's Dora case in 1899. It was further compromised by Ferenczi when he promoted the investigation of the more intimate emotional connections between analyst and patients. Marjorie Brierley (1937) said, "It is time that we restored affects to a place in theory more consonant with their importance in practice" (p. 257). The Balints, after taking refuge in Britain, began to re-examine the countertransference, "the analytical situation is the result of an interplay between the patient's transference and the analyst's countertransference, complicated by the reactions released in each by the other's transference on to him" (Balint and Balint 1939, p. 228).

These early signals developed into a major re-thinking of countertransference in the late 1940s. Indeed, it is possible to distinguish two periods in the history of this concept: a first stage that goes from 1909 until the end of the 1940s, period in which the countertransference was perceived as resistance/obstacle that should be avoided or eliminated, and then a second stage in which the countertransference was/is perceived as a useful diagnostic/therapeutic tool (Dagfal 2013; see also Hinshelwood 2016; Stefana 2017a; Stefana et al., 2020). The works by Heinrich Racker and Paula Heimann—the two most quoted figures of that re-thinking—bridged the interval between these two periods.

In this article we want to disentangle the contributions of Racker and Heimann, who are so frequently thought together (see for example Abend 2018; Birkhofer 2017; Christian 2015; Levy 2017; Perelberg 2016; Skogstad 2015; Weiss 2018). Therefore, we will present Racker's and Heimann's ideas, then attempt a comparison of their similarities, differences and interactions, and put them into a historical and clinical-theoretical context.

CIRCULATION OF KLEINIAN IDEAS FROM LONDON TO BUENOS AIRES IN THE 1940–1950S

The work of Racker and Heimann coincided with the arrival of psychoanalysis in Argentina and contacts were made with the British Society. In 1942, the Asociación Psicoanalítica Argentina (APA) was founded, and straightaway its official organ, the *Revista de Psicoanálisis*, published in Spanish translation articles of Melanie Klein and her collaborators, including Susan Isaacs and Joan Riviere. This publishing choice anticipated the interest in the Kleinian movement in the region of Río de la Plata during the years between 1950 and 1970 (see Lisman-Pieczanski and Pieczanski 2015).

Personal contact between Argentinian analysts and the Klein group started with the 1949 International Congress of Psychoanalysis in Zürich, when the APA was recognized as a component society of the IPA, and importantly when Heimann presented her paper "On countertransference." Subsequently in the 1950s Argentinian analysts established close ties to the British psychoanalytic community—especially with Klein, Heimann, and Rosenfeld.

In fact, a journey to Buenos Aires was planned for Klein and Heimann in the early 1950s (letter from Klein to Betty Garma and Arminda Aberastury, June 25 1952; Garma, B. 2003), but it was later cancelled because of the contention between Klein and Heimann (Garma, Á. 1992). Instead, Klein sent Hanna Segal, as a leading exponent, to supervise and teach in 1954, a visit that was regarded as "a true scientific event" (Etchegoyen and Zysman 2005, p. 874). Racker himself went to London in 1955, and during supervisions he recorded Klein's comments to share with his Argentine colleagues (Cesio 1985). Back in Argentina, Racker may have gained some knowledge of Heimann's work before presenting his second paper on countertransference, "A contribution to the psychoanalysis of transference neurosis" (1950), which, as we will see later, marked the dominant trend that characterized Racker's future research: countertransference as a technical tool—a perspective that has become widely accepted in recent years (see for example the panel "Metaphors and the use of analyst as tools to improve our clinical practise" of the IPA Congress Boston 2015).

HEINRICH RACKER

Heinrich Racker (1910-1961) was born in Poland and earned his doctorate in philosophy and music in 1935 in Vienna. He began to fulfil his "dream of being a psychoanalyst" (Racker, quoted in Etchegoyen 2014, p. 90) in 1936 when he started a training analysis with Jeanne Lampl-de Groot (analyzed by Freud). Racker was unable to complete his training after Nazi Germany's annexed of Austria in 1938. He emigrated to Argentina, arriving in Buenos Aires in 1939. He entered analysis with the Spaniard Àngel Garma (analyzed by Theodor Reik), but he soon had to interrupt for financial constraints. Finally, in 1942, Racker began a training analysis with the Viennese, Marie Langer (analyzed by Sterba), and in the following year, began the Institute's seminars, becoming an associate member of the APA in 1947 (then a full member in 1950 and a training analyst the following year).

In September 1948, Ranker presented the paper "A contribution to the problem of counter-transference" to a gathering limited to the training analysts of the APA. This work elicited various disagreements from those present, and one important analyst said haughtily that "the best thing for an analyst to whom 'those things' happened was for him to reanalyze himself!" (Etchegoyen 1986, p. 265). Such negative welcome did not hold Racker back from developing a general theory of countertransference, on which he continued to work until his death.

In this first presentation, Racker (1953[1948]) already recognized the countertransference—defined as the entirety of images, feelings, and impulses towards the patient—as an important tool for analytic practice. More specifically, he maintained that "the countertransference is instrumental in bringing to [the analyst's] notice a psychological fact about the patient" (p. 323) and it allows him to identify intellectually with the patient's ego and potentially to understand it. (Later he will call this a "concordant countertransference.") However, because of his own neurosis, sometimes the analyst is not able to identify emotionally and react with understanding—this will only be possible after analysis of the analyst's issue. Moreover, even when the working-through process succeeds, the analyst may sometimes still be disturbed by what he has understood. Then his own interpretative capacity may be compromised. Later, Racker explained that in this case the analyst identifies himself with the

patient's internal objects, a type of identification he called complementary countertransference. This presentation was published in the *International Journal* in 1953, but references to articles on countertransference which appear in the intervening five years were consigned to footnotes. Hence, in Argentina Racker is considered the pioneer in this subject.

This pioneering work was probably the most Freudian of his contributions. Racker, as a Viennese analyst, was prudent in approaching countertransference from the point of view of the analyst's psychopathology. However, he was "bold" in opening a discussion on the analyst's Oedipus complex—the original neurosis, the transference neurosis, and the countertransference neurosis—are all centred on unresolved Oedipal issues. However, the analyst's neurosis was not exposed in detail, probably because at that time almost all analysts were reluctant to expose their own neuroses. Nonetheless, Racker had started to undertake a kind of analysis of the analyst, elucidating psychological mechanisms based on Klein's and Enrique Pichón Riviere's object-relations theories (Scharff 2018).

Racker's fundamental hypothesis was that:

> as the whole of the patient's personality, the healthy part and the neurotic part, his present and past, reality and phantasy, are brought into play in his relation with the analyst, so it is with the analyst, although with qualitative and quantitative differences, in his relation with the patient. [1953[1948], p. 313]

In other words, the analyst's neurotic issues are the basis for his pathological response to the patient's transference neurosis. The transference–countertransference neurosis is always present with greater or lesser intensity and, in becoming aware of the countertransference, he can sense what is happening in the patient.

The countertransference neurosis is a "pitfall" to the analyst's understanding. Given the analyst's double role of interpreter of, and object of, the unconscious processes, the countertransference can distort or prevent his perception. However, even a correct perception can evoke neurotic reactions, compromising one's interpretive capacity. Moreover, if the countertransference remains unconscious, it negatively affects the

analyst's understanding and interpretation as well as his behavior towards the patient, and thus causes a change in the patient's internal image of the analyst. So, the countertransference also influences the patient and his transference. This view can be traced back to Ferenczi (1918; Ferenczi and Rank 1924), whose influences are discernible in Racker.

In the countertransferential situation, the objects—or rather "the parents of the genital Oedipus complex and their heir, the superego" (Racker 1958b[1956], p. 556)—can be transferred onto the patient in a direct way, or an indirect one. In other words, the clinician experiences a direct countertransference when the object, upon which the countertransference depends, is the patient who comes to represent the parent. Alternatively, an indirect countertransference is when the object is, for example, a colleague with whom one discusses the case and from whom one desires some sort of appreciation. Usually, both of these forms of countertransference appear, although to different degrees, during the course of the analytic process. Perhaps, Racker being an excellent pianist, his great musical sensitivity enhanced his perception and theorization of the need to be a "sensitive passive instrument" and a "rational critical listener" (Racker 1960[1957], p. 131 in the Spanish version only).[1]

Between 1949–1952, Racker proceeded to an extensive study of transference neurosis, its relationship with resistance, and its role in the analytic process, producing four papers. In his paper "A contribution to the psychoanalysis of transference neurosis," Racker in summary said:

> The analyst's perception of his own countertransference states could prove an important instrument for the understanding of the analysand's transference states. If the analyst can use his negative countertransference reactions in favor of the treatment, he is usually able to overcome them. When does negative countertransference appear? In general terms, it could be said that it is the result of the analyst feeling that the analysand has frustrated him. In this sense, we could claim,

[1] Some paragraphs of Racker's *Estudios sobre tecnica psicoanalitica* are missing in the translated English version *Transference and Countertransference* (London: Karnac Books, 1982).

> although it may only be partly accurate, that whenever the analyst is angry, the analysand has a feeling of guilt about his transference aggressiveness. To put this in the terms of the present paper: whenever the analyst experiences anger, the analysand is defending himself from the basic paranoid situation, which is being transferred in a latent fashion by means of the identification with the "bad object" (that is, the frustrating object). Deep down, what has been projected onto the analyst is a persecutor; on the surface, it is the superego that reproaches him for his tendencies, or behavior, that correspond to the aforementioned identification. [Racker 1961[1950], p. 239n]

Dealing with the annoyance/anger aroused in the analyst by the patient's resistance to the analysis, Racker concluded that it is not only or not so much an objective response to the frustration of his/her own efforts, but also a paranoid countertransferential reaction triggered by—and therefore revealing—the existence in the patient of feelings of aggression and anxiety elicited by specific relationships with his/her (the patient's) internal objects. Therefore, at least in part, the sense of inconvenience/annoyance/anger the analyst feels in the face of the patient's resistances is infantile in nature and can never be fully avoided. Here, according to Etchegoyen (2014), "Racker's approach is truly revolutionary" (p. 88).

According to Racker's stratification hypothesis, in each of the libidinal stages there is a paranoid situation (which had its origin in an actual lack) resulting from a frustrating libidinal object that is experienced as a persecutor, and every libidinal link feels dangerous (that is the persistent danger of being frustrated or attacked). The patient's guilty feelings and paranoid fear of retaliation/abandonment by the analyst refer to the projection of both the id and a part of the "bad ego" (consisting of bad objects with which the analysand identified himself in an attempt to defend against their persecution) upon the analyst. Such a projection occurs together with the identification of the superego with the internal persecutors.

This second lecture too received a negative response at the time from most of Racker's APA colleagues, few of whom considered either paper a major contribution to psychoanalysis (Cesio 1985). However,

the situation radically changed within the next few years. Between 1949-1956, the *International Journal* was particularly interested in countertransference and published a series of articles by Winnicott (1949), Heimann, Little (1951), Racker, and others. That is why, when Racker gave his third lecture on countertransference at the APA in 1951, he was no longer alone and no longer a transgressor. He was a young Training Analyst whose research was aligned with a growing number of European and American theorists who were accepting that the countertransference is a technical tool that can reveal something about the analysand's psychological processes. Furthermore, between 1949–1958, he also explored the transference neurosis and the "stratification" of neuroses in general, reaching the conclusion that transference and countertransference are inextricably interwoven and in part reciprocally determined. Therefore, in his works he does not speak just of countertransference neurosis, but of the dynamics of countertransference, countertransference reactions, and counter-resistances.

Thus, in September of 1951, Racker presented "Observations on countertransference as a technical instrument: preliminary communication" at the APA. In this work, Racker (1952[1951]) cited and agreed with Heimann, maintaining that "the content of the countertransference reaction can teach us about the content of the transference situation" (p. 22). Its intensity can be helpful to the analyst in understanding when it overlaps the analyst's identifications with internal objects, or with the defenses and impulses of the analysand, while "countertransference feelings frequently indicate whether the analysand is 'moving on,' that is, if he is overcoming resistances or not" (p. 23).

Furthermore, in line with Freud's (1912) thinking, Racker (1952[1951]) asserts that, "The key to understanding our patients continues to be, as always, the capacity to pick up unconscious phenomena by means of the analyst's own unconscious" (p. 19). The working through of what has been understood, through identification (Deutsch 1926) with the analysand's desires, defences, and images, can suffer interference from the countertransferential reactions.

Two years later, in 1953, Racker wrote four papers on the subject. In the first, entitled "On the confusion between mania and health," Racker maintained that a revival of infantile conflicts through transference, in an improved situation (that of analysis), requires the analyst, at least to a

certain extent, to be free of anxiety. Thus, the analyst's own aspirations—like the desire to cure, comprehend, succeed, and be loved—are without compulsion. Then the inevitable and continual frustrations can be tolerated and worked through. To the extent that the analyst achieves it, he can help the patient to gain a larger degree of "real independence," which is a better internal dependence. But if the analyst is not conscious of his countertransference reactions, he may expose the analysand once again to an archaic object that awakens his hostility, in spite of his having some understanding of what is happening in the patient, the analyst denies himself some understanding of the patient and then of giving a useful interpretation. As an example:

> During her first analytic session, a woman patient talks about how hot it was and other matters which to the analyst … seem insignificant. She says to the patient that very likely the patient dares not talk about herself. Although the analysand was indeed talking about herself (even when saying how hot it was), the interpretation was, in essence, correct, for it was directed to the central conflict of the moment. But it was badly formulated, and this was so partly because of the countertransference situation. For the analyst's "you dare not" was a criticism, and it sprang from the analyst's feeling of being frustrated in a desire; this desire must have been that the patient overcome her resistance. [Racker, 1957[1953b], p. 332]

Furthermore, an analyst who lives in anxious dependence on his own internal objects, and therefore fearful of a healthy dependence, could unconsciously encourage the analysand, directly or indirectly, to act in an "independent" or instinctual manner, and thus reinforce the pathological defence of acting out. Furthermore, an analyst who is subject to reaction formations could have difficulty helping the analysand to work through and overcome the neurotic dependence on the analyst. The analyst's neurosis could lead him to confuse hypomania for health, but if he controls a tendency to mania (e.g., the denial of both dependence and guilt-feelings belong to its main characteristics) he shall also refrain from provoking analysands to make use of the same defence, whether or not the latter possess the tendency to "flee to health" (ivi, p.

185). More generally, Racker believed it possible to connect the specific central neurotic position of an analysand with a specific countertransference reaction.

The other three articles written in 1953, and presented to the APA, were collected into one single published paper, "The meanings and uses of countertransference," and was his most complete essay on the subject. In this treatise, which included a review of what had been written in the filed thus far (including Heimann's work), Racker maintained that the analyst's emotional response is closer to the patient's psychological state than is the analyst's conscious judgment of it. Then, he declared his agreement with Heimann about the following main points:

> (1) Countertransference reactions of great intensity, even pathological ones, should also serve as tools. (2) Countertransference is the expression of the analyst's identification with the internal objects of the analysand, as well as with his id and ego, and may be used as such. (3) Countertransference reactions have specific characteristics (specific contents, anxieties, and mechanisms) from which we may draw conclusions about the specific character of the psychological happenings in the patient. [Racker 1957[1953b], pp. 305-6]

But a question remains: what happens in the analyst during the relationship with the patient? Racker's answer is that "everything happens that *can* happen in one personality faced with another" (p. 311), but in addition there exists in the analyst an intention to understand what is happening in the analysand.

Similar to Freud (1915-17) on transference, Racker (1957[1953b]) argued that countertransference too "may be the greatest danger and at the same time an important tool for understanding" (p. 303). He stressed that it would be "a mistake [to expect] to find in countertransference reactions an oracle, with blind faith to expect of them the pure truth about the psychological situations of the analysand" (p. 354). This is so even if "our unconscious is a very personal 'receiver' and 'transmitter' and we must reckon with frequent distortions of objective reality" (p. 354). Nevertheless, according to Racker, the danger in an excessive reliance on one's own unconscious, even when a very

"personal" countertransference is occurring, is more contained than that from repressing or denying the value of messages from one's own unconscious. This is because, with personal analysis and clinical experience, the analyst should be sufficiently aware of his/her own "personal equation" (i.e., the analyst's natural tendency to some specific errors due to his/her own neurosis) and of his/her relationship with the analysand's processes and with the entire analytical practice.

Racker examined in detail three aspects of countertransference: concordant and complementary countertransference; direct and indirect countertransference; and countertransference thoughts and positions. The analyst's intention to understand predisposes him to identify with the patient and constitutes the basis of comprehension. The analyst identifies the parts of his own psychic apparatus (id, ego, and super-ego) with the patient's respective parts. This type of identification is called concordant and lies at the basis of empathy. In other cases, the analyst identifies his own ego with the patient's internal objects; a type of identification that Racker, adopting an expression of Helene Deutsch (1926), called complementary identification. He specified that:

> The concordant identification is based on introjection and projection, or, in other terms, on the resonance of the exterior in the interior, on recognition of what belongs to another as one's own ("this part of you is I") and on the equation of what is one's own with what belongs to another ("this part of me is you"). The processes inherent in the complementary identifications are the same, but they refer to the patient's objects [and] are produced by the fact that the patient treats the analyst as an internal (projected) object, and in consequence the analyst feels treated as such; that is, he identifies himself with this object. [Racker 1957[1953b], p. 312]

Accordingly, every (positive or negative) transference situation provokes a (positive or negative) countertransference that is based on the analyst's identification with the patient's internal objects—i.e., complementary countertransference. Furthermore, Racker maintained that countertransference is governed by unconscious laws and can be repressed or blocked but not avoided. It is essential that the analyst

develops an observing ego, which enables an awareness of it and then to interpret instead of enacting.

Here a simplified example of complementary countertransference:

> if the patient's neurosis centers round a conflict with his introjected father, he will project the latter upon the analyst and treat him as his father; the analyst will feel treated as such,—he will feel treated badly,—and he will react internally, in a part of his personality, in accordance with the treatment he receives. If he fails to be aware of this reaction, his behavior will inevitably be affected by it, and he will renew the situations that, to a greater or lesser degree, helped to establish the analysand's neurosis. [1957[1953b], p. 315]

Although in the 1950s the term "countertransference" was usually restricted to the complementary countertransference, concordant countertransference too must be considered as an integral part of the overall phenomenon of countertransference. Racker reported a common situation illustrating both the concordant and complementary identifications:

> The analyst identifies himself with the id and ego of the patient and with the patient's dependence upon his superego; and he also identifies himself with this same superego—a situation in which the patient places him—and experiences in this way the domination of the superego over the patient's ego. The relation of the ego to the superego is, at bottom, a depressive and paranoid situation; the relation of the superego to the ego is, on the same plane, a manic one insofar as this term may be used to designate the dominating, controlling, and accusing attitude of the superego toward the ego. In this sense we may say, broadly speaking, that to a "depressive-paranoid" transference in the analysand there corresponds—as regards the complementary identification—a "manic" countertransference in the analyst. This, in turn, may entail various fears and guilt feelings, to which I shall refer later. [1957[1953b], p. 318]

With the complementary identifications, we find the direct and indirect countertransference (which we have already dealt with above).

Finally, Racker divided the countertransference experiences into "thoughts" and "positions." The former are the thoughts which the analyst suddenly discovers himself having, without however being able to find a rational connection to the patient and the material he has brought. These are linked to very deep conflicts in the analyst's mind and so it is not unusual for them to appear both in the material of the patient, as well as in the clinician's mind. The clinician should not fall into the error of impulsively trying to push them aside. He must instead examine them with careful consideration, until their confirmation or negation emerges from the patient's material. When confirmed, such thoughts could be profitably used in the formation of an interpretation; while when unconfirmed, they cannot, since they are probably linked to the analyst's neurosis. On the other hand, we have the countertransference positions, or rather "the behaviorally manifested or enacted roles, which may lead to persistent role-adoptions and/or acting-out by the analyst" (Mills 2004, pp. 472-473). Countertransference positions often, but not always, imply deeper conflicts and a greater disturbance in the clinician, even allowing for the feelings and phantasies of the countertransference to be ego-syntonic and therefore pass unobserved.

An important difference between countertransference thoughts and positions lies in the degree of the ego's involvement. The first type of countertransference is experienced as thoughts, free associations, or fantasies with a slight/moderate emotional trigger from the analyst, almost as if we are dealing with something extraneous to the ego. Differently, the second type of countertransference is experienced with great intensity and as a reality, since the ego is fully involved in it. A consequence of this is that countertransference thoughts and countertransference positions differ, both in quality and content, from the experience that they evoke in the analyst (LaFarge 2007). The occurrence of one type or the other is dependent on some factors related to the analyst, such as his neurosis, defence mechanisms, inclination to anxiety, and tendencies to enact.

Racker gives us a brief example of countertransference position:

> an analysand repeats with the analyst his "neurosis of failure," closing himself up to every interpretation or repressing it at once, reproaching the analyst for the uselessness of the

> analysis. . . The analyst interprets the patient's position toward him, and its origins, in its various aspects. He shows the patient his defense against the danger of becoming too dependent, of being abandoned. . . He interprets to the patient his projection of bad internal objects and his subsequent sado-masochistic behavior in the transference; his need of punishment; his triumph and "masochistic revenge" against the transferred parents; his defense against the 'depressive position' by means of schizoid, paranoid, and manic defenses (Klein). . . But it may happen that all these interpretations … fall into the "whirl in a void" of the "neurosis of failure." Now. . . the analyst feels anxiety and is angry with the analysand—that is to say, he is in a certain countertransference "position." [Racker 1957[1953b], pp. 319-21]

On the other hand, a simplified example of countertransference thought is the following:

> At the start of a session an analysand wishes to pay his fees. He gives the analyst a thousand peso note and asks for change. The analyst happens to have his money in another room and goes out to fetch it, leaving the thousand pesos upon his desk. During the time between leaving and returning, the fantasy occurs to him that the analysand will take back the money and say that the analyst took it away with him. On his return he finds the thousand pesos where he had left it. When the account has been settled, the analysand lies down and tells the analyst that when he was left alone he had fantasies of keeping the money, of kissing the note goodbye, and so on. The analyst's fantasy was based upon what he already knew of the patient, who in previous sessions had expressed a strong disinclination to pay his fees. The identity of the analyst's fantasy and the patient's fantasy of keeping the money may be explained as [follow:] to the analysand's wish to take money from him (already expressed on previous occasions), the analyst reacts by identifying himself both with this desire and with the object toward which the desire is directed; hence arises his fantasy of being robbed. [Racker 1957[1953b], p. 321]

Ultimately, Racker insists on the relative usefulness of communicating/interpreting one's own countertransference to the analysand. After starting by saying that "much depends, of course, upon what, when, how, to whom, for what purpose, and in what conditions the analyst speaks about his countertransference" (p. 356), he argues that, even though in most cases it isn't so, "there are … situations in which communication of the countertransference is of value for the subsequent course of the treatment" (p. 356).

Three years later, in 1956, Racker organized and chaired the APA annual symposium, choosing as theme "the psychoanalytic technique." On that occasion, Racker read his paper "Counter-resistance and interpretation" (1958a [1956]), in which he showed that the analyst's resistance to verbalising an interpretation indicated a more important conflict in the analysand in that moment. In addition, he showed that counter-resistance in the analyst has a double root cause: first, an objective one, associated with an identification with the analysand's resistance, and then a subjective one, resulting from the fact that the identification and the fate of it also depend on the analyst's conflicts.

Four months later, the First Latin-American Psychoanalytic Congress took place in Buenos Aires. Racker read the work "Psychoanalytic technique and the analyst's unconscious masochism." According to him, "the analyst's masochism, [a universal tendency which exists in everyone], represents one of the forms of unconscious 'negative' countertransference, the analyst putting his sadistic internal object into the patient" (1958b[1956], p. 558). This masochistic inclination provokes the analyst to repeat or invert a specific relationship with his own primary objects. In this way, "as countertransference is a 'creation' (Heimann) of the patient and an integral part of his inner and outer world, so also, in some measure, is transference the analyst's creation and an integral part of his inner and outer world" (p. 559).

An explicative example is, for instance, that of an analyst whose professional activity:

> signifies to him an attempt to destroy the father, the Oedipal guilt feeling may express itself in a moral masochism conspiring against his work … Psychological constellations of this kind may constitute, to a variable degree, a "negative

> therapeutic reaction" of the analyst. In such a case the analyst is partially impeded in achieving progress with his patients or else he feels unconsciously compelled to annul whatever progress he has already achieved. [For example,] after having given a series of good interpretations and having thus provoked a very positive transference, [the analyst] thereupon becomes anxious and has to disturb things through an error at his next intervention. [1958b(1956), p. 558]

The following year, Racker read the lecture, "A study of some early conflicts through their return in the patient's relation to the interpretation" at the APA Symposium on psychoanalysis of children. In this paper, Racker (1960[1957]) discussed the analysis of transference through the patient's relations with the interpretation and returned to the topic of stratification.

The endpoint of the evolution of Racker's ideas on countertransference was in 1958, when he presented his paper "Classical and present techniques in psycho-analysis" at the Second Latin-American Congress of Psycho-Analysis. He explicitly steered the dynamic of identifications back to projective identification as described by Klein and said that "The analyst's identification with the object with which the patient identifies him, is … the normal countertransference process" (Racker 1968[1958], p. 66).

The theoretical framework provided by Racker for the analysis of transference-countertransference rested not only on the structural model of the mind, but also on that of internal object relations. The contribution of the analyst has been fully utilized from all theoretical standpoints associated with object relations (Kernberg 1993) opening the field to new perspectives, not only in South America (cfr. de Bernardi 2000), but also in The United States (cfr. Friedman 1996; Jacobs 1999).

Summary of the points of Racker's argument:

1. The direct reception from unconscious to unconscious is the route to understand the patient's unconscious.
2. The term countertransference indicates the totality of the analyst's psychological response to the analysand.
3. Transference and countertransference influence each other, are always present and always reveal themselves.
4. To certain transference situations there correspond certain countertransference situations, and vice versa.

5. Countertransference is based on identification with the patient's id, ego (i.e., concordant identification) and on his internal objects (i.e., complementary identification).
6. The specific contents (feelings and thoughts) and the intensity of the countertransferential reactions may allow us to draw conclusions about the specific character of the patient's psychological experiences, particularly his/her transferential situation.
7. Direct countertransference is experienced when the object is the patient, whereas indirect countertransference is experienced when it depends on an object other than the patient (such as supervisor).
8. Countertransference experiences may be divided into "thoughts" and "positions."
9. The original neurosis, the transference neurosis, and the countertransference neurosis are centred on the unresolved Oedipus complex.
10. A double neurosis arises in the analytic situation: the countertransference neurosis is the analyst's pathological response to the patient's transference neurosis.

PAULA HEIMANN

Paula Heimann, born in Poland (in Gdansk) in 1899, trained as a doctor in Berlin, was analyzed by Theodor Reik and supervised by Karen Horney and Hanns Sachs. She became an Associate Member of the Berlin Psychoanalytical Society in 1932, but moved to London in 1933, because she felt her life was under threat from the Nazi regime. She was accepted as an Associate in the British Psychoanalytic Society in 1933, and met Melanie Klein in 1934, at a time when Klein was distraught after the death of her son in a climbing accident. Heimann helped in a secretarial way with the paper that Klein eventually presented on depression at the 1934 IPA Congress in Lucerne (Klein 1935). Heimann became friends with Melanie Klein; and Klein advised going into analysis again—with Klein herself. The analysis continued intermittently until 1953.

In 1939, Heimann became a full Member of the Society with her paper on sublimation (published 1942), probably in response to Anna Freud's the week before (see Hinshelwood 1997). Heimann remained at that time close to Klein and emerged as a central player in the special Scientific Meetings organised for the Controversial Discussions (1943-1944), giving one paper herself, and a joint paper with Susan Isaacs.

The sole-authored paper (published 1952) was on projection and introjection and is clearly relevant to her thinking about the process of countertransference in the analytic relationship. After the Controversial Discussions, she remained a central member of a much-reduced Klein group and was very involved in training students.

The entangled relationship with Melanie Klein continued into the 1950s (Grosskurth 1986), and eventually involved a difficult process of emerging as a more independent thinker. The first step in that independence was Heimann's paper, "On counter-transference," presented in 1949 to the IPA Congress in Zurich and published 1950. She did not seek advice from Klein, and she received disapproval. Plausibly it was a bid for independence, though her final break did not come until years later, in 1955. Her two significant contributions to the revision in thinking on countertransference—"On counter-transference" and her more cautious review of her own ideas in a paper simply called, "Countertransference" presented in 1959 and published 1960—were in that context.

Though her 1950 paper is often quoted as the seminal statement of the change of direction, in fact many others had offered their own reflections on the analyst's emotional reactions (Balint and Balint 1939; Brierley 1937; Rickman 1937–39), and around the time she wrote her paper (in 1949) there were others who were reconsidering countertransference (she mentions Alice Balint [1936] and Berman [1949]); as she said in a footnote, "The fact that the problem of the counter-transference has been put forward for discussion practically simultaneously by different workers indicates that the time is ripe for a more thorough research into the nature and function of the counter-transference" (Heimann 1960[1959], p. 81n).

In fact, there were a number of others she did not mention (including Gitelson 1952[1949]; Little 1951[1950]; Reich 1951; Racker and Winnicott 1949). Some of them she must have known, such as Winnicott and possibly Little (who gave her paper to the Society in 1950 but did not grasp Heimann's point clearly). We can only guess that Heimann omitted more references out of loyalty to the Klein group. Interestingly, her first analyst, Theodor Reik, published his most well-known work, *Listening with the Third Ear*, in 1948, the year just prior to the Zurich Congress. Reik's book concerns the way in which the analyst

must use his own unconscious to discern the patient's unconscious meanings, and it is hard to think there was not a connection with her work. Heimann's presentation in 1949 was the year after Racker's paper to his Society in Argentina. There is no evidence that Heimann knew Racker or his work then.

Heimann's paper was short and to the point (in fact, only about 2,800 words including a vignette), remarkable for a text that some would say changed psychoanalytic history. The trenchant clarity and incisiveness give the paper a force not equalled by others writing on countertransference at the time. It was, as she implies, the right paper at the right time.

Her key point is emphatic: "My thesis is that the analyst's emotional response to his patient within the analytic situation represents one of the most important tools for his work. The analyst's countertransference is an instrument of research into the patient's unconscious" (Heimann 1950[1949], p. 81). It could not have been a plainer challenge to the forty years of suspicion before that date, originating when Jung, and also Ferenczi, were caught up in struggles with their erotic responses to female patients (Stefana 2015; see Stefana 2017b, for some reflections on erotic transference and countertransference).

Heimann noted how her students told her of the unemotional stance required at that time. Here is one of her students, from the 1940s:

> She [Heimann] was taking a seminar on Freud's papers on technique, and she had asked me to summarize the main points in his paper "Recommendations to physicians practising psychoanalysis" [Freud 1912]. When I came to the recommendation that analysts should take as a model "the surgeon, who puts aside all his own feelings…," Paula Heimann, to my surprise, strongly disagreed with Freud's emphatic recommendation. She formulated her point of view later in her paper entitled "On counter-transference." [King 1989, p. 5]

Heimann tersely stated that "the aim of the analyst's own analysis, from this point of view, is not to turn him into a mechanical brain" (Heimann 1950[1949], p. 82). Rather it is to open him to a free-floating

attention, unaffected by intense feelings which risk impelling him to action.

This conflict, between reflecting on one's feelings or allowing them to become an impulse to action, was a key to the listening activity: "[He should listen to] the manifest and the latent meanings of his patient's words, the allusions and implications, the hints to former sessions, the reference to childhood situations behind the descriptions of current relationships, etc." (Heimann 1950[1949], p. 82). She was moving towards an understanding of the analyst's use of his affective response on one hand, as opposed to being overwhelmed by his feelings which then distort the work.

Remembering that the analyst's feelings are "the patient's creation … can protect him from entering as a co-actor on the scene which the patient re-enacts in the analytic relationship" (Heimann, 1950[1949], p. 83). It is that remembering, which is the trick the analyst has to perform, though that may be difficult given the intensity of feelings, and with the uncertainty in oneself, especially whilst the analyst is still inexperienced. She recognised the work involved. As Rayner (1991) summarised:

> For her the use [of the term "countertransference"] is restricted to incidents where there is a time-lag between the analyst's unconscious and conscious understanding of the patient's communications. Instead of comprehending the patient's projections in good time, on such occasions the analyst unconsciously introjects the patient and experiences a consequent puzzling sense of unease. [p. 215]

This reaction involves a "time-lag," elaborated in detail later on by the Kleinian Money-Kyrle (1956[1955]) when he described "normal countertransference" and "being stuck" in either a projective state or an introjective state.

The point is to take up Freud's injunction to attend to the unconscious communication:

> this rapport on the deeper level comes to the surface [as] the most dynamic way in which his patient's voice reaches him. In the comparison of feelings roused in himself with his patient's associations and behavior, the analyst possesses a most

> valuable means of checking whether he has understood or failed to understand his patient. [Heimann 1950[1949], p. 82]

The emotions of the countertransference arise from a role the analyst is required to play and can be used to check whether he has understood the narrative displayed in the associations (Hinshelwood 2013). That is, he can make a comparison of his feelings with the content of the patient's association.

Finally, she made a brief recommendation to refrain from confiding the countertransference to the patient. They are a tool to understanding the patient and not the other way around; if the analyst confides his feelings, it places, she thought, a burden on the patient. At this point, Heimann returned to a point of disagreement with others who she had mentioned at the outset of her paper, notably Alice Balint (1936) who "suggested that such honesty on the part of the analyst is helpful and in keeping with the respect for the truth inherent in psycho-analysis" (p. 61). Heimann also added a similar note before publication of her paper, referencing Berman (1949).

A vignette in her paper describes a man drawn to and intending to marry a woman who had been traumatized, and this was associated with a transference dream depicting the analyst as a woman from abroad who needed repair. This burdened man she tells the reader came to mind in connection with her argument about the countertransference, implying the burden of feelings a psychoanalyst must bear. However, Heimann also recalled more personal aspects of the kind of burden an analyst bears. Later apparently (King 1989), Heimann recognized that she had been brought up as a replacement child by a mother burdened by the death of the previous older sibling; and Heimann's entangled relationship with Melanie Klein had started at the time when Klein had suffered the burden of the bereavement over her son's death. These associations about the burdened analyst/mother seem to support Heimann's interest in the recommendation against burdening the patient too with one's own countertransference feelings.

Despite Heimann's centrality in this topic of countertransference, she wrote only one other significant paper about it. Ten years later, she contributed to a symposium on countertransference held by the Medical

Section of the British Psychological Society in 1959. Heimann did three main things: she gave an outline of her main argument in the earlier paper, she attempted to disentangle what seemed like a more ordinary form of countertransference (others, like Money-Kyrle 1956, had called it "normal countertransference" but Heimann did not use that term), and thirdly she gave an account she had failed to give in full in the earlier paper regarding the reasons for not confiding one's feelings to the patient.

She started by reconsidering Freud's (1912) steely surgeon analogy, suggesting that detachment is a defence against the analyst's threatening feelings of uncertainty or of sexual feelings. She repeated the claim that analysis is a relationship between two persons: "[It] is not the presence of feelings in one partner, the patient, and their absence in the other, the analyst, but the *degree* of feeling the analyst experiences and the *use* he makes of his feelings, these factors being interdependent" (Heimann 1989[1960], p. 152).

Heimann also repeated crisply that the analyst's own analysis is not to turn him into "a mechanical brain which can produce interpretations on the basis of a purely intellectual procedure, but to enable him to sustain his feelings" (p. 162). Sustaining feelings is not easy if they are intense, and there is a time lag between the unconscious disturbance, and the conscious awareness of what is disturbing:

> As he waits—which he must do in order not to interfere with an ongoing process in the patient and in order not to obscure the already puzzling situation still more by irrelevant and distracting interpretations—the moment occurs when he understands what has been happening. The moment he understands his patient, he can understand his own feelings. [p. 153]

She is clearly following a different recommendation that Freud had given: "he must turn his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient. He must adjust himself to the patient as a telephone receiver is adjusted to the transmitting microphone" (Freud 1912, p. 115).

Heimann noted the paper by Gitelson that contrasted the obstructive and unanalysed neurotic aspects of the analyst's reaction, with the

tool-like useful countertransference, the first: "emanating from a surviving neurotic 'transference potential (in the analyst)" (p. 155). The other type of countertransference, Gitelson described, Heimann called "actual countertransference" (p. 155); it is that created by the patient via the role that the transference demands of the analyst. In these instances, the analyst will be more willing to employ a self-analytic inquiry and can therefore preserve his receptiveness.

Finally, Heimann gave a detailed account about speaking one's own countertransference feelings. She says that in practice, she would go so far as to indicate when she thought she had made a mistake and would make a correction, without going into why it had occurred. Like all sorts of things in the analyst's personality, and indeed in his room, the patient has the opportunity to know the "real" analyst. In turn, his mistakes are a further opportunity for the patient to know him. However, the analyst does not explain why he has a certain piece of furniture in his room; and she says, "The patient has many opportunities in life where a person apologizing for a mistake will give reasons for it. He has only the analytic situation in which it is *exclusively and consistently his prerogative* to be the object of research into reasons and meanings" (p. 157, italics in the original). The analyst is not a "real" person in that sense, since in that "real role": "[An analyst] is as useful to the patient as any Tom, Dick, or Harry" (p. 157).

One of the analyst's main resistances is the wish to retreat into an "ordinary" relationship, confiding mistakes, or a personal state of mind. And this corresponds to the resistance expressed in preserving a deadening detachment of neutrality. On the other hand, a more receptive countertransference response to the patient's transference will be when the analyst employs a *self*-analytic enquiry and can therefore preserve his receptiveness.

Overall this later paper is not so clearly written and is rather obscure in parts. Indeed, Heimann was rather unsure about including this paper in the edited collection (see Heimann 1989, p. 160n). However, it does amplify in various ways the brief first paper in 1950. One of the least clear passages is Heimann's attempt to use Gitelson's paper to distinguish normal countertransference from the analyst's transference to the patient. Heimann's ability to find a beautifully clear form of expression for an idea is not evident with this issue. It is only some time later, in

1975, when she was dealing with a more general description of the mental work of the analyst, that she managed to make this crystal clear.

These comments, in 1975, are therefore worth adding to the two papers dedicated to countertransference. The paper on "Observations on the analyst's cognitive processes," was presented to the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society, and published 1977. Those few comments differentiated the normal use of countertransference from the "neurotic" reaction to the patient. She clarified the difference. Transference is the psychoanalyst's problem. Countertransference "is not a preformed attitude applied … [to the patient, but] a *specific response* to the patient" (Heimann 1975, p. 299), and thus created by the patient, not the analyst. Most of the time the functioning of the countertransference demands "our attention only when something has gone wrong" (p. 299); when it goes well, it is like walking which one does not have to think about once the method has been learned. But the countertransference can go wrong, and when it does so the patient's created countertransference has touched a neurotic transference in the analyst. At that point the analyst has to engage in a piece of self-analysis for the neurotic problem *he* (the analyst) has created.

This addendum in 1975, was written after Kleinian authors had also made contributions to "normal" countertransference and to a pathological form (for example, Bion 1959; Money-Kyrle 1956). Klein feared countertransference always indicated a disturbance in the analyst. She thought that the new conceptualisation of countertransference allowed the analyst to attribute everything to the patient, so that she commented that she learned more about *herself* from the countertransference than about her patient (quoted in Spillius 2008). Klein never published her views, perhaps out of respect to Heimann, although in her notes she did attribute some diagnostic value to countertransference (see Hinshelwood 2008, 2016).

Heimann wrote much less than Racker about countertransference because she was interested in other topics; first, she was occupied with defending Melanie Klein's discoveries up until about 1955 and then subsequently, she sought to establish her own somewhat divergent position. She never fully moved to the position of the Independents as she retained her commitment to the importance of destructiveness, which increasingly took on the nature, for Heimann, of a reservoir of

instinctual aggression located in the id, and she tried to embody it within Freud's classical structural model, rather in the manner of classical ego-psychology.

However, there remains no evidence that Heimann was influenced by Racker. Racker on the other hand noted Heimann's first paper in one of his own in 1952 (see above). Margaret Little (1951), almost contemporary with Heimann's first paper, acknowledged Heimann's use of countertransference as a kind of signal anxiety promoting a heightened awareness of the emotional events occurring. Rosenfeld (1952) endorsed Heimann's views, especially with schizophrenic patients where the analyst's intuitive unconscious understanding has to stand in for verbal communication. Marion Milner (1952; Stefana 2011, 2019), at that time close to Klein and Winnicott, also endorsed the countertransference "as part of the analytic data" (p. 188). There were in all some 17 authors (including Racker) who endorsed Heimann after her original postulate in 1950, and with little real dispute.

Summary of the points of Heimann's argument:

1. Listening according to Reik.
2. Projection and introjection in the Klein/Abraham paradigm.
3. The analyst's feelings are a vital tool for investigating the patient's subjective state.
4. The unswerving opposition to the analyst as a mechanical brain observing a surgeon's neutrality.
5. Sustain one's feelings as opposed to discharging them.
6. Using feelings as the key to the unconscious.
7. The "actual" countertransference is a normal (non-neurotic) reaction.
8. Analysis is the space for the patient's feelings only, not the analyst's.

DISCUSSION

Racker and Heimann share responsibility for the revolution in the value of countertransference. It is remarkable how they came to their conclusions at much the same time without apparently any real communication between them, and from rather different conceptual backgrounds and geographical locations. It seems that the evolution of psychoanalysis itself was ready for this step, a genuine Kuhnian paradigm shift in the culture. Why psychoanalysts took this step forward at this moment is a matter of cultural history.

Both Heimann and Racker developed their ideas from a deeply clinical point of view. But their forms of practice had come from different traditions and so shades of difference occur in the formulations they eventually evolved. Here we will review briefly the similarities (major) and the differences (relatively minor).

Similarities

Both Racker and Heimann acould look back on Freud's (1910) assertion of an *unconscious to unconscious communication* between analysand and analyst. Freud had been perplexed by how such communication could happen. And until the rule that all psychoanalysts should have their own analysis (instituted in the 1920s, as a "control analysis") there was suspicion an unprofessional influence by these unconscious communications to act out. However, after a few generations passed since the 1920s rule providing for psychoanalysts being analysed, it became obvious they were still not immune from unconscious influences when with their patients. Transference had become much more familiar over this period and the kind of *jigsaw fit between transference and countertransference* was waiting to be noticed and exploited.

Heimann and Racker also shared similar attitudes toward the directness of the transmission of unconscious material. On one hand, Heimann followed the enthusiasm of the Klein group in general for the schizoid mechanisms (Klein 1946), and saw projective identification (which can be see as a model in detail of Freud's unconscious-to-unconscious communication) as a powerful explanatory idea. According to her, the experiences, especially emotional experiences, can be transmitted directly—without symbolisation—from the patient's mind unconsciously into the analyst's mind that is prompted to experience similar or complementary emotional states. The analyst has the work of sorting out their own feelings from the patient's which are projected, and felt in an empathic way. On the other hand, Racker asserted that the main way towards understanding the analysand's mental processes continues to be direct reception from unconscious to unconscious. In his view, the patient's unconscious phenomena are grasped by the analyst's own unconscious by way of emotional identification with the object with which the analysand identifies the analyst. The dynamic of this

identification will be referred back to projective identification by Racker himself in 1958.

The importance of *professional boundaries* became important, but perhaps in the 50 years since Freud (1906) had trouble with Dora's transference, Europe had become a more democratic culture. That both analyst as well as patient could have *human attributes* and could be constantly moved by their feelings (as well as by rational reflection) was more acceptable. And so, it became necessary to take a rational point of view about the emotional states of *both* partners.

For both Racker and Heimann, the transference and countertransference were two sides of an *interactive*, even interpersonal encounter. However, both grounded their understanding of the interpersonal relations in the combined intra-psychic dynamics of each partner. The recognition of the human aspects of the analyst, pointed to the need to admit and to take account of any potential for *neurotic manifestations* that remained in the analyst. So, the enduring suspicion during the first half of the 20th Century had to remain, but as a feature, and a risk, to take account of rationally as far as possible. Both Heimann and Racker were insistent on the importance of the *personal analysis* including a persisting self-analysis after termination. Part of the work they were doing was to sustain and enhance the view that an analyst has to keep his own possible neurosis in mind. If the risks could be kept in mind then the *mutuality between countertransference and transference* was regarded as one worth running, as the analyst's feelings could offer vital clues about the patient's transference feelings.

Differences

As far as their *backgrounds* were concerned, Racker started his career as a psychoanalyst in Vienna though did not qualify until he was a refugee in Argentina. His background was in the classical psychoanalysis of Freud, Anna Freud, Hartman, and the developing ego psychology of the mid-1930s. Then he resumed his training in the very different context of psychoanalysis in South America where he was a part of the birth of psychoanalysis there, and its particular interest in British psychoanalysis. As British psychoanalysis had been on a divergent path from Vienna during the 1930s, the emergent framework of ideas in Argentina was a pluralist one. The structural model, with emphasis on the ego and its function

with strength (or not) in relation to the instincts, was combined with the intense object-relations interest in internal objects as the playthings of the mind. Racker could be said to be a *pluralist* with respect to these two divergent traditions in psychoanalysis.

In contrast, Heimann had her initial training in Europe, specifically in Berlin, but after Abraham had died. Exiled in 1933, she became a close personal assistant and friend to Melanie Klein, partly in response to Klein's tragic bereavement in 1934, and then subsequently an analysand of Klein until 1953. She was, with Susan Isaacs, Klein's loyal supporter during the Controversial Discussions, giving two of the scientific papers. Her conceptual framework was therefore wholly *Kleinian*, although she did later move away from Klein finding her independent point of view in 1955. These later disagreements may have been partly Heimann's personal need for independence, but in part they concerned the new ideas on countertransference which Klein hesitated to accept.

For Racker, the *Oedipus complex* remained the core of psychoanalytic work. And so, countertransference was seen in two forms, according to Freud's structural model. Either the analyst is a response and empathic ego, or their relation is that between ego and super-ego. The roles of ego and super-ego could be assigned either way—the analyst being at times the super-ego to the patient and at times the patient being super-ego to the analyst. This contrasts strikingly with Heimann's analysis of the countertransference, which is much more to do with the structure of *the ego and its coherence*. During the time that Heimann was working closely with Klein, Klein was developing her views on splitting of the ego and the schizoid mechanisms, notably projective identification. In Klein's terms the ego, or parts of it, are annihilated.

There is a complex set of contrasts here, as Racker employs the Kleinian understanding of internal objects in a sophisticated and relevant way, and he recognizes the free interplay of introjection and projection of such objects. However, Racker does not pay the kind of attention to splitting and projective identification that was central for Klein and Heimann. Countertransference for Heimann is important insofar as the analyst's experience is composed in significant part as the evacuation and communication of the patient's experience, split off from the patient's ego. It is the expression, in part of a destructive or self-destructive impulse on the part of the ego provoked by certain intolerable

anxieties of persecution and guilt. For Racker, the enactment of ego and super-ego together is a re-enactment of unresolved Oedipal issues and traumas from the past.

This is perhaps the most fundamental distinction between Racker and Heimann. For Racker, the transference-countertransference relation is a replay of the past, a regression to Oedipal issues not resolved in the early genital phase of the libido; but for Heimann it is radically different. The replay of the transference-countertransference is from the presently active dynamics of the unconscious that are alive now. She followed Klein's focus on the "deeper levels" of the unconscious active in the present which underlie the neurotic Oedipal level.

Racker wrote a great deal more about countertransference than Heimann did, and he was intent on developing a *systematic account*. There are a number of defining features and variants in the phenomenon of countertransference which he described. It is well-known that he divided countertransference into the useful distinction between concordant and complimentary types. However, there he explored other distinctions he made as well; in all:

- Direct and indirect
- Concordant and complementary
- Thoughts and positions

These are dealt with earlier in this paper. Heimann had no intention of developing a systematic classification of characteristics of this kind.

Finally, they differed over whether it is advisable for the analyst to confide his feelings to the patient. Heimann is adamant that the analytic space is for the patient's feelings and experiences uninterrupted by anyone else. Racker on the other hand argued that in some instance it enhances trust if the analyst exposes his emotional side as well as his reasoning.

CONCLUSIONS

We have tried to explore various aspects of the work of Heinrich Racker and Paula Heimann on countertransference from the late 1940s onwards. They have somewhat different conceptual backgrounds, though Racker did absorb Heimann's work, and with colleagues in

Argentina developed his ideas in an integrative pluralist form. His aim in the long run was to develop a comprehensive phenomenology of countertransference. Both however were initiating a fairly widespread interest and change in practice. Whilst both were innovative, and remarkably parallel in their innovations, they were surely only people of their time who represented an inevitable sea-change in the practice of psychoanalysis and the role of the analyst's thinking.

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CHEKHOV'S OEDIPAL JOURNEY

BY GEORGE MANDELBAUM

In this paper, I posit that Chekhov, in composing his plays, came to master the oedipal tensions and conflicts embodied by his psychic image of his mother and biological father as well as of his artistic father, Shakespeare. Chekhov framed his feelings about his parents through his many versions of the Hamlet *closet scene, in which Hamlet kills Polonius and upbraids his mother for having married Claudius. Chekhov eventually transformed that scene to embody his new post-oedipal vision of his parents and of himself. In the process, he created a new scenic structure for dramatizing oedipal strivings.*

Keywords: Chekhov, Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Oedipus Complex, waning of the Oedipus Complex, post-oedipal, incest/parricide, literary influence.

INTRODUCTION

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904), generally considered the greatest playwright since Shakespeare (1564-1616) and second only to him, developed his distinctive dramaturgy over time. He abandoned the recurrent melodramatic elements of his early plays for the more mundane, seemingly aimless action of his late ones. He also abandoned the sharp, direct conflicts between characters that are at the heart of his early plays for the more natural, oblique, seemingly disconnected

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conversations and interactions that are one of the hallmarks of his late dramatic style.

I propose that Chekhov also, over time, mastered a large part of his internal world, specifically the areas revolving around his psychic image of his mother Evgenia and his biological father Pavel. The plays further suggest that during this process Chekhov simultaneously mastered his image of his artistic father, Shakespeare, one of whose central scenes in *Hamlet* (1599/1601?) he repeatedly appropriated to frame his feelings about his parents and which in his late plays he transformed and transcended to create something new and significant in Western drama. Before discussing Chekhov's plays individually, I need briefly to present an overview of the oedipal journey he undertook and then an overview of the journey's connection to *Hamlet*. Next, I need to provide a brief biographical sketch of a period in Chekhov's early life that reveals much about his parents as well as his relationship to them.

Chekhov's Plays… and Hamlet

Chekhov's seven full-length plays suggest that his mastery of his internal world took place in three phases, similar in some ways to the process of psychoanalysis. In the initial phase, defined by *Platonov* (c. 1880),[1] *Ivanov* (1888), and *The Wood Demon* (1889), Chekhov dramatized the derivatives of the psychic images of himself and of his parents as well as of his feelings towards them. The derivatives crystalized around oedipal strivings and were symbolized in the plays through triangular, oedipal relationships.[2] Chekhov, however, buried these derivatives in a welter of characters and actions through which they are defensively obscured. Ronald Hingley's (1989) observation on *Platonov* can be applied to each of these three plays: "Notoriously the writer in whose later works 'nothing happens' the Chekhov of *Platonov* makes far too many things

[1] Except for *Platonov*, which was not performed in Chekhov's lifetime, all the dates of his plays refer to the year in which they premiered. All quotations from *Platonov* are from Magershack's translation (1964a); all quotations from *Ivanov* and *The Wood Demon* are from Rocamora's translation (1999); all quotations from Chekhov's other plays are from Garnett's translation (1963).

[2] I wish to note that this paper focuses on the positive Oedipus Complex. A discussion of the negative one in Chekhov and his plays lies outside the scope of this paper.

happen" (p. 38). So many things, in fact, happen in the plays that it is difficult for us, and presumably also for Chekhov, to focus on any one thing.

In his journey's second phase, defined by *The Sea Gull* (1896) and *Uncle Vanya* (1899), Chekhov brought the derivatives of his oedipal strivings into direct and sharp focus. He appears to have penetrated the defensive distractions evident in the first phase and directly accessed his incestuous and parricidal wishes, which now took center stage and around which he organized much of the action and interactions of the plays. Through this entire process, I suggest, Chekhov appropriated these strivings in ways described by Loewald (1979) in his classic paper on the waning of the Oedipus Complex. In Loewald's terms, as Chekhov moved from the first to the second phase, he faced, accepted, internalized, and dramatically symbolized various elements of the Complex.

In the third phase, consisting of *Three Sisters* (1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), the loves and hates of the Complex were no longer a driving force, and Chekhov was now free in his plays to create in a post-oedipal world. Characters now appeared within triangles, but the characters were no longer bonded through oedipal wishes as they previously had been. In *Three Sisters,* the central triangle is a neutralized version of his hitherto highly charged oedipal ones. The neutralization is, however, only partial and incomplete, and the original, oedipal triangle, though distant, still shadows the play. Only in *The Cherry Orchard,* Chekhov's last play, are the characters within his triangle not bonded by the instinctualized elements of the Oedipus Complex and exist outside of it. Chekhov's extraordinary artistic achievement in these last two plays—generally considered among the greatest in the Western canon—rests then to a large extent, I propose, on his great psychological achievement as he penetrated his defenses, then faced and accepted his highly charged inner, infantile world, and then neutralized and transcended it.

Chekhov's achievements become evident through his repeated use of *Hamlet* in his plays, specifically his use of its closet scene, which I have discussed at length elsewhere (Mandelbaum 2018). In that formidable scene, Hamlet kills Polonius and upbraids his mother for having married Claudius. Shakespeare here, for the first time, dramatically shaped the infantile emotions and wishes of the Oedipus Complex. Hamlet's raw parricidal wishes are evident in his killing of Polonius, who he

initially thinks is Claudius. Hamlet's raw incestuous wishes are evident in his enraged, highly sexualized diatribe against his mother. His wrathful effort to denigrate and diminish Claudius in Gertrude's eyes simultaneously embodies both wishes, namely, to destroy Claudius and to become the center of his mother's love life.

From his first play, *Platonov*, to his last, *The Cherry Orchard*, Chekhov's plays are filled with quotations from and references to *Hamlet;* the play with its obvious oedipal underpinnings was continually on his mind. Magershak (1964) declared that, "All through his life, Chekhov was obsessed with *Hamlet*" (p. 12). Rowe (1976) observed that, "One cannot help but be struck by the frequency of [Chekhov's] use of *Hamlet*" (p. 111). Four of Chekhov's plays—*Platonov*, *Ivanov*, *The Sea Gull,* and *The Cherry Orchard*—contain Chekhov's direct variations of the *Hamlet* closet scene. Three—*The Wood Demon*, *Uncle Vanya,* and *Three Sisters*—do not, but they disperse the elements of the scene throughout each play. As Valency (1966) observed without elaborating, "All of Chekhov's plays in some way make use of *Hamlet*" (p. 26). Rayfield (1994), author of the standard biography, similarly observed without elaborating that *Hamlet* "underlies most of Chekhov's work" (1994, p. 122). Rayfield subsequently asserted that: "Most of Chekhov's prose up to 1895 quotes and ponders *Hamlet*" (2000, p. 208). I have elsewhere discussed Chekhov's use of the *Hamlet* closet scene in creating his women characters (Mandelbaum 2011). I would now suggest that his repeated use of that scene to frame his own feelings towards his parents as well as his ultimate, radical reworking of the scene embody an important path for following Chekhov's journey from an oedipal to a post-oedipal view of his parents and of himself.

Examination of that journey helps shed light, not only on Chekhov and other creative artists, but on aspects of the internal world of someone who has undergone a successful analytical process, either on his own, as Chekhov seems to have done, or with someone else. His last two plays are continually compelling because we apprehend that we are in the presence of a playwright who not only created worlds inhabited by highly individualized, emotionally rich and psychologically complex characters but who also created at an advanced level of psychic development. I suggest that we repeatedly turn to his late plays because they embody psychic states we strive to achieve.

Taganrog and Moscow

The place to begin to begin any examination of Chekhov as a playwright is with his first extant, full-length play known as *Platonov,* the name of its central character. The play manuscript was found without a title page among Chekhov's papers in 1923, long after his death. Its actual title is uncertain and its date of composition controversial, with some arguing that Chekhov wrote it when he was around seventeen and others when he was in his early twenties. The precise date of composition is for our purpose immaterial, for the monumental events in Chekhov's life continued throughout this entire period, and their traumatic impact on him would most likely have remained the same as well. The events serve to illuminate, not only *Platonov,* but all of Chekhov's subsequent plays, up to and perhaps especially *The Cherry Orchard.* I can only outline these events; it would take a Dickens to make them fully come alive or perhaps a Dostoevsky.[3]

In 1876, Chekhov's father Pavel secretly fled the family home in the provincial town of Taganrog for Moscow to escape his creditors. He left behind Chekhov's mother Evgenia and four of their six children, including the sixteen-year-old Chekhov, who as the oldest of the four was tasked with fending off the creditors, with disposing of the family's possessions, and with caring for his mother and younger siblings. Pavel, repeatedly and brutally beaten by his own father to the point where he sustained lifelong injuries that eventually contributed to his death, seems to have been dissociated much of the time. He sadistically beat his own children, including Chekhov, and abused his wife: "Remember the horror and revulsion we felt," Chekhov wrote his brother Aleksander, "…when father would flare up because the soup was over salted or would curse mother for a fool" (Chekhov as quoted in Rayfield 1997, p. 17). Little is known about Evgenia; she surrendered herself completely to Pavel, carried out the duties expected at that time of a wife and mother and liked to tell her children stories. Pavel fled because he could not repay the debt he had accumulated to fund a store which was initially successful but eventually failed, in large part because he did not recognize and respond to changed business conditions and deeply

[3] The biographical sketch that follows is largely based on Hingley (1989) and Rayfield (1997).

offended many of his clients. He had additionally accumulated large debt on a house he owned and eventually lost it.

In Moscow, Pavel joined Chekhov's two older brothers who had moved there earlier and were living in abject poverty; at times all they could afford to eat in a day was a shared breakfast roll. The father's arrival only made matters worse: "[Pavel] did not hurry to find work" and spent much of his time "idly pontificating" (Rayfield 1997, p. 44 and p. 53). He did not, in fact, work for seventeen months after his arrival. Some three months after that arrival, Evgenia and Chekhov's two younger siblings joined the unemployed Pavel in Moscow. Chekhov and a younger brother were again left behind in Taganrog. In Moscow the family supported itself through occasional odd jobs by the older brothers, through handouts from family and friends and through money sent by Chekhov. The family, constantly hungry, moved twelve times in three years and ended up living on the edge of a red-light district in a "dank basement: all that the inmates could see from the window were the ankles of passers-by" (Rayfield 1997, p. 66-67). Evgenia imploringly wrote the teenaged Chekhov:

> We've had two letters from you full of jokes while we had only 4 kopeck for bread and dripping and waited for you to send money … obviously you don't believe in us … . I have no warm shoes, we stay at home … . For God's sake send money quickly … please don't let me die in misery, you have plenty to eat and the sated can't understand the hungry … . E. Chekhova. We sleep on the floor in a cold room … and tomorrow … we have to find 13 roubles for the flat. [E. Chekhov as quoted in Rayfield 1997, p. 54]

In Taganrog, Chekhov supported himself and his younger brother by tutoring other students and by catching and selling goldfinches as pets. Whatever extra money he earned or received from the sale of the family's possessions or from the sale of the bankrupt store's inventory, part of which Pavel hid before his escape, Chekhov sent to Moscow. He had twice been held back in school after failing several subjects, including Classical Greek, but his grades in the subjects and his grades overall improved. He graduated with a scholarship and a stipend provided by the city of Taganrog to promising students for university studies. At

nineteen, he rejoined his family and started attending Moscow University's prestigious medical school. Pavel had by this time found a menial job that paid thirty rubles a month, still not enough to support the family. Chekhov arrived to undertake a five-year long course of study with a monthly stipend of twenty-five rubles. He brought with him two Taganrog students who were also to attend medical school and who, in exchange for room, board, and tutoring from Chekhov, each paid him twenty rubles a month. The family's income more than tripled; "Evgenia fed her household to satiety" (Rayfield 1997, p. 73).

To supplement the family's income, Chekhov, who had published a few short items in Taganrog, began in this period much more assiduously to write and publish, primarily satirical sketches, for money. The family soon moved into much better quarters. Chekhov continued to support his parents and various siblings though his writing and through his work as a doctor. Eventually he provided endless, morning to night, medical care and medicine at no cost to the peasants where he lived.

If one of the central roles of a father in Chekhov's time was financially to support his family, then Chekhov assumed the father's role beginning from the time he was left behind in Tagonrag with his mother and siblings. Hingley (1989) observed that starting from this time Chekhov was "the most adult member of his family" (p. 22). Rayfield (1997) went even further and declared that: "At sixteen Chekhov became the head of the family" (p. 42). At that age, I suggest, he also found himself in the very position Hamlet found himself after his father's murder. Each case would have actualized an oedipal fantasy: the father abruptly disappears and leaves the son with his mother. It is perhaps not overly fanciful to suggest that if Hamlet had been a playwright, then he might have written his own version of *Platonov,* Chekhov's response, I propose, to suddenly wearing his father's highly charged shoes.

Platonov *(Hamlet/Gertrude/Claudius and Platonov/Sophia/Voynitsev)*

Platonov (c. 1880) is a sprawling work with a dizzying number of plots, subplots, and random incidents. The play is almost as long as Chekhov's last three plays—*Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters,* and *The Cherry Orchard*—combined. The play's primary, though not exclusive, focus is on Platonov, a ne'er do well schoolteacher loved and desired by its four main female

characters but unable to love any of them. In the midst of the play's plethora of action, Chekhov, however, in its exact middle creates a scene that appears to be its psychic center. Within the scene Chekhov dramatizes the loves and hates of an oedipal triangle, based, I propose, on the Chekhov/Evgenia/Pavel one and dramatically bound as well as structured by his own version of the *Hamlet* closet scene.

Chekhov's scene takes place between Platonov and Sophia, recently married to Platonov's friend Voynitsev. Also now married, Platonov had known and loved Sophia five years earlier in their student days and still desires her. He begins the scene with a question about her husband: "My dear," Platonov asks Sophia, "tell me frankly, in the name of our common past, what made you marry that man? How could such a marriage have appealed to you?" As the scene proceeds, Platonov further asks:

> Why didn't you choose for your husband a man who works hard, a man who has suffered for his beliefs? Why didn't you take *anyone* for your husband, and not this pigmy who's up to his neck in debt and hasn't done a stroke of work all his life. [2.1. p. 98, italics in the original]

The Hamlet-Gertrude and the Platonov-Sophia closet scenes are clearly similar in that both take place in private, out of everyone's earshot, and as a result may be said to dramatize private, secret thoughts. In both triangular scenes, moreover, a man interposes himself between a woman he desires and her husband, whom he aggressively belittles. When Hamlet is not venting, he denigrates Claudius in order to establish an intense emotional bond with Gertrude much as Platonov here denigrates Voynitsev to establish a sexual bond with Sophia. Eventually Platonov and the married Sophia have an affair.

Lest we miss the covert reference to the *Hamlet* closet scene in the Platonov-Sophia scene, Chekhov repeats the reference overtly later in the play. Apropos of absolutely nothing and leading absolutely nowhere, Voynitsev and Platonov suddenly have the following exchange:

> VOYNITSEV: We're thinking of putting on *Hamlet*. Word of honor! We'll show them such acting that even the devil will go free with envy! (*He laughs loudly.*) How pale you are! Are you drunk too?

PLATONOV: Let me go … I'm drunk.

….

VOYNITSEV: I am Hamlet.
[Declaims] And to this villain, forgetting shame as woman, wife, and mother. How could you yield yourself?[4]
(*He laughs loudly.*) Not such a bad Hamlet, am I? [2.2. pp.131-132]

Like Hamlet in his reference here to Claudius, Platonov in his closet scene with Sophia implies that she could not possibly have attached herself out of love to her husband, a lazy man up to his eyebrows in debt—a man who is a pigmy, who cannot take care of her and who thus in Platonov's eyes is utterly unlovable. During the course of the play, Sophia's husband Voynitsev, who has encumbered his estate with debt, in fact loses it and, like Pavel, Chekhov, goes bankrupt. And although Voynitsev wants to play Hamlet, it is Platonov, called "the second Hamlet" (2.1. p. 82) during the course of the play, who enacts the Hamlet role in his closet scene with Sophia.

Platonov is similar to Hamlet not only in that both represent the son figure in the oedipal triangle; they are similar in at least one other, noteworthy way. Throughout much of the play, Platonov is repeatedly reproached, upbraided, berated, vilified, and shamed. And when others do not belabor him, he belabors himself. In sum, like Hamlet, he suffers from severe guilt, in his case primarily guilt evoked by his seduction of Sophia, a married woman. "With someone else's wife?" Platonov's wife exclaims when she discovers he has strayed with Sophia, "I didn't expect such a mean, such a sinful action from you. God will punish you for it,

[4] The three lines Voynitsev quotes from *Hamlet* (1599/1601?): "And to this villain … /How could you yield yourself" do not actually appear in Shakespeare's play, but in a Russian translation, as Chekhov did not read English. Magershack's translation of these three lines into English is not based on Chekhov's text and creates confusion. I therefore insert here L. Selenick's (c.1880b, p. 128) accurate translation of the lines instead. As Selenick suggests (p. 128), the three lines are probably a translation of either of the following actual lines from *Hamlet*: "Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed/ And batten on this Moor? Ha! have your eyes/ You cannot call it love" (3.4. 66-70) or: "Oh shame! where is thy blush!/ Rebellious hell/ If thou canst mutiny in a matron's bones,/ To flaming youth let virtue be as wax/ And melt in her own fire" (3.4. 79-83).

you shameless man" (3.1. pp. 158-159). Platonov is, in fact, punished. The play ends when Sophia shoots and kills him. Very shortly before she does so, young Chekhov, having brought Shakespeare into dramatic focus, turns like Freud some twenty years later towards Sophocles. "Now I understand why Oedipus tore out his eyes! How base I am, and how deeply conscious I am of my own baseness (4.2. p. 192), Platonov declares in the play's anagnorisis, the moment a tragic character discovers his true nature and identity, shortly before his death.

It seems safe to say that Chekhov symbolized much of his inner life within the Platonov/Sophia/Voynitsev triangle, in many ways a symbolized version, it would appear, of the Chekhov/Evgenia/Pavel one. Within Chekhov's scene are his anger at his father for being a poor provider, his wish to replace him in his mother's eyes, his sexual desire for that mother, and his need to atone and be punished for such guilt-ridden parricidal and incestuous thoughts. None of this is surprising given what we know about sons' real and mentalized relationships with their fathers and mothers. Several aspects of *Platonov* do not, however, point towards such ubiquitous mental states and are worth reviewing.

It is noteworthy that Chekhov did not act out his guilty need to atone. He did not engage in action that provoked punishment; instead, he bound his guilt and need to be punished artistically within the play. Even at a young age, moreover, Chekhov reveals a remarkable artistic assurance and boldness. As Olga Tabachnikova (2012) observed, Chekhov was "fearless, or better to say courageous" (p. xv). His first play is thus not an empty academic exercise; rather, it embodies Chekhov's efforts to address and master his highly charged feelings about his parents and himself. He overlays and obscures these feelings with an overabundance of distracting dramatic action, but the underlying psychic sources of the feelings in the Oedipus Complex seem evident.

Chekhov's boldness—his audacity—is evident not only in this turn to his inner world in the play but also in his outward turn to Shakespeare, through whose closet scene he gave voice and dramatic life to the oedipal wishes he found in himself. Shakespeare's scene is then a framework within which Chekhov symbolizes those wishes to himself and others. And it is worth noting that even as a very young man Chekhov did not turn to just anyone for his dramatic frame. He

recognized greatness and did not shrink from hanging his first dramatic hat on the best of the best.

Chekhov's turn to Shakespeare, I suggest, was at least in part a turn to an older, powerful father figure whom he admired and complicates our understanding of his feelings towards his father. Chekhov's hatred of his father finds discharge in Platonov's harsh criticism of Voynitsev. His love for his father is evident in his turn to Shakespeare, a father figure to whom Chekhov looks as a guide and whom he imitates and artistically tries to become. Shakespeare, in fact, appears to have been the gold standard against which Chekhov measured other artists and presumably himself. When he was nineteen, he avuncularly told a younger brother to read *Don Quixote*. "It's by Cervantes, who rates pretty well on Shakespeare's level," (Chekhov as quoted by Hingley 1989, p. 26) he told the brother.

Ivanov *(Lvov/Petrovna/Ivanov) and* The Wood Demon *(George/Helena/Serebryakov)*

In his next two plays, Chekhov continued to dramatize the triangle he initially depicted in *Platonov*. He recreated the basic elements of the *Hamlet* closet scene in both plays—*Ivanov* and *The Wood Demon*—and appears to have continued to frame his love and hate for his parents within that re-creation.

In *Ivanov*, Lvov, a doctor attending the sick wife of its eponymous hero is puzzled by her squalid surroundings and asks:

> You astonish me … […] No really … you absolutely astonish me, you do. Explain it to me, would you, help me to understand, how you, an intelligent, pure, almost saint-like creature, could delude yourself, could let yourself be dragged into this den. Why on earth are you here? What do you have in common with that cold, callous … but let's leave your husband out of it!—how could you possibly exist in this vulgar, uninhabited environment? Oh merciful God? … .Why are you here? How on earth did you ever come to this place? [1. p.111]

Lvov's questions are part of the play's closet scene and are part of his denigration of Ivanov. They do not, however, arise from Lvov's desire

for Petrovna, and the denigration is not part of an effort to seduce her. Unlike the enraged Hamlet, who in the closet scene vents what we might term "the flash and outbreak" of Shakespeare's "fiery mind," (*Hamlet* 2.1.982), Lvov's questions arise out of his effort medically, scientifically to understand Petrovna, much as Chekhov, a doctor well known for his diagnostic skills, attempted to understand the relation between presenting symptoms and their underlying causes. The scene then has little emotional content and does not become the focal point of the play. Instead, the play veers into repeated, clinical descriptions, dramatizations, and discussions of Ivanov's depression, into extensive interactions between subsidiary characters, and into melodrama.

Like *Platonov* and *Ivanov*, *The Wood Demon* contains multiple plots and multiple foci of interest. It ends with the reunion of an estranged married couple and with the union of two other couples, who, after a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing, realize they are in love and decide to marry. A fourth couple fails to participate in this happy ending. In one of the play's subsidiary plots Chekhov presents Helena, young, beautiful, and married to the much older Serebryakov, crotchety, hypochondriacal and demanding. George (Yegor Petrovich Voynitsky) desires Helena and attempts to interpose himself between her and her husband, much as Hamlet, who was clearly on Chekhov's mind, attempts to interpose himself between Gertrude and Claudius: "There are more things on heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (4. p. 282) a character declaims in the play. Like Hamlet, George thus does not unite with his Gertrude. Serebryakov suddenly announces that he intends to sell the estate on which George lives and works, and for reasons not entirely made clear George as a result shoots and kills himself. The suicide has some—though not great—effect on others. The play continues on its path to its happy ending as if George's desire for another man's wife and his ensuing suicidal guilt at such thoughts had little, if any significance in the welter of the play's actions.

In sum, in each of his first three plays Chekhov dramatizes a triangle framed by the *Hamlet* closet scene or else derived from that scene. He transforms the Hamlet/Gertrude/Claudius triangle into Platonov/Sophia/Voynitsev, Lvov/Petrovna/Ivanov, and George/Helena/Serebryakov. Yet Chekhov's triangles, while psychologically central, are dramatically peripheral. The triangles do not have the dramatic

significance of the Hamlet/Gertrude/Claudius one in *Hamlet* and are defensively overwhelmed and obscured by the other events in the plays.

The Sea Gull *(Treplev/Arkadina/Trigorin) and* Uncle Vanya *(Vanya/Helena/Serebryakov)*

Moving from Chekhov's first phase of his dramaturgy to the second is to move from the shadows into the light. Oedipal wishes that seemed tangential and were buried in surrounding action now become Chekhov's central focus. The intense feelings of love and hate of the wishes he now intensifies, expands, and integrates into his characters.

The most transparent sign of this change is evident in *Uncle Vanya*, which Chekhov created out of *The Wood Demon*. As I have already noted the oedipal triangle in the earlier play consisted of George, Helena, and Serebryakov, but these characters and their actions were buried in the play's other multiple plots. In *Uncle Vanya,* Chekhov extracts that triangle, modifies it to create the Vanya/Helena/Serebryakov triangle and centers the entire play around it and its oedipal underpinning. The triangle now is not only the psychic center but also the dramatic center of the play.

Chekhov's dramatization of those strivings in *Uncle Vanya* and *The Sea Gull* might initially suggest that they are very different plays. Yet both are derivatives of the same oedipal constellation, and both directly dramatize many of its its chief concerns. The deep structure of the two plays is thus the same, and I suggest that they may be thought of as two halves of the same play. I also suggest that in Loewald's (1979) terms, Chekhov through the two plays appropriates—that is, faces, accepts, and dramatizes—incestuous and parricidal wishes.

In *The Sea Gull,* Chekhov recreates the familiar triangle through three of the play's central characters: Constantine Treplev, a young writer struggling to make his mark in the world; Arkadina, Treplev's mother; and Trigorin, Arkadina's lover and also a writer. The tensions and conflicts within the Treplev/Arkadina/Trigorin triangle are crystallized in the play's closet scene between son and mother, a scene whose direct debt to the Hamlet-Gertrude closet scene has long been recognized (e.g. Stroud 1958). Treplev begins the scene by asking his mother a question about Trigorin that Hamlet might have asked Gertrude about Claudius: "Just lately, these last days, I have loved you as tenderly and

completely as when I was a child. I have no one left but you. Only why, why do you give yourself up to the influence of that man?" (3. p. 56). Like Hamlet in Shakespeare's closet scene, Treplev continues by vehemently denigrating the Claudius figure. Treplev declares that Trigorin is a coward and not a genius as his mother thinks. In fact, Treplev vehemently declares in the scene, Trigorin's books make him sick.

Evident in the scene and in the entire play is Treplev's deep love for his mother and deep hatred of Trigorin. The sexual component of that love and of its relationship to Hamlet and to oedipal wishes were noted by the acclaimed actress and acting teacher Stella Adler (2000): "Constantin [Treplev] has developed the Hamlet/Gertrude situation. He loves his mother, doesn't want her touched by another man. That is a big psychological thing. Shakespeare knew it and Chekhov knew it, and you see it in life all the time" (p. 212).

Although none of Chekhov's characters can be said directly and fully to represent him, I suggest that *Uncle Vanya* is his most personal, most autobiographical play and that its characters most clearly symbolize many of his own feelings about his parents and himself. The play lacks any direct reference to Shakespeare's closet scene, but the entire play can be viewed as an extension of his version of that scene in *The Sea Gull*. Chekhov disperses and dramatizes the various elements of that scene throughout the play, much as a composer disperses the elements of a musical motif throughout a musical composition.

As in *The Wood Demon*, the father figure in *Uncle Vanya* is Serebryakov, arguably Chekhov's clearest dramatization of his venomous hatred and contempt for his father. Pavel Chekhov, barely literate, fancied himself an expert on arcane areas of Russian liturgical music, and Vanya describes Serebryakov, a retired professor, as a crotchety, empty-headed nincompoop who advanced his academic career by writing books that no one ever read on subjects he did not understand. The connection between Pavel and Serebryakov goes deeper. Like Pavel living off Chekhov's work, Serebryakov supports himself not by working but by profiting from the work of others, in his case from Vanya's work on land left to Serebryakov by his first wife. Despite his unappealing presence, however, Serebryakov is married to the much younger and beautiful Helena, and in typical oedipal fashion the play repeatedly questions how

such an idiot of a man could have ended up with such a magnificent woman.

During the course of the play, Helena, the Gertrude figure, answers that question. She explains that she met Serebryakov when she was very young and taken in by his role as professor. She now realizes that the marriage was a mistake, but she is too moral, too fearful, and too overcome by a sense of ennui to leave her husband or have an affair with anyone else. Helena, the play insists, thus stays with her husband but as a fantasized, idealized mother never actually loved him. She was naively infatuated with him when she was young, Chekhov tells us, and dislikes him now that she is older. In *Platonov*, Hamlet had asked Gertrude, "And to this villain/Forgetting shame as woman, wife and mother/How could you yield yourself," and Chekhov had thereby suggested that the yielding was certainly not out of love. Chekhov now repeats that observation about the lack of love through his creation of Helena and Serebryakov, her repulsive, unloved husband.

Chekhov present his "Claudius" and "Gertrude" in the play as single characters—Serebryakov-Helena. He, however, divides the "Hamlet" in the play into two characters, both of whom desire the same "Gertrude." Like Chekhov, Astrov, one of the play's Hamlets, is a doctor concerned about the deforestation of Russia. But the play's central Hamlet figure and the one who most pursues Helena is Vanya, who I suggest is also the play's central Chekhov figure. Like Vanya, Chekhov set aside his own wants and needs and devoted his life to taking care of his family. Vanya gave up his patrimony so his sister could inherit all of his father's lands and took care of his niece after his sister's death. Vanya has overseen farming on those lands to extract every kopeck of profit and, like young Chekhov in Taganrog, spent as little as possible on himself in order to send money to the father figure (in his case Serebryakov). Like Chekhov, Vanya has forgone pleasure and accepted pain—has denied himself many of the luxuries a young man might indulge in—to support his family. And like Chekhov, Vanya never married or enjoyed domestic life: Like Chekhov, who up to this point had not married and who never had children, Vanya is not a father but an uncle. During the course of the play, Vanya expresses his sense that life passed him by as he strove to take care of others and also to expresses his anger and sense of grievance

against Serebryakov. At one point the enraged Vanya tries to kill him; Vanya shoots Serebryakov but misses.

It will perhaps be evident that the same strivings in Chekhov underpin *The Sea Gull* and *Uncle Vanya*. In *The Sea Gull,* Treplev's Hamletian anger at Trigorin for writing sickening books finds its match in Vanya's even more intense, more aggressive rage at Serebryakov and his unread ones. And just as aggression appears to be directed at a father figure in each play so too does libido appear to be directed at a mother figure: Vanya's desire for Helena finds its match in Treplev's desire for his mother. None of this is meant to suggest that the only relationship between men in Chekhov's plays involves anger or murderous rage; many instances of friendship such as the one between Vanya and Astrov can be found. But the most highly charged, most emotionally intense connections between men do, in fact, rest on a deep sense of grievance and involve rage or intense anger.

There are numerous differences between *The Sea Gull* and *Uncle Vanya*, but one of the central ones is that even though both plays depict incestuous desire and parricidal aggression, each stresses one or the other, as if Chekhov in each play accessed and dramatized different aspects of his own oedipal strivings. The oedipal triangle in *The Sea Gull* is thus the first and only one in Chekhov's plays that actually involves a mother and son (Arkadina-Treplev). Through this overt depiction of a highly charged mother-son relationship, Chekhov now appears more directly to access his own incestuous wishes and to symbolize them. Similarly, the triangle in *Uncle Vanya* is the first and only one in which the Hamlet figure actually attempts to kill the Claudius one (Vanya-Serebryakov). Through this overt depiction of murderous aggression directed at the play's father figure, Chekhov now appears more directly to access his own parricidal wishes and to symbolize them as well. Chekhov's movement from the first to this second phase of his dramaturgy may thus be said to be a movement from a continuing defense against facing oedipal wishes to their acceptance.

Three Sisters *(Vershinin/Masha/Kulygin)*

In his last two plays, *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*, Chekhov invokes the framework of Shakespeare's closet scene but creates outside of it. He no longer needs to dramatize the oedipal triangle, as he did in *The Sea*

Gull and *Uncle Vanya*, or to circle around and away from it, as he did in *Platonov*, *Ivanov*, and *The Wood Demon*. He now has the expanded psychic space within which to create something that is dramatically and psychologically new. The triangles in his last two plays thus differ radically from any of the preceding ones, for they no longer embody the intense loves and hates of the original triangle. Instead, as Chekhov moves from *Three Sisters* to *The Cherry Orchard*, the triangles are increasingly neutralized and increasingly take place in a post-oedipal world. The triangles embody the waning of the Oedipus Complex as well as its artistic transcendence.

In *Three Sisters*, Chekhov initially presents the Vershinin/Masha/Kulygin triangle in exactly the same way as he had presented triangles before. The beautiful, desirable Masha, married to Kulygin, falls in love with and has an affair with Vershinin, much as the married Sophia had fallen in love with and had an affair with Platonov. Yet the triangle in the play differs substantially in at least two ways from Chekhov's previous ones.

Kulyign is the Claudius figure in the triangle, but he is not despised and denigrated as Chekhov's previous ones had been: Platonov had harshly criticized Voynitsev, just as Lvov did Ivanov, and as Constantine did Trigorin and as Vanya did Serebryakov. Kulygin is not the object of such aggression and is not belittled in the play. He is depicted as a slightly comical figure, but he deeply loves Masha and has a dignity not found in previous Claudius figures. And as Stella Adler (2000) observed, Kulygin stands out because he is the only happy person in the play. Chekhov depicts him as a simple man, content and accepting of circumstances and of others. To the extent that Kulygin might be said to represent the "older man," he is presented with an acceptance and forgiveness not evident in Chekhov's earlier plays.

Just as Kulygin differs from the preceding Claudius figures, so too does Masha differ from the preceding Gertrude ones. Chekhov's Gertrude figures—and Gertrude herself—had always been previously attached to the Hamlet figures from the very beginning of a play. Gertrude is Hamlet's mother, just as Arkadina in *The Sea Gull* is Treplev's. Similarly, Platonov initially already loves and desires Sophia, just as Vanya initially already loves and desires Helena. In each of these instances the connection between the Hamlet and Gertrude figure is

simply a given, an unexamined and, hence, unexplored dramatic *donnée,* grounded in the givens of the underlying, instinctualized loves of the oedipal triangle. Within that triangle Hamlet and Gertrude are always attached. One cannot have a Hamlet without a Gertrude or a Gertrude without a Hamlet. And one cannot have either without a Claudius. All three exist as a Hamlet/Gertrude/Claudius, a not fully differentiated object in Hamlet's mind and presumably a dramatic *donnée* in Chekhov's.

In *Three Sisters,* Chekhov accesses this hitherto bastioned *donnée,* masters it, and transcends it. He transforms an undifferentiated object, Hamlet/Gertrude, into a symbol, Vershinin and Masha, both of whom now exist outside the oedipal Hamlet/Gertrude world.

Masha and Vershinin are not initially attached within an oedipal triangle; they are strangers to each other without any emotional connection at the beginning of the play and only gradually fall in love. They are the first and only couple in a Chekhov triangle to do so. Chekhov dramatizes the reasons for their love—the personal qualities that draw them to each other—and depicts them as adults who happen to fall in love. The series of scenes in which they unite are Chekhov's great love scenes. Before Masha and Vershinin leave in order finally to consummate their love, they communicate through songs, as if their feelings are now so intense that they take place at a language-transcending level, a level that can only lead to song or to physical intimacy.

Yet even though the characters exist outside the *Hamlet* world, they still have one foot within it. Symbolization, which takes place along a continuum (Segal 1957), is not complete in the play. Masha and Vershinin, while mere shadows of Hamlet and Gertrude, are still drawn to each other and not to anyone else. And Kulygin, while amusingly comic, is also a cuckold. The ties that bind the three characters through oedipal bonds are distant and weak but unarguably there. The three characters are not yet as outside the oedipal matrix as they will be in *The Cherry Orchard.*

The Cherry Orchard *(1) (Trofimov/Ranevskaya)*

The extraordinary triangle in *The Cherry Orchard* is unlike any that Chekhov had created before, even in *Three Sisters,* for Chekhov now erases the oedipal triangle and makes it disappear. Chekhov created the

previous triangles by establishing family bonds between two of its characters and connecting them to a third. Sophia/Platonov/Voynitsev, for example, are clearly a triangle because Sophia is married to Voynitsev, and Platonov interposes himself between them. Similarly, Treplev/Arkadina/Trigorin are a triangle because Arkadina is Treplev's mother and Trigorin her lover. Even in *Three Sisters*, Masha is married to Kulygin before Vershinin appears and has an affair with her. All such characters also are also connected, albeit to different degrees, through the attractions and repulsions of the Oedipus Complex. In sum, the triangle in Chekhov's previous plays formed around three points, all of which were simultaneously bonded to each other through the desires and affects of that Complex and through family ties. In *The Cherry Orchard,* Chekhov eliminates all such bonds among his three characters. He thereby eliminates the triangle so that we now encounter three utterly disconnected dots. The play then takes place in a more neutral triangular space than any other of Chekhov's plays, including *Three Sisters.*

The three disconnected dots in the play are defined by three of its central characters: Trofimov, the university student; Ranevskaya, who loses her ancestral estate; and Lopakhin, who ends up with it. None of these characters is related to any other. Ranevskaya is not Trofimov's mother, nor is Lopakhin his father, nor is Lopakhin married to Ranevskaya. All three exist independently of each other and independent of the oedipal bonds that might hold them together and might make them a triangle.

Yet *Hamlet* was clearly on Chekhov's mind as he created *The Cherry Orchard.* In *Platonov,* Voynitsev quoting from *Hamlet* declaimed: "Ophelia, nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered" (2. p. 132). In *The Cherry Orchard,* Lopakhin quotes the same line right after declaiming, "Ophelia, get thee to a nunnery" (2. p. 91). Clearly aware of *Hamlet,* Chekhov invokes the oedipal Hamlet/Gertrude/Claudius relationship in the play whenever he chooses so that it suddenly backgrounds and contrasts with the actual post-oedipal interactions between his characters. In this way, he simultaneously invokes the past and present—the oedipal past of *Hamlet* and the post-oedipal present of *The Cherry Orchard*—just as he invokes the past and present in other ways throughout the play.

Through Trofimov's interaction with Ranevskaya, Chekhov evokes the Hamlet-Gertrude part of the oedipal triangle and contrasts it with the post-oedipal Trofimov-Ranevskaya interaction that he actually dramatizes. And through Trofimov's interaction with Lopakhin, he evokes the Hamlet-Claudius part and contrasts it with the play's Trofimov-Lopakhin scenes. Artistically, the closest analogue to such a dramatic form would seem to be Cubism, initiated by Picasso and Braque in France some four years after *The Cherry Orchard*. As in Cubism, Chekhov presents multiple points of view of an invoked object, in this case the oedipal triangle, without depicting the actual object itself. In a Cubist-like way, the oedipal triangle is thus there and not there.

Trofimov's central scene with Ranevskaya occurs as the orchard is being auctioned offstage in the third act. That remarkable scene has been termed "one of the masterpieces of modern drama" (Valency 1966, p. 276) and is arguably Chekhov's greatest scene. It revolves first around the sale of her estate and then around Ranveskaya's absent lover, who never appears in the play but is invoked. In the background of the Trofimov-Ranevskaya scene is thus the Trofimov/Ranevskaya/Lover triangle with its invocation of the Hamlet/Gertrude/Claudius one. In the foreground is the actual scene between Raneskaya and Trofimov.

Ranevskaya's emotional needs in the scene emanate first from her deep attachment to her estate and then to her attachment to her absent lover. Initially fearful that she is about to lose the estate, she turns to Trofimov for comfort; she wants him to say something warm and reassuring. He cannot, however, give her what she wants for he has never been able to experience loss or love and does not comprehend either one. He is above love he declares at the beginning of the scene, and he responds to her need for warmth with coldness by declaring that the estate is already lost, that the loss means absolutely nothing and that she should simply move on.

When the scene turns to a discussion of Ranevskaya's absent lover, it directly enters the world of the *Hamlet* closet scene. Like Chekhov's earlier Hamlet figures Trofimov denigrates the Claudius one. Her lover, he declares robbed her. Her lover, he declares as Hamlet might have done in Shakespeare's closet scene, is a "wretch": "He is a wretch. You're the only person that doesn't know it! He's a worthless creature! A despicable wretch!" (3. pp. 99-100).

But the Gertrude in the scene is not silent, as she more or less is in Shakespeare's closet scene. Chekhov here for the first time shifts his focus entirely from "Hamlet" to "Gertrude." It is now Gertrude-Ranevskaya who propels the scene, not Hamlet-Trofimov, and it is now her emotional needs, not Hamlet's, that Chekhov foregrounds. In the scene Chekhov, aware of *Hamlet*, recreates Shakespeare's closet scene with Gertrude, *not* Hamlet, as its central character. Chekhov thus gives Ranevskaya-Gertrude a voice and lets her step out of her role as an oedipal object that Shakespeare had created for her. She is differentiated from the Hamlet/Gertrude unit in the same way that Masha had been in *Three Sisters,* the major differences being that here Chekhov places the mother figure directly in Shakespeare's closet scene and that she is no longer the object of a son figure's desire. In the scene we thus can hear not only Ranevskaya's response to Trofimov's but Gertrude's possible imagined response to Hamlet:

> RANEVSKAYA: You [Trofimov/Hamlet] settle every problem so boldly, but tell me my dear boy, isn't it because you're young—because you haven't yet understood one of your problems through suffering? You look forward boldly, and isn't it because you don't see and don't expect anything dreadful, because life is still hidden from your young eyes? You're bolder, more honest, deeper than we are, but think, be just a little magnanimous, have pity on me. [3. p. 98]

When the conversation turns to Ranevskaya's lover, she declares that she deeply loves him and cannot live without him. And when Trofimov can neither take pity on her nor understand her love, she angrily attacks him towards the end of the scene for being young and callow:

> RANEVSKAYA: *(getting angry but with restraint)* You're twenty-six or twenty-seven-years old, but you're still a schoolboy.
> TROFIMOV: Possibly.
> RANVESKAYA: You should be a man at your age! You should understand what love means! And you ought to be in love yourself. You ought to fall in love!
> (*Angrily*) Yes, yes and it's not purity in you [Trofimov/Hamlet], you're simply a prude, a comic fool, a freak.
> TROFIMOV: (*in horror)* The things she's saying. [3. p. 100]

The scene may be viewed as a symbolization of the "old" Chekhov, embodied by Trofimov, contrasted with the new one embodied by Ranevskaya. Unlike Trofimov, the "new" Chekhov, evident through his creation of Ranevskaya, now fully understands love and loss. He now understands through his depiction of her not only that Hamlet deeply loves Gertrude, but that Gertrude also deeply loves Claudius, despite anything negative Hamlet might think of him. Ranevskaya, whose given name, Lyubov, is derived from *lyublu*, the Russian word for love, declares of her absent lover, "I love him, that's clear. I love him! I love him" (3. p. 99).

In *Platonov* as well as in subsequent plays Chekhov had followed Shakespeare's lead in *Hamlet* as he struggled to understand how an admirable mother could possibly attach herself to an inferior father. It was certainly not out of love Hamlet and Platonov had both declared, just as Chekhov declares it through his creation of Helena and the repulsive, unloved Serebryakov in *Uncle Vanya*. In *The Cherry Orchard,* Chekhov now dramatizes his new post-oedipal understandings of the bonds between mothers and fathers: Gertrudes deeply love Claudiuses; mothers deeply love fathers; and that love unites them as a couple separate from their child and from the child's needs and desires.

The Cherry Orchard *(2) (Trofimov/Lopakhin)*

Chekhov's new understanding of mothers exists side by side in the play with his new post-oedipal understanding of fathers. That understanding—the Hamlet-Claudius part of the original oedipal triangle—is dramatized through Trofimov's interactions with Lopakhin, the play's father-figure and its Claudius. The connections between Pavel and Lopakhin are not difficult to find. The connections seem to me to result from a process of reparation (Klein 1937) in which Chekhov gives Lopakhin the qualities he had initially attacked Pavel for lacking. Chekhov thus largely creates Lopakhin by transforming much of what he had negatively dramatized about his father into something positive. But by insisting that Lopakhin is the polar opposite of Pavel, Chekhov cements the connection between the two.

Unlike Pavel, Lopakhin loves to work and eagerly does so from morning to night. And unlike Pavel, he is also a successful and very rich businessman. The Gertrude figure in *The Cherry Orchard* does not then

have to write letters to anyone begging for money to buy food, as Evgenia did in her letter to Chekhov; Lopakhin generously showers Ranevskaya with money throughout the play. And unlike Pavel, Lopakhin does not lose his business or his house. Lopakhin gains an estate and its cherry orchard, both of which can be viewed—among many other things—as Chekhov's parting gift to his father and as his dramatic reparation of the store and house that the Chekhovs lost.

Part of the emotional richness of *The Cherry Orchard* comes from its blend of the comic and tragic revolving around the sale of Ranevskaya's estate and is evident in the Lopakhin-Ranevskaya scene after the sale. The blend of grief and joy, of tears and laughter in that scene are one of the hallmarks of what we call Chekhovian. In the play, Chekhov creates the most intense version of that blend in his dramaturgy by developing Lopakhin and Ranevskaya as two unattached, neutralized characters. He brings the entire play to the moment when a deeply loved object—the Chekhov's store and house/the Ranevskaya estate and cherry orchard—is simultaneously lost and found, as if the two parts of the *fort/da* game that Freud (1920) saw his grandson playing happened at one and the same time. At the climactic moment in the scene Chekhov juxtaposes Ranevskaya's grief at her loss with Lopakhin's triumphant joy at what he has gained: "Lopahin: I have bought it. *(A pause. Ranevskaya is crushed; she would fall down if she were not standing near a chair and table)*" (2. p. 105). It is difficult to think of any other playwright who could so succinctly present such a complex emotional moment, one that deeply moves us and that we might surmise would, through its personal meaning for Chekhov, have moved him even more.

Trofimov has two parallel scenes with Lopakhin, one before Trofimov's scene with Ranevskaya, one after. The first scene establishes a pattern followed subsequently by the second. Lopakhin teases Trofimov, who responds angrily to his teasing:

> LOPAHIN: Our perpetual student is always with the young ladies.
> TROFIMOV: That's not your business.
> LOPAHIN: He'll soon be fifty, and he's still a student.
> TROFIMOV: Drop your idiotic jokes.
> LOPAHIN: Why are you so cross, you queer fish.

> TROFIMOV: Oh don't persist.
> LOPAHIN: (*laughs*) Allow me to ask you what's your idea of me?
> TROFIMOV: I'll tell you my idea of you, Yermolay Alexeyevitch: you are a rich man, you'll soon be a millionaire. Well, just as in the economy of nature a wild beast is of use, who devours everything that comes in his way, so you too have your use (*All laugh*). [2. p. 88]

The Trofimov depicted here is rather like the "old" Chekhov in his relationship with his father. Like Platonov, Treplev, and Vanya, Trofimov is filled with anger at the "older man" and as he will later do with Raneskaya's lover cuts him down to size. Lopakhin in Trofimov's eyes is only a wild beast just as Ranevskaya's lover is in his eyes only a wretch.

Trofimov's observation about Lopakhin would be accurate if the characters inhabited the melodramas popular before and during Chekhov's lifetime (Brooks 1995). Lopakhin would then be the play's villain, evilly plotting to wrest away an impoverished widow's cottage and adjoining vegetable patch. In the play Chekhov transcends the two-dimensional world of melodrama. Ranevskaya is more than an impoverished widow, the vegetable patch is now the cherry orchard and Lopakhin is not the play's villain. Trofimov cannot see Lopakhin's softness, kindness, and generosity, nor can he understand the affection that underpins Lopakhin's teasing. At the beginning of the play, Lopakhin declared that he had fallen asleep while reading a book he did not understand. He sees himself as an uneducated oaf, and as Chekhov shortly makes clear, his teasing is a heavy-handed effort to reach out to a university student who obviously understands books and whom he likes and deeply admires.

Lopakhin does not let up on his effort to connect with Trofimov. In the fourth act Lopakhin once again teases Trofimov, who once again answers. But the answer moves into new emotional territory, territory apparently opened up through Trofimov's preceding, highly emotional scene revolving around Ranevskaya's estate and absent lover:

> LOPAHIN: I daresay the professors aren't giving any lectures, they're waiting for your arrival.
> TOFIMOV: That's not your business.

> LOPAHIN: How many years have you been at the University?
> TROFIMOV: Do think of something newer than that—that's stale and flat. (*hunts for galoshes*). You know we shall most likely never see each other again, so let me give you one piece of advice at parting: don't wave your arms about—get out of the habit. And another thing, building villas, reckoning up that the summer visitors will in time become independent farmers, reckoning like that, that's not the thing to do either. After all, I am fond of you: you have fine delicate fingers like an artist, you've a fine delicate soul.
> LOPAHIN: (*embraces him*) Good-by my dear fellow. Thanks for everything. [4. p. 109]

Lopakhin's interaction with Trofimov immediately after this loving embrace revolves around money and has considerable resonance. Money clearly played an important role in Chekhov's life and played an important role in his submerged conflict with his father; with the exception of *Three Sister*, money is important in every Chekhov play:

> LOPAHIN: (*embraces him*) Good-by my dear fellow. Thanks for everything. Let me give you money for the journey, if you need it.
> TROFIMOV: What for? I don't need it.
> LOPAHIN: Why, you haven't got a halfpenny.
> TROFIMOV: Yes, I have, thank you. I got some money for a translation. Here it is in my pocket, (*anxiously*) but where can my galoshes be!
> VARYA: (*From the next room [offstage]*) Take the nasty things.
> (*flings a pair of galoshes on to the stage*)
> TROFIMOV: Why are you so cross, Varya? h'm … but those aren't my galoshes. [4. p. 109]

Trofimov has clearly undergone a change. Apparently through his interaction with Ranevskaya he has matured enough to recognize something positive about Lopakhin and to voice tender feelings towards him. His new view of Lopakhin is a far cry from Platonov's view of Voynitsev, Treplev's view of Trigorin or Vanya's of Serebryakov. The partly merged Hamlet/Clauldius figure with intense hatred directed at the father has become differentiated and neutralized. And the father is now viewed—

by Trofimov and by Chekhov—with affection. Through the juxtaposition of the two Trofimov-Lopakhin scenes, Chekhov thus depicts the movement from anger directed at a father figure to acceptance and forgiveness.

Yet Chekhov is too wise and too measured to suggest a sudden, complete transformation in Trofimov. As in the Trofimov-Ranevskaya scene, Chekhov in the scenes between Trofimov and Lopakhin creates a complex scene between two characters at different levels of psychic development. The two expressions of thanks in the brief scene are a typical, indirect Chekhovian way of defining the difference. As he shows us here, Chekhov is one of the great masters of subtexts—of the profound meaning underlying seemingly unimportant sensuous surfaces—first as an observing physician and then as a creating playwright. Trofimov, Chekhov seems to tell us here, is thus in many ways still a child—comically unable to find his galoshes. And unlike Lopakhin in this scene, he is unable to express a need, unable to accept a gift of something he actually needs and unable fully to experience the gratitude that accompanies acceptance of things with which we are gifted, perhaps especially their love. Another man with a pocket full of change and with a generous, wealthy man in front of him might have accepted the money as well as the affection that accompanies it. Trofimov, as he leaves Ranevskaya's estate is, however, at the beginning of the many journeys Chekhov completed with *The Cherry Orchard*. The play premiered at the Moscow Art Theater on January 17, 1904, twelve days before Chekhov's forty-fourth birthday. He died of tuberculosis on July 15th.

Some Frames for Chekhov's Journey

Sophocles in *Oedipus Tyrannos* (ca 429 BC) accessed some of the basic elements of the Oedipus Complex. As Jocasta declares in the play, every man has dreamt of killing his father and marrying his mother. Some two millennia later, Shakespeare in the *Hamlet* closet scene accessed the deep, infantile loves and hates of the Complex in ways I have examined elsewhere (Mandelbaum 2018). For three centuries *Hamlet* held the boards, drawing attention to those emotions and dramatically structuring them. Chekhov began with that structure as a framework for his own oedipal strivings and eventually reframed Shakespeare. He replaced Shakespeare's closet scene as the central dramatic way of crystallizing

the Oedipus Complex with his own scene in *The Cherry Orchard* as a new way of doing so.

Why Chekhov was able to move from the first to the second stage of his dramaturgy on his journey to that scene—from *Platonov*, *Ivanov*, and *The Wood Demon* to *The Sea Gull* and *Uncle Vanya*—is an utter mystery, much as other playwrights' ability to do undertake such journeys is mysterious. We can perhaps only say that great playwrights can penetrate their defenses and access and symbolize some of the most highly charged areas of their psyches, as I have argued Shakespeare, Eugene O'Neill, and Strindberg were able to do (Mandelbaum 2015, 2017, 2018). Inability to do so results in a repetitive, hollow variations of the same dramatic action, as I have suggested is the case with Ben Jonson's comedies and the late plays of Tennessee Williams (Mandelbaum 2008, 2017).

We can also only speculate about why and how Chekhov moved from the second to the extraordinary third stage of his dramaturgy. As I have suggested earlier, one way to describe the change is embodied in Loewald's (1979) observations on the waning of the Oedipus Complex. Loewald argued that the Complex does not wane when it is repressed or when it is acted out. It wanes when one appropriates—that is, fully accepts and makes as one's own—one's incestuous and parricidal wishes, "acknowledging that they are ours" (p. 393). The result, Loewald argues at length, "is tenderness, mutual trust, and respect, the sign of equality" (p. 390) between offspring and parent. Another result is that one can turn one's back on the past and freely create a new life and, by implication, new art, new artistic forms, and a new artistic style. The future continually emerges from the past through murder, Loewald (1979) observed, and all great playwrights destroy the drama of their time.

As I have noted, Chekhov appears to have appropriated and dramatically symbolized incestuous strivings in *The Sea Gull* and parricidal strivings in *Uncle Vanya*. Could Chekhov's appropriation of such strivings in these two plays of the second phase have set the stage for the third, in which the Oedipus Complex appears to have waned? Could his appropriation of his parricidal strivings in *Uncle Vanya* have enabled Chekhov finally to kill his father and become his own man, independent of that father and released from his hatred for him? Could Chekhov's simultaneous killing of his other father, Shakespeare, have enabled him to create

outside of *Hamlet* and finally in *The Cherry Orchard* to create his own closet scene through processes examined in another context by Harold Bloom (1973)? Could it also be that in killing Shakespeare and replacing him, Chekhov as he was dying attempted to establish himself as the new father of Western drama?

It might well be that such an explanation rests within another one, an explanation that entails a brief consideration of Chekhov's love life in the late 1890s. That love life, I suggest, has a direct bearing on *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* as well as on *The Sea Gull* and *Uncle Vanya*.

In 1898, the year before he wrote *Three Sisters,* Chekhov was living in Yalta, whose warm climate had a salutary effect on his tubercular lungs. But he was bored and took every opportunity to escape to Moscow, rather like the sisters continually dream of doing in *Three Sisters*. During his visits and afterwards, Chekhov fell deeply in love for the first time in his life. His beloved, who came deeply to love him in return, was the thirty-year-old Olga Knippers (1868-1959), soon to be the lead actress of the newly formed Moscow Art Theater. She premiered every one of Chekhov's major female characters—Arkadina in *The Sea Gull,* Helena in U*ncle Vanya,* Masha in *Three Sisters* and Ranevskaya in *The Cherry Orchard*. Chekhov created the last two roles specifically for Knippers, the first time he created a role for an actor or actress and a remarkable gift to the woman he loved.

Much stood in the way of that love. Because of his health Chekhov could not permanently live anywhere except Yalta, and because of her work Knippers could not permanently live anywhere except Moscow. And as a doctor who had already lost family members, including a brother, to tuberculosis, Chekhov would have known that his time was limited and that whatever life they had together could only end tragically with his own early death. At the end of *Three Sisters* in a heart-wrenching scene reminiscent of a death scene Masha parts from Vershinin, a soldier reassigned to another town, and Tusenbach, who is to marry Masha's sister Irina, dies in a senseless duel. Love may well be at the heart of the play, but it does not lead to marital bliss. Chekhov nevertheless felt that he had found the love of his life and in what was for him a highly unusual move married her. As Jean Benedetti (1996) noted, "Knipper was not Chekhov's first lover, but she was the only one he ever thought of marrying" (p. xi). It might perhaps then be argued that

Chekhov's love for Knippers led him for the first time fully to understand the force of love, both in his own life and in that of his parents. His newfound love, it might be argued, then precipitated the changes evident as Chekhov moved from *The Sea Gull* and *Uncle Vanya* to *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*.

One might account for Chekhov's love solely by citing external factors. Chekhov, it might be argued, met the "right woman" at this point in his life and fell in love. Yet meeting the right woman cannot have been the only reason Chekhov loved Knippers. Described by some contemporaries as the most eligible bachelor in Russia, the thirty-eight-year-old Chekhov surely earlier might have encountered a "right woman" to fall in love with and marry—had he been of a mind to do so. But as Freud (1910) observed, one cannot genuinely fall in love with a person initially experienced as whole and separate from oneself if one is deeply immersed in oedipal strivings. Could it be then that through *The Sea Gull* and *Uncle Vanya* Chekhov cleared the oedipal cobwebs from his mind, that it was this clearing which enabled him to fall in love and that this love, in turn, helped him to create *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*? Chekhov once wrote that the task of the artist is to raise questions, not to provide answers, and these may ultimately be yet more questions raised by his life and art.

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The Analyst's Desire: The Ethical Foundation of Clinical Practice.

By Mitchell Wilson. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 223 pp.

Sarah Ackerman

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE ANALYST'S DESIRE: THE ETHICAL FOUNDATION OF CLINICAL PRACTICE. By Mitchell Wilson. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 223 pp.

When it comes to psychoanalysis, it sometimes feels as if everything there is to say has already been written. Many of us need to write to gain a distance from which to appraise our work, but few of us are actually pushing into something new. Not so with Mitchell Wilson's book, *The Analyst's Desire*. This book makes the claim that the analyst's desire—long disavowed—is an essential ingredient in the analytic process: "the psychoanalyst inhabits her role as analyst with a specific desire that is all the more hidden from view when it is satisfied" (p. xi). This desire serves as the ethical rudder, requiring that the analyst acknowledge and tend to her desire as it guides the entire process. This relationship between the analyst and her desire sheds new light on resistance, transference-countertransference, clinical impasses, and termination. For this reader, the book's strength is its capacity to reposition the contemporary focus on the analyst's personhood within a comprehensive, Freudian perspective, tilting our fascination with our own impact on the work in the direction of ethical responsibility.

Wilson's thesis is based upon a particular reading of the nature of desire, informed by Freud, in the spirit of Lacan. For Wilson, desire has no bottom line. Rather, desire is embodied by "the persistence of human wishing and wanting that not only colors our conscious experience, but also quietly (at times loudly) animates our engagement with the world and the people in it, and bends that world ineluctably in our direction (if not *under* our direction)" (p. xiv, italics in original). Operating outside of consciousness, desire is the motivating force that underlies all

human action, whether aggressive or loving. The analyst's analytic desire, then, is not driven toward a measurable outcome, like removing suffering or convincing a patient of a better way of living. Rather, the analyst's desire animates us, stimulating our emotional engagement, and enlivening our contact with our patients:

> What is crucial here is that the analyst's desire—what the analyst wants to have happen—conditions the field, establishes a certain standard for work, and is the foundational base without which what we call countertransference would not exist. These conditions are usually implicit, and often unconscious. It is one of the marked ironies of psychoanalytic work that we are responsible for what often enough we are unaware of or take for granted, or when we act in ways we didn't expect or can't account for. To the extent we can catch hold of it at all, the desire that inheres in our action comes to us in retrospect, after the fact. And our responsibility for our desire is double. We both acknowledge to ourselves (and sometimes to the patient) the conditions we have imposed, the action we have taken. We also, and more importantly, listen for its impact on the patient and the process. [p. 162]

It is this taking account of our desire that upholds the ethical foundation of the analytic relation and produces the meaning in which a good analysis is embedded. While this book is a meditation on the analyst's desire, there is an aim housed within it—to uncover the source of ethics and the unique contribution that the analytic encounter has to offer to our ethical position.

The analyst's desire can only perform an ethical function in drawing a patient into this unique kind of conversation if it germinates within the soil of what Wilson, following Chetrit-Vatine, calls matricial space. Chetrit-Vatine describes the analyst as having an ethical call to provide the necessary conditions to facilitate an analytic engagement.[1] Wilson enlivens the concept of matricial space by conceiving of the analyst as an innkeeper, who provides the necessary provisions to enable her patient to feel at home and at rest. Only within the safety and predictability of

[1] Chetrit-Vatine, V. (2014). *The Ethical Seduction of the Analytic Situation: The Feminine-Maternal Origins of Responsibility for the Other.* London: Karnac.

this space can the strangeness of unconscious processes be appraised. It is the analyst-as-innkeeper's job to notice any dysregulating presses that arise for her patient, most crucially noticing ways in which her own actions or words may provoke a reaction. Within the stabilizing atmosphere of matricial space, the function of the speech relation can perform its message, allowing new meanings to take both analyst and analysand by surprise, and create a context in which these moments—irruptions of desire—can be apprehended.

Desire, for Wilson, must be distinguished from wishes, which are clunkier, more conscious and definable, and a problematic tool in the analyst's toolbox. We hold certain wishes as analytic ideals, like the wish to be neutral with respect to the patient's life goals or the wish to be experienced as a stable, reliable presence with our patients. And behind these more firmly avowed wishes, we come upon wishes that we wrangle with, such as a wish to be loved or admired by our patients. Wishes, as Wilson conceives them, are the fruit of the Imaginary, evidence of our unavoidable narcissism, and they stand in opposition to the latent, ineluctable desires that rumble below the surface:

> Wishes … are specific and identifiable manifestations of this more all-encompassing, and therefore all-the-more-hidden, desire. Wishes can be more or less fulfilled and are more or less conscious; desire cannot be fulfilled and is unconscious. Regarding the analyst's desire, it can be seen or glimpsed within the various actions that desire motivates, including why each of us choses [sic] to be an analyst, … our theoretical persuasions, and the kinds of experiences we want to have with our patients for our own particular reasons. Here we can already sense that unconscious desire and specific wishes may not be so easy to disentangle. Be that as it may, the analyst acts on specific wishes, wishes that may be facilitative or harmful to a specific ongoing analytic process. Whether harmful or helpful, our desires are engaged every moment we do analytic work. [p. 57]

This contrast between wishes and desires allows Wilson to flesh out a universal, problematic tendency that all fall prey to: the allure of a set storyline. Wilson points to the tug of the Imaginary order, which encompasses our conceptions of narcissism and of the ego. The analytic role,

in Wilson's view, can be subsumed in an idealization, which risks what Laplanche calls "narcissistic closure" (as cited on p. 32 of Wilson).[2] We are always caught by the temptation to construe a unified, coherent, and full image of the analyst. We need to resist this temptation to reify our analytic identities. It is crucial, following Wilson, that the analyst's desire be seen in opposition to this foreclosed, illusory identity. Here, Lacan's mirror enters in and Wilson captures its dual function. On one hand, the mirror can seduce us into a sense of wholeness, intoxicating us with the completeness of our mirror image. This aligns with the nature of the ego, which is founded in an array of identifications that coalesce as a gestalt, an imaginary, illusory self-conception that denies our essentially fragmented and decentered subjectivity. However, the mirror also has the potential to unseat us, pressing us to recognize its illusory nature, disrupting the image that is essential to our nature. Wilson emphasizes that it is the appeal of closed narratives that sets us up to feel betrayed when our patients surprise us; instead we might anticipate the value of the disruption, where new meanings emerge for us and our patients. One way that we attune ourselves with our analytic desire is by guarding ourselves against narrative closure, being curious about the unexpected.

In keeping with Lacan, Wilson places a huge emphasis on lack as constitutive of desire. That is, there isn't a thing called desire, to be uncovered in the analyst, or in any human. Rather, desire emerges from an absence: "Human desire, psychoanalytically conceived, is founded on the absent (usually maternal) object. Desire emerges from this human lack that is constitutive for the child's future development. Desire is close kin to, though it encompasses far more psychic terrain than, Freud's Eros in that it is an irreducible, unconscious force that motivates a generic searching" (p. 56). In a move that Wilson makes throughout this book, Wilson locates in the work of Barry Opatow a trend evocative of Lacan—by pairing disparate thinkers, he enables them to say synergistically more than either could say alone.[3] I will return to this important quality of this book but here, Opatow conveys the notion that hallucinatory wish-fulfillment is the "*original scene* of psychoanalysis," the origin

[2] Laplanche, J. (1999). *Essays on Otherness.* London: Routledge.

[3] Opatow, B. (1997). The real unconscious: psychoanalysis as a theory of consciousness. *J. Amer. Psychoanal.,* 45:865-890.

of our human subjectivity and the seed of desire. In a Lacanian spirit, Opatow conceives of the mind as wishing "to affirm and reaffirm, close the circle, to fill the lack that generated the desire at the start" (p. 59, italics in original). We get drawn into looking for something, which is an expression of being captivated by a wish, but we are thrown from this search by a disruption or dislocation, which is where desire reveals itself. Meanings enter in by surprise; our conscious intentions are hijacked by our own unconscious messages. Wilson writes,

> It feels as if we have momentarily vacated present experience only to be brought back to it as we grapple with what has just happened. We were "somewhere else" for that brief period of time; this "somewhere else" we experience as a kind of forgetting or absenting of our self… There is an important sense in which the entire analytic endeavor involves this fading and coming back that continually shows itself to us in a way that we experience as a kind of forgetting or absenting. [p. 168]

These fadings, evidence of a gap or lack, embody possibility in an analysis, and by being open to and even anticipating these moments, we mobilize the possibility of our words taking on new meaning. In this way, it is the analyst's process of analyzing herself, as well as her patient, that catalyzes the analytic process. By Wilson's account, the analyst enters in with a wish, looking to reexperience a particular kind of relationship. It is as that wish gets disrupted by her unconscious—in dialogue with this particular patient—that analysis is animated.

Based on this thesis that the analyst's desire is the ballast that animates and supports the whole edifice of each analytic encounter, Wilson goes on to argue that the analyst is responsible for her desire. Our analytic ethics are grounded in our readiness for the irruption of evidence of our desire. This brings Wilson to a first take on the claim that is the pulse of this book: it is the analyst's responsibility to locate her own desire, and in that way to step out of "'the field of contest'" (p. 66, citing Lacan).[4] "My claim … is that these experiences of interruption, dislocation, of fading, and our ongoing engagement with them, constitute the

[4] Lacan, J. ([1949] 2002). The mirror stage and the formation of the I function as revealed in psychoanalytic experience. In *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. B. Fink. New York: Norton. 75-81.

heart of the ethics of psychoanalysis" (p. 159). Taking responsibility for our desire is equated with accepting—and even expecting—our lack, our inevitable tendency to miss our patients' meanings. Wilson sees lack as a basic working condition for the analyst. "This missing, if tolerated by both analyst and patient, allows the patient to take up his own place, to articulate in increasingly clear ways a position in his own individual voice" (p. 79). Lack, then, is generative. Our humility in the face of our lack alters our authority, opening up a space for the patient. This resonates with my sense of relief in a moment when a patient feels free enough with me to say something like, "No, I think you've gotten it wrong. I see it differently." Wilson theorizes this moment. Our willingness to acknowledge the limits of our own understandings allows new meanings to emerge—for patient and analyst. Lack, then, presses the analyst into a view toward a future, where more can be learned.

Our analytic resistance to the notion of lack can take the form of an illusion that we can fulfill our patients' unmet needs, occupy the role of the parent they never had. Wilson locates this illusion in ego psychology, as well as in the British independent and Kleinian schools.

> If the analyst's position is conceptualized as a positive presence—modeled on the nourishing breast and containing mother with the assumption that the analyst's interventions are essentially a "good feed"—then the analyst's role in creating resistances and impasses will not only remain hidden but will also be misrecognized as simply more benign help against which the patient defends. [p. 87]

Many theoretical persuasions, as Wilson conceives them, fall into an overemphasis on the analyst's positive presence. In this sense, these theories are captivated by the Imaginary, seduced by narrative closure. Wilson helpfully brings together the tropes that unite various popular contemporary theories, elaborating our tendency to view the patient as primitive, or as having psychotic parts, and the analyst as the container of these feelings, drawing on internal reveries to represent for the patient, and communicate back to the patient, newly metabolized ideas, enacting a kind of maternal function. Wilson adds that "the fundamental problem with this way of conceptualizing the psychoanalyst's position is that the analyst sets herself up as an ideal—a thinker, a processer of

unwanted emotion, a metabolizer of the patient's 'bad' parts" (p. xxi). Wilson underscores the reductive conception of unconscious content implicit in this perspective, along with the grandiosity of the analyst's position and its disavowal of the analyst's desire.

Wilson's focus on desire, and the lack that it reveals, in contrast, is a call to ethics, a demand to wrestle with our desire. For Wilson, "*In the end, the patient is not responsible, from an ethical point of view, for the analyst's actions or states of mind"* (p. 152, italics in the original). By asking analysts to own their analytic desires, and as a result, to be open to the surprising emergence of their desires within each session, Wilson is placing a burden of responsibility on the analyst. In this context, Wilson makes new meaning of Lacan's well-known directive not to cede ground to the truth of one's desire. Lacan wrote this sentence as a commandment for the patient—her analyst should press her not to cede ground to the truth of her desire. For Wilson, this directive invokes a taking responsibility on the analyst's part for the complexity of her own desire. I would add from Wilson's surrounding ideas that this directive demands an awareness of the slipperiness of our desires as they trip along a path of signifiers and ultimately yield to a sense of lack. We shouldn't be enthralled by a mirage of a realizable desire, as frequently happens when an analytic tug-of-war results from the patient's and her analyst's competing wishes.

Wilson distinguishes himself helpfully from Lacan, who frames the analyst as a cipher, a silent placeholder, who is remote from her patient in her awareness of the illusory nature of her presence to the patient. Wilson writes:

> Lacan failed to take his assertions about the ontology of the subject—our divided, lacking nature—to their logical conclusions as regards the analyst and her position. The book that you are reading, in its entirety, which is so indebted to Lacanian ideas, runs aground of those ideas on this most basic of issues: "the possibility of the psychoanalyst, as agency of the clinical process, operating as a divided subject." Being is always ineluctably trafficking in non-being, or a want-to-be; this is the heart of the analyst's futural, gyroscopic position. As divided, as lacking and desiring, the analyst's "being sure" is always partial; and rigor, however comforting, may be hard to distinguish from rigidity. [pp. 147-148, quoting Nobus,[5] p. 20]

[5] Nobus, D. (2016). For a new gaya scienza of psychoanalysis. *Div./Rev.,* 15:17-23.

Wilson delineates that it is generally after the fact, as we appraise our words and their impact, that we engage our analytic ethics. The process of retrospective resignification, deferred action, is the work of analytic ethics. After Lacan,[6] Wilson conceptualizes ethics as a judgment of our action; "Both patient and analyst find themselves in an ethical field in which each must take account of, and ultimately avow, his or her involvement and impact" (p. 156).

The ethical field for the analyst is defined by the fact that our conscious engagement with our patients is always interrupted by meanings and intentions that are beyond our awareness. Because "there will always be a gap between avowed reasons for action, the action itself, and our retrospective reading of what happened" (p. 164), there is, incumbent upon the analyst, a demand to take responsibility for actions and meanings that took us by surprise. This is what Wilson means when he says, as quoted earlier, "It is one of the marked ironies of psychoanalytic work that we are responsible for what often enough we are unaware of or take for granted, or when we act in ways we didn't expect or can't account for" (p. 162).

Wilson employs a broad range of theoretical perspectives to draw out his ideas, while also honing in on ways that many theories have overlooked the centrality of the analyst's desire. His attention to various theories is open-minded and nonprejudicial. His effort is to get to the heart of our common practice, rather than to compete for primacy:

> I indulge the hope that it is possible to mix and compare theoretical models to felicitous and generative purposes, and to bring together seemingly disparate terms in an intellectually responsible way. Part of this responsibility is to represent faithfully, as best one can, a point of view with which one has disagreements. Further, comparative psychoanalytic scholarship must be willing, as I am here, to describe a landscape in which contrasts are as worthy to lay bare as are comparisons and similarities. In other words, *not all models are additive; some are incommensurable.* [p. 125, italics in original]

[6] Lacan, J. ([1959-1960] 1992). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis. 1959-1960*, ed. J. A. Miller, trans. D. Porter. New York: Norton.

Wilson creatively employs this array of theoretical perspectives, bending them toward important, universal truths about psychoanalysis. His pairing of divergent theoretical models yields to a deeper conceptualization of his own ideas; as an example, he brings Jacques Lacan[7] together with Tversky and Kahneman,[8] research psychologists who study cognitive bias. Likewise, Wilson reads Wilfred Bion against Lacan, drawing out a central organizing thread from these very divergent minds. We find Betty Joseph paired with Fred Busch, Glen Gabbard with Joseph, and Heinrich Racker with Lacan.

In contrast to Lacan's seemingly perverse capacity to frustrate the epistomophilic drives of his readers, Wilson rivals Bruce Fink in his ability to render Lacan intelligible. There is an allegiance to Lacan that runs through every chapter, making Lacan's ideas accessible and urgently relevant to our position as analysts, while also engaging Lacan's ideas with contemporary relational concepts. As faithfully as Wilson brings Lacan alive for his readers, he is no fanatic. He pointedly illuminates some of Lacan's crucial errors in psychoanalytic theory, namely his reluctance to extend this theory of decentering into the person of the analyst. He distinguishes his own conception of the analyst's desire from that of Lacan, who places it as an empty lure. The risk in Lacan's formulation is that the analyst remains at a remove from the patient, embracing her lack too fully as an excuse to deaden the relationship. In contrast, Wilson suggests a compromise: "*The object is present but necessarily lacking*. And so, *the psychoanalyst is present but necessarily lacking*" (p. 89, italics in original). Crucially, Wilson claims: "I am also responsible for my actions, including especially those whose significance and meaning have eluded me" (p. 30).

This picture of the analyst's desire widens our perspective on central themes in contemporary psychoanalysis: resistance, countertransference, clinical impasses, and termination—all are reconceptualized when an equal share is given to the role of the analyst, and the play of

[7] Lacan, J. ([1949] 2002). The mirror stage and the formation of the I function as revealed in psychoanalytic experience. In *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English,* trans. B. Fink. New York: Norton. 75-81.

[8] Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgement under uncertainty: heuristics and biases. *Science, New Series.* 185:1124-1131.

her unconscious. For instance, Wilson brings in Racker,[9] who offers an "unflinching, face-to-face recognition and acceptance of the analyst's basic desiring position—a position that is inevitable, unavoidable, and at times deeply troublesome" (p. 131). Analysts, according to Racker, can get drawn into a law of the talion with their patients, an eye-for-an-eye mentality, when patients frustrate their desires. The retaliation is meant to distract from the analyst's responsibility for the conflict. By pairing Racker's law of the talion with Lacan's conceptualization of dual-relation resistance,[10] Wilson points to a way that these singular theories converge around a shared understanding: by ignoring her countertransference, or unpleasure, or disappointed desire, the analyst is drawn into combat with her patient, stirring an iatrogenic, traumatic experience. Wilson reveals that it is in the literature on countertransference and projection that the aporia of the analyst's desire is most blatant.

Wilson's framing of our work engages a more future-oriented—proleptic, as he calls it—perspective. The analyst's interventions help to tip the patient into a new terrain, a movement into a new engagement or awareness with unconscious elements. This is what brings Bion and Lacan together, in what Wilson calls the position of "listening-accompanist." As the patient speaks, the analyst listens attentively, trying to locate signifiers that point to something more than what the patient knows herself to be saying. The analyst accents, comments, re-inflects, or punctuates the patient's words, generating a kind of "call-and-response" (p. 112). Both Bion and Lacan, Wilson posits, "situate the analyst in this place of emergence: Lacan called it lack or the Real, and Bion called it O" (p. 115).

Drawing in part on Heidegger, Wilson construes humans as "in anticipation of the not-yet. We are thrown into the world, are practically engaged, and so care in a naturally forward-leaning, anticipatory manner" (p. 172). In contrast to Freud, Wilson sees a potential even in the deadening aspects of the compulsion to repeat: "What is repeated is never the same; it is never the identical iteration over and over. Even if,

[9] See Racker, H. (1957). The meanings and use of counter-transference. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 26:303-305 and Racker, H. (1968). *Transference and Countertransference.* New York: International Univ. Press.

[10] Lacan, J. ([1953] 2002). The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis. In *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English,* trans. B. Fink,. New York: Norton, pp. 197-268.

phenomenologically speaking, the repetition feels deadly, static, oneric, it is never only that" (p. 172).

With this sense of potential buried within all communication, the analyst's job is to find the clues to unearth a sense of novelty or new awareness. Wilson conceives of the analyst as occupying a gyroscopic position, settling into her unsettled, decentered position, such that she can shift and rotate to lean into a sense of the new. "The proleptic unconscious is a becoming, as a kind of arrival or the entering of a new place. But the challenge of representing this turning or becoming is considerable. We are all of us tempted to concretize and reify" (p. 173). The reductive version of the unconscious is akin to a narcissistic closure that settles the matter, avoiding an opportunity to open up something novel in the message.

Wilson traces the evolution of ego psychology as a movement toward a future-oriented sense of unconscious processes (Roy Schafer is an important example here).[11] This informs his model of an unconscious that is always in movement.

> [I]t is precisely in time, in the now-and-the-next of the clinical hour, that manifestations of the unconscious are realized or emerge as the potentially significant. It is much less the case that the psychoanalyst "speaks" to the patient's unconscious, and much more so that the patient's "unconscious" speaks to both parties through its proleptic dimension of becoming as the analytic work moves into the future. [p. 185]

Speech is crucial to the work of the proleptic in the treatment. Polysemy and overdetermination generate new meanings that emerge from old turns of phrase. As long as the analyst occupies a position in which she is ready to be surprised by novel meanings—within her own words as well as in those of her patients—the analytic relationship is in constant movement toward what Wilson calls "the now-and-the-next."

In every chapter, Wilson provides clinical examples from his own practice, which bring his ideas to life. At the outset, he provides an autobiographical account of the determining forces that gave rise to his own desire to be an analyst. Wilson underscores the necessity of the question

[11] Schafer, R. (1976). *A New Language for Psychoanalysis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

of naming his desire but also the impossibility of answering this question truthfully and completely.

In his account, Wilson places himself in a web of mostly male relationships—a childhood friend, a too-absent-because-traumatically-present alcoholic father, a commanding and reliable baseball coach, a child psychiatrist uncle, an English professor, and his first analyst. Wilson generously invites us into his own psychic world in a way that feels evocative of many of the personal stories of Freud's own interpersonal web of relationships that are woven into *The Interpretation of Dreams*. As with Freud, having a context for the person of Mitchell Wilson allows us to engage with his own relationship to his work and his patients. We can understand the urgency of Wilson's need to "get it right" with his patients vis-a-vis the absences and misses that his childhood yielded. Through this process, Wilson comes forward to show that the personal question of the analyst's desire places the analyst in an essential, ethical position, a position that all candidates in analytic training must also be urged to take up.

Wilson's clinical vignettes are extremely flexible, and serve to show what he is saying, without a rush to a conclusion. Concise and compelling clinical examples flesh out instances in which both Wilson and his patients are brought up short by words that suddenly take on new meaning, rendering the entire relationship between them in a new light. These are the kinds of examples that stay with a reader, illuminating the quiet power of seemingly insignificant or everyday exchanges.

However, while Wilson's ideas are coherent and eminently compelling, they started to tug at me as I read. Isn't there a risk of a closed narrative embodied in Wilson's model of analytic desire? Mightn't the analyst *impose* a model of lack and decenteredness on her patient, engendering a similar kind of closure to what Wilson identifies in other theories? How, we might ask, can Wilson hold this universal claim about desire without sharing in the risk he has identified elsewhere of "colonizing the patient's text"?

This drew me in to what I consider to be the navel of the book, a patient that Wilson calls Evan, who comes to analysis feeling all too aware of being fragmented and decentered, and whose wish is to attain a sense of wholeness. In other words, the patient is asking Wilson for that

which Wilson is least inclined to offer, something Wilson would eschew, as it is in conflict with his very sense of human subjectivity.

Evan is a classic case of an underachiever, a 30-year-old man who is unable to complete a long list of aspired "adult" goals, from paying his taxes, to completing the last two courses required for his B.A., to getting a job. By Wilson's account, Evan's use of language mirrors Shakespeare's *King Lear* in the array of truths he conveys about the concept of nothing. "Nothing could be further from the truth." "Nothing scares me more than that." "Nothing is stopping me." "Nothing can help me." Wilson gets the message that Evan is sending him—for Evan, the experience of lack is traumatic and broken. He can find no way out of it. As Wilson puts it, "Evan not only felt decisions to be impossible—he identified with impossibility itself" (p. 90). The wish that Evan was bringing to Wilson is a wish to feel more present or whole.

And of course, this wish comes forward in the analysis, with a request for the analyst to give him something to hold onto, even if anything so offered would assuredly fall short. As Wilson conceives it, Evan "had succumbed to the lure of plenitude. Once his father or mother [or analyst] produced the answer that was definitive, no other questions would need to be asked … . But there were no such answers. Evan was stuck" (p. 91). As the analysis unfolds, Evan enacts this need for something, and its inevitable falling short in relation to Wilson's words. Evan frequently asks Wilson to repeat what he has said, feeling a need to fix Wilson's words in his mind. Over time, Wilson refuses this request, and it is intensely frustrating to Evan to find a lack in Wilson that mirrors his own sense of lack: "Evan seemed to stage this lack in the Other to revisit, yet again, the point of absence and disappointment, and in this way never really to move on" (p. 91). Wilson inhabits the position of lack, mirroring back to Evan his own sense of impotence, and ironically, this movement invites Evan to feel more agency. Over time, Evan begins to see a new meaning in the phrase, "Nothing can help me." He begins to see the complexity of his attachment to "nothing." Nothing might mean something, after all. One example of this comes in a moment where Wilson offers a somewhat rote defense interpretation, and Evan feels the freedom to call him out, saying "'No, this is different. What I'm telling you is that I felt alive as I was coming here. I was actually awake'" (p. 93). As Wilson accepts his own sense of lack in this encounter, Evan feels the

freedom to locate a sense of presence, a coming forward, in the treatment. Evan now perceives the liberation that comes with breaking that mirror. As the analysis proceeds, Evan returns to school, but struggles with procrastination. Eventually, the pair devises a solution in which Evan brings his computer to the sessions to write his final paper. These hours were spent in silence, as Evan developed something to say.

Wilson gleans the import of Evan's message as something that we all struggle with, analysts and patients alike. We all wish that nothing could be further from the truth; we wish to distance ourselves from nothingness and lack, or we wish to grab onto a something, even if that something is illusory. This clinical account is also an account of the work that each of us, as analysts, must work through. As Wilson puts it:

> … to recognize and confront how one puts together one's place in the world—that is, sees the fantasmatic nature of one's fantasies—is upsetting, uncomfortable, and at times terrifying … .This experience is the experience of nothing and more precisely that nothing which supports what one thinks, where one is, and what one feels. It is an experience of confusion, of utter not knowing. One can see then what one has used, psychically, to prop oneself up, so to speak. [p. 93]

This solves the riddle I posited about the analyst imposing her model of lack on a patient and thereby forcing a kind of narcissistic closure. This conception of desire invokes an emptying of one's authority and an openness to surprise. If we truly apprehend the nature of lack that Wilson is proposing, we have nothing to impose. Nothing, in fact, is our domain.

> It is not only "okay" not to know; it is also crucial to grasp the salutary limits of the analyst's knowledge. The analyst is a curator of space. She offers what she feels and thinks, always in the service of furthering the analytic dialogue in the pursuit of truth, a pursuit that is ever-evolving but whose object is consistently in focus … I am advocating a bias that acknowledges the lack inherent in desire, meaning, and subjectivity—a bias, in other words, that takes full account of symbolic castration. [p. 94]

In spite of how much I have already said about the depth and value of this highly original and pertinent book, I am pained by how much I am leaving out. For me, this book is a must-read for candidates in analytic training and a welcome read for practicing analysts. I also think it will stimulate academics who traffic in psychoanalytic theory. It situates us in the present theoretical moment, expands our understanding of the ethical foundation of analytic work, and opens new vistas onto analytic practice and technique.

SARAH ACKERMAN (HANOVER, NH)

ON DANGEROUS GROUND: FREUD'S VISUAL CULTURES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS. By Diane O'Donoghue. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. 400 pp.

In an obsessively detailed and illuminating book, art historian Diane O'Donoghue brings a new approach to the study of the material and cultural environment in which psychoanalysis was born, resulting in this remarkable work of intellectual history. Paying close attention to Freud's ideas in the specific context in which he develops them, O'Donoghue argues persuasively that Freud's disavowal of his own painful memories contributed to the very way that he conceptualized the structure and the workings of the unconscious. Most centrally, she illustrates many instances in which Freud emphasizes infantile sexuality and obscures the contribution of early trauma and shame as determinants of defensive structures. Using a close reading of his published dreams, examination of his contemporaneous letters, the itinerary of his travels, his encounters with works of art and antiquities, and details from his personal history, she brings to light the complex meanings of specific details that Freud dismisses, disguises, distorts, or leaves out. She usefully incorporates and comments on the work of many scholars and assembles an astonishing amount of evidence from beyond the psychoanalytic literature. O'Donoghue's meticulous and wide-ranging research leads her to fresh discoveries that add to the persuasiveness of her argument; even

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Rebecca Chaplan

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the few places where she resorts to speculation are easy to forgive because of the wealth of thought-provoking material she provides. The book is as thrilling to read as a detective story.

There is an unfortunate body of tendentious scholarship that speculates about Freud's unconscious motives. What distinguishes O'Donoghue's approach is the thoroughness of her research and her devotion to detail. She knows what Freud saw when he looked out of his window, and we are invited to see Vienna as a place of meanings that resonate in Freud's ideas. She shows us photographs of the interior of the shop where he bought the urn that appears in his "dream of convenience," she knows the statues that he walked past, the paintings that he would have seen hanging *next to* the paintings he writes about, the configuration of the train compartments that he traveled in, and the identities of his traveling companions. Not only does she identify with confidence the specific book that young Freud and his sister tore to pieces like an artichoke, she tells us the reason they might have been encouraged to do so. The effect is like reading Joyce's *Ulysses* with a teacher who grew up in Dublin: not until then do you realize the dimension it adds to consider the meaning that resides in the physical and the manifest.

In each of the book's five chapters, O'Donoghue demonstrates that Freud's nascent ideas are connected to the material environment of his life. The first, titled "The lost language of stones," explores how the architecture that surrounded him influenced the way he conceptualized the psyche and contributed metaphors for his explanation of the origin of hysteria. From his attachment to the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, detailed in his letters to his fiancé Martha as a place of comfort and excitement that he would visit frequently after attending lectures by Charcot, to his deliberate choice of living spaces in Vienna, O'Donoghue tracks the evolution of Freud's ideas about trauma and memory as he moved among physical structures.

O'Donoghue shows us how the architectural history of Vienna is intwined with Freud's intellectual and emotional life. For example, when Freud returned from Paris in 1886, he and Martha moved into a new building on the Ringstrasse designed by the preeminent architect Friedrich von Schmidt, who had been responsible for the design of the nearby Rathaus, or City Hall. Schmidt himself lived in the building, and

his funeral was held in the chapel while Freud was still in residence. His program of neo-Gothic architecture deliberately embodied liberal and secular ideas that flourished under the reign of the emperor Franz Joseph, including the promotion of political life and civil rights for Jews. His motto, "*Saxa loquuntur,*" "The stones are speaking," appears on the building plans for the Rathaus as well as on the architect's tomb, as an expression of the historical cultural claim that informed the political philosophy of the progressive movement. Freud used the phrase with a slightly different meaning in his 1896 paper in which he announced his discovery of sexual trauma as the etiology of hysteria.[1] In his extended metaphor, the archeologist digs down through layers into the past to find fragments that he can then assemble and understand by translating the ancient inscriptions. O'Donoghue points out that his audience would have heard in the resonance of this phrase not only a reference to the recent archeological discoveries at Ephesus, in which the Viennese were employing newly developed scientific techniques, but also would have understood it as a reference to the architect and his modernist political project.

The building that Freud chose for his apartment and office had been constructed on a site where hundreds of people had died in a catastrophic fire. Rebuilt as a residence whose revenues would go to charity, it was a desirable address, with a neo-Gothic façade, a rose window, and a large interior courtyard surrounded by a staircase. In keeping with the theme of restoration, on the occasion of the birth of their first child, which brought new life to the scene of the tragedy, Freud and Martha received a letter and a gift from the Emperor Franz Joseph. Freud's ambitious hopes for his future were associated with this significant address which represented professional stature and association with modern and scientific values. Within a few years it was the site of a death connected to Freud, but which he hardly mentions in any of his writing, even including his intimate letters to Fleiss. Pauline Silberstein, the 19-year-old new wife of Freud's childhood friend Eduard, had been sent from her home in Romania to see him as a patient, suffering from unspecified mental illness. Freud left no account of his consultation, nor is there any evidence to determine the date of her arrival in the city.

[1] Freud, S. (1896). The Aetiology of Hysteria, *S.E.,* 3:189-221.

There is no way to know whether she had yet met with Freud, and it is unlikely that she encountered him in the building on the day that she presumably jumped to her death from the stairs from the third floor, where his office was, into the interior courtyard. O'Donoghue cites the scant existing records of the event, including a newspaper report that misspells Freud's name as the doctor she was coming to see. Freud's silence about the incident is striking given his proximity to her fall, the likelihood he would have been called to the scene as the closest physician, and the degree of distress we can assume he must have experienced. There is a gap in his correspondence with Fleiss, and there are no existing letters between him and Silberstein from this time, so it is probable that some communication was destroyed. Freud seems to have buried the incident, and there is room to speculate that he had blocked it from his own awareness. O'Donoghue offers evidence that despite his silence, the event was a trauma that Freud experienced in somatic symptoms. For example, two years later, on the anniversary of her death, Freud complained to Fleiss of "incomprehensible" dysgraphia. O'Donoghue cites an observation made by another author in a paper about the suicide, that there is evidence in his dreams.[2] For example, in Freud's discussion of the "Non Vixit" dream in the Interpretation of Dreams,[3] he identifies themes of death, hostile competitive feelings towards loved ones, ambivalence towards his friend Fleiss, his inability to keep a secret, and the idea of a ghostly "revenant," who can be made to disappear with a wish. Among his associations he mentions two "Paulines": Fleiss's new baby daughter, whose birth Freud hoped would comfort him for the death of his sister, and Freud's own niece, who was a childhood playmate, and who is mentioned in his association to another dream as someone whom Freud teased and treated cruelly. He omits the Pauline about which he might have felt the most responsibility, ambivalence about his reaction to her death, and fear for his reputation. It is noteworthy that Freud leaves out this association even as he is reformulating his idea of how the psyche allows only certain material to be available to consciousness. Although the omission is most probably deliberate (he has told us at the outset that he knows more about the

[2] Hamilton, J.W. (2002) Freud and the suicide of Pauline Silberstein. *Psychoanal. Rev.*, 89(6):889-909.

[3] Freud, S. (1900). The Interpretation of Dreams, *S.E.*, IV, p. 486.

dream than he will relate), it is an example of his selection of material, in order to privilege the operation of sexual and ambitious wishes over the influence of trauma and guilt, in his theory of symptom formation. O'Donoghue also wants us to understand that the death of Pauline would have changed the meaning of the building for him: the Freuds moved out soon afterwards.

As his theory of the origin of hysteria began to shift from being the result of an actual event towards an emphasis on the activity of the mind in recording and defending against experience, in May of 1897 Freud sent a letter to Fleiss including an idea for a paper to be called "The architecture of hysteria."[4] The letter includes a sketch with a row of jagged triangles depicting how iterations of successive fantasy constructions protect against access to traumatic experiences, showing the way that they can be revealed through the work of analysis. His use of the term "defensive structures" in the letter has been attributed by a previous historian to the recent trip the two had taken to Nuremberg where they had observed the medieval fortifications, whose shape is echoed by the lines in his sketch. Instead, and more relevantly according to O'Donoghue, the phrase was in use at the time to refer to the protective buildings under construction in Vienna to defend against floods. This more likely source is consistent with the shift in the location of danger in Freud's theory from the outside to the inside, and his recognition of the activity of the psyche in its own defense. Furthermore, she reminds us that Karl Lueger had been elected mayor in Vienna, and the Rathaus building that once embodied liberal political ideas was now the site of anti-Semitic speeches. The building which once represented safety and freedom of thought had suddenly become a symbol of disappointment and pain. It is a subtle argument, but as I read it, she suggests that the changing political situation and Freud's own sense of danger contributed to his move away from a "safe," or naïve, theory, in which one can be certain about what "actually" happened, and in which one can be confident that the stones are speaking a unified truth, to a more sophisticated one in which the mind is required to recruit more creative defenses and fantasy is employed to manage threatening affect from within.

[4] Freud, S. (1897). Draft M. The Architecture of Hysteria, May 25, 1897. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904*, pp. 246-248.

The second chapter reconstructs Freud's trip to Italy in which he bought the first item in his collection of antiquities. O'Donoghue reminds us by repeated examples that Freud's destinations were not accidental and that his impressions from his travels found their way into the formation of his theory. This trip immediately preceded his September 21, 1897 letter to Fleiss in which he renounces the seduction hypothesis and states "there are no indications of reality in the unconscious" (p. 87). To begin with, she reviews for us the relationship between the historical interest in the excavation of artifacts from the Etruscan tombs that Freud visited near Orvieto, and the developing commercial market to sell souvenirs to tourists, which imposed a different system of valuation of the objects based on stories about the past that were more likely to make them sell. The excavations were arranged to give the visitor an exotic experience: model tombs displayed skeletons and artifacts that had been moved from their original places. The bowl that Freud purchased in the belief that it was a cinerary urn was in fact a food vessel. O'Donoghue develops the idea that the meaning of the antiquities, far from being the proof of the "real" historical past, was subject to elaboration and fantasy to fit the imagination of the buyer. She compares this to the memories unearthed in Freud's ongoing self-analysis, in which, she claims, the "truth" of the memory is established by how well it comports with the narrative of psychic development that Freud is expounding. Two years after his trip to Orvieto, Freud has an obscure and frightening dream in which he is dissecting his pelvis. In the dream there are "Red Indians and Gypsies" and he is walking in a grave where there are men sleeping next to children on benches. To exit the grave, he must walk over the children. Freud associates the grave to his visit to the Etruscan tombs and concludes that it represents a hopeful and consoling ending, that he has survived one grave already. He does not account for the terror that woke him from sleep. O'Donoghue points out that there is more going on here than he lets on. She explains that Freud sent Martha a postcard from Orvieto observing that "the present inhabitants are as black as gypsies of ancient Etruria," and that he would have related the low status of the local Roma people to the similar situation of Jews (pp. 96-97). She gives further support for this as a source of anxiety in a later chapter, in which she discusses pervasive anti-Semitic imagery that appeared in the tarot card

games, associated with Roma that were hugely popular at the time. She speculates that the dream image of men sleeping next to children is a representation of the idea of sexual abuse by fathers, the troublesome idea that was very much on Freud's mind as he toured the excavations. In the famous letter to Fleiss renouncing this idea, he had complained that he had originally hoped to achieve fame and wealth by solving the riddle of hysteria, so that he could lift his children above the "severe worries that robbed me of my youth." She believes that his selection of some details in the dream and his neglect of others is a means of rearranging artifacts to fit a story. and that there are meanings in the dream that refer to these severe worries, producing the terror that woke him up, that Freud had a motive to conceal from even from himself.

In his paper on screen memories, Freud, disguised as a patient, tells an autobiographical story of a "catastrophe" in his father's business that forced the family to move to a large town, and says: "Long and difficult years followed, of which, as it seems to me, nothing was worth remembering."[5] The idea of something not "worth remembering" is curious in this context, as Freud's technique for listening to a dream includes paying special attention to details that are disregarded. This is the theme of the third chapter in which O'Donoghue fills in details of Freud's early childhood, again with emphasis on material details, and shows how his dreams contain allusions to early experiences even when he does not acknowledge it. She also shows convincingly that his selectivity and his lack of doubt about the veracity of his memories are in the service of supporting his Oedipal framework, in which the erotic fantasy of the child becomes the principal content that must be repressed. Freud's promotion of the Oedipal narrative gives agency to the child, but it also functions defensively to conceal real threats to the child's emotional and material life. The emphasis in his theory, O'Donoghue argues, is partially determined by Freud's erotization of his own pre-Oedipal trauma.

In a letter to Fleiss a few weeks after his allusion to the worries that robbed him of his youth, Freud attributes his longstanding anxiety about trains to the moment of his erotic awakening, when at age "between two and two and a half years" he saw his mother naked on the train journey to their new home in Vienna. O'Donoghue traces the family's travels

[5] Freud, S. (1899). Screen memories, *S.E.,* 3:303-322.

from Freiberg to Leipzig, and from there to Vienna, to demonstrate not only that the scene he remembers could never have happened, since among other things trains at that time did not provide private compartments, but to elaborate the circumstances of the family's move, the financial insecurity that necessitated the relocation, and the attachments that were disturbed along the way. Freud's father's livelihood had collapsed, and he moved the family in search of work. Freud's younger brother had died in infancy a year earlier when Freud was two; his infant sister became ill along the journey causing them to remain in Leipzig for additional months; his mother was pregnant again. In the relocation, Freud was separated from his earliest caregivers: his nanny who was fired for stealing and went to prison and the nurse who accompanied the family during their months in Leipzig but did not follow them all the way to Vienna. When they arrived in Vienna, his father's inability to find work meant that the family was dependent on his maternal grandparents for support.

This biographical material is not new, but O'Donoghue is most interested in how it informs Freud's theory. She points to several instances where Freud emphasizes the sexual meanings of train travel in unconscious fantasy but ignores the manifest reference to trains, a location of painful and traumatic memories.

One piece of her detective work is particularly revealing. In one of the examples Freud gives of an "absurd" dream, "My son the Myope," he begins with the detail that "certain events that occurred in the City of Rome" required that "the children be removed to safety."[6] Freud gives as day residue his worries for his own children, including threats facing the Jewish community. He had recently seen a play by Herzl, and the dream occurred in the year of the Dreyfus trial. Rome is associated with Herod, and danger to Jewish children. In the dream Freud sits on the edge of a fountain, near a large gate, "greatly depressed and almost in tears."[7] He watches while two children, one of them his son, are handed to a man by a female attendant. He identifies the origin of the dream in a "tangle of thoughts" about acts of anti-Semitism and worries about the future for his own children. The words spoken in the dream are the seeming absurdity: Freud tells us that the word "geseres" spoken in the

[6] Freud, S. (1900). The Interpretation of Dreams, *S.E.,* V, pp. 441-444.

[7] Freud, S. (1900). The Interpretation of Dreams, *S.E.,* V, p. 443.

dream is a Hebrew word that means "weeping and wailing," which is then in the dream transformed into its nonsensical opposite by the prefix "un." This becomes the emphasis in his analysis: the turning into its opposite has to do with bilateral symmetry. The appearance of "nonsense" leads Freud to conclude that "dreams … are often most profound when they seem crazy."[8] Didier Anzieu, in his comprehensive book about Freud's self-analysis, believes the image of the transfer of the children refers to Freud's early childhood separation, and, further, makes the case that the dream refers to a specific disagreement with Fleiss about his ideas about bilaterality and bisexuality that would soon lead Freud to end their friendship. Freud does not tell us, but it makes some sense of what he identifies as the "profound" meaning if we understand the dream to represent a threat to their intense and sexualized connection.[9] Meanwhile, Freud skips over the specific detail of "The City of Rome," except to say that in the dream he knows the gate is the Porta Romana in Siena. O'Donoghue insists that the dream in fact refers to a repressed memory, and that the key is in the manifest content. What O'Donoghue's discovery adds is to call our attention to Freud's direction of focus away from the strong affective content, by means of his attention to the linguistic play, to the general unhappy condition of the Jews, and then to the seemingly neutral, intellectualized topic of bilaterality. With some sleuthing, she has identified the hotel where the Freud family lived during their stay in Leipzig; significantly it was named "The City of Rome." It stood near a large gate at the terminus of an ancient Roman road. She presumes that the scene in the dream is a memory of Freud's parting from his nurse, accompanied by an appropriate affect, and that his stress on the "nonsense" content of the words is defensive. Whether consciously or not, Freud has omitted the connection that might account for the marked affect in the dream. This insight is consistent, as she points out, with Freud's theory-building in the case of "Little Hans," where Freud selects details to support his Oedipal story, explains the boy's phobia as a result of repression of a sexual wish, but disregards everything he knew about the boy's ongoing family trauma. Her point is

[8] Freud, S. (1900). The Interpretation of Dreams, *S.E.,* V, p. 444.

[9] Anzieu, D. (1986). *Freud's Self-Analysis.* Translated by Peter Graham. Madison, CT: International Univ. Press, p. 262.

that Freud's has a self-protective motive for this disavowal, which directs how he assigns value to both conscious and unconscious material in his theory.

In the fourth chapter she gives another example of "word play" used defensively, and again, of Freud putting the sexual content forward as a motive for repression, a priori, to disguise more existential fears. This chapter is a tour de force; she discusses his travels through the Balkans in detail, all the while emphasizing the colonialist lens through which Freud would have seen the "otherness" of the local population. Supported by specifics from his dreams and letters, knowing his exact itinerary, and knowing the identities of his companions, she fills in background and draws connections that help to focus our attention on what Freud chose to include and what he left out. For example, she reviews the three versions of Freud's account of a memory lapse that he uses to illustrate the activity of repression, told first in a letter to Fleiss, then published in a 1898 paper, "The psychical mechanism of forgetfulness," and then in the first chapter of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. The slip occurred during a conversation with a companion on a train, and involved forgetting the name of the painter Signorelli, whose works he had seen in the Duomo in Orvieto a year earlier on the same trip that included the excursion to the Etruscan graves. His attempts to remember the name produced instead the painters Botticelli and Boltraffio, and as he told Fleiss, the element *Bo* featured in these names because "the memory responsible for the repression … concerned something that happened in Bosnia," which had been the topic of their conversation (Freud as quoted in Donoghue, p. 182). Freud describes the linguistic mechanism for his parapraxis and ascribes his unconscious motivation to the content of their talk about sexual habits of the Turks. Once more, O'Donoghue's research reveals more about the nature of the conversation, which touched on disturbing personal themes. In an earlier letter he had told Fleiss of another lapse in which he could not remember the name of the poet Julius Mosen, who had written a famous poem about the Austrian nationalist Andreas Hofer, whose statue he had seen in Innsbruck. In this case Freud speculates that there were connections to the name that he wished to repress, and that "infantile material played a part" (Freud as quoted in Donoghue, p. 186). O'Donoghue reminds us that Julius Moses was the name of Freud's

brother who had died as an infant, and she also connects the figure of Hofer to Freud's anxiety about nationalism and his status as stateless Jew that was aroused by his travel in the region. In this light she proposes that the conversation with his companion on the train, whom she identifies as the lawyer Paul Freyhan, in which Freud says they discussed "death and sexuality," would have affected him deeply. Freud knew Freyhan's brother, and she gives good internal reasons why their conversation would have ranged from the sexual habits of the Turks to sexual difficulties of males in Berlin and Vienna. She also believes that Freyhan is the "certain young man of academic background," in the vignette Freud presents in the following chapter of the *Psychopathology* book, who is complaining to Freud about the "doom of a generation of younger Jews" (p. 202). O'Donoghue speculates, reasonably, that for the sake of his examples Freud has split one conversation into two. In his conversation with this young man the forgotten word is "aliquis," taken from Dido's speech declaring vengeance against Aeneas. Freud supplies the missing word by quoting its use in a speech he had read by the Jewish socialist Lasalle. O'Donoghue tells us that the same words appear at the base of a statue and reliquary commemorating the death of fifty students killed in a battle for Italian independence in 1848, which Freud would have seen at a stop in Siena on his way to Orvieto. His companion goes on to associate to "reliquien" (relics) and to "liquis," and from there to having visited a church associated with "blood libel," the recurrent pretext for massacres of Jews. Freud's interpretation of the slip in this case has to do with suspected pregnancy, and he makes a clever guess about the motivation for his companion's forgetting. O'Donoghue has more to say on this topic, but most salient here is that the topic of blood libel in this second conversation supports the connection between Freud's earlier forgetting of "Signorelli" and another, repressed, determinant of the repetition of *Bo* in his retrieval.

O'Donoghue invites us to look at the actual content of the paintings by Signorelli that Freud saw in the cathedral in Orvieto. Representing the "Last Things," the prophesied events leading up to the Apocalypse, they are violent scenes depicting the defeat and torture of infidels by Christians. She describes them in detail, considers the material in the guidebook that Freud consulted, and educates us about the tradition of depicting these scenes in Italian painting, including the blurring of

distinctions between Jews and Muslims and the use of Jewish stereotypes in the portrayal of the Antichrist. The Orvieto cathedral itself was built to commemorate the "Miracle at Bolsena," the appearance of the blood of Christ in the communion offering in 1263, and a chapel contains a relic of the communion cloth alongside paintings of related miracles of transubstantiation and of Jews being punished for desecration of the host. The theme of Jews as the enemy of the Christian faith and the fantasy of blood libel as justification for their persecution carries over thematically in the visually seductive Signorelli cycle of paintings in the next-door chapel. Thus, the name Bolsena, a nearby town that Freud had visited, and which was closely connected to his memory of the Signorelli paintings, could plausibly be the unconscious link that produced "Bo," and interfered with Freud's production of the name. O'Donoghue's point is not that Freud was necessarily unaware of this connection, but that there is evidence that Freud was deeply troubled by political and existential fears even as he was reworking his discoveries to explain the sexual roots of neurosis and to argue for the intelligibility of unconscious processes through the intellectual work of deciphering dreams and verbal slips.

In the final chapter, O'Donoghue opens another treasure chest. She is concerned with Freud's distinction between latent and manifest, and in particular the examples where a visual stimulus, like the Signorelli paintings, provides an unconscious motive for the symptom or the dream, but then disappears in the analysis, as though the meaning of the visual content were not important. She discusses this in the "Close the eyes" dream about his father's funeral, suggesting that Freud harbored more ambivalence and guilt about his handling of the funeral arrangements than he admits, and then in even more detail in the dream of the "Botanical monograph," where the visual image of the page in the shop window is important to Freud's analysis mainly for the associations it stimulates, including to his monograph on cocaine. O'Donoghue convinces us that the colored plate in the dream is a memory of a specific book and that Freud, for determined reasons, leaves us in the dark about its importance. The brief, visual dream, of course, is provided to demonstrate that a huge amount of meaning can be extracted from a seemingly inconsequential dream image. Along with the day residue's connection to flowers, a hint about his wife's

pregnancy, and his ambitions surrounding his paper on cocaine, Freud tells us he has a memory of his father giving him and his sister a book with colored plates to tear apart. He says that "the ultimate meaning of the dream, which I have not disclosed, is intimately related to the childhood scene."[10] Freud emphasizes his memory of tearing the pages, like the leaves of an artichoke, and the "childhood scene" is usually read to represent "deflowering," with the assumption, consistent with his thesis about infantile sexuality as the driving force of the dream, that Freud is being discreet about an aggressive sexual wish. But O'Donoghue shows us that there is more to see here if we pay attention to the manifest detail. With the clue of the book title, which Freud remembers as "Reise in Persien," she considers the various candidates for the actual book that have previously been suggested, gives reasons why they are not likely, and proposes a new one that not only is an illustrated botanical monograph, but for which there is a credible reason why it would have been in the Freud home and a reason why it was given to the children to destroy. According to O'Donoghue, it is a book of practical botany, written by Buhse, who is credited with the discovery of the substance galbanum which became a staple of the dye industry in Austria in the 1850s. To make the identification even more certain, a fold out map in the book has the legend, "Reise in Persien."

She then gives a summary of what is known about Jacob Freud's business failures and his probable attempt to learn about natural sources of dyes, not unrelated to his previous work as a wool merchant and plausibly connected to a business venture with his older sons, then living in Manchester, England, which was a major center of the textile dye industry. When this business idea failed, she suggests that it would have made sense that he would want to be rid of the book, an expensive reminder of his shame. She also reminds us that at the time Freud's uncle Joseph and the older brothers were accused in a scheme of passing counterfeit bills; she quotes a police report that throws suspicion on his father as well. The word "Bluhten," blooms, a link in the chain of flower associations in the dream, was used in criminal slang at the time to refer to producing counterfeit money. Thus, at the root of this dream

[10] Freud, S. (1900). The Interpretation of Dreams, *S.E.*, V, p. 191.

about Freud's ambition is a deep current of shame about failure and poverty.

What O'Donoghue can't tell us, of course, is whether Freud had conscious access to these associations or whether they were repressed. He is frank throughout the dream book that he knows more about the meanings and referents of his dreams that he will say. As has been stated many times, he was circumspect about including details that would affect his reception in the scientific community, and though this is true about sex and about Fleiss's botched operation on "Irma," it would most certainly apply to his shame about his class origins and his ambivalence about his father's business failures. O'Donoghue's emphasis on the particulars of Freud's material world made me wish that she told us more about the influence of his domestic life during this period of his on his theory-building. I wonder that his life in a household with six young children would not leave a stronger trace. She briefly touches on the vicissitudes of his relationship with Fleiss, the waning of his passionate feeling for Martha, and, in the context of his Bosnia travels, on his closeness to his sister-in-law Minna. Others have written about how his attraction to Fleiss and his evolving ideas about his own sexuality are represented in his early theory. O'Donoghue has limited her scope to the pre-1900 period of his work, emphasizing the pre-Oedipal material to be found in his letters and dreams. In this book she gives strong evidence of how preoccupied he was with his status as a Jew in 1890s Vienna, his memories of childhood hardship and separations, and his associated fears for his children's future wellbeing. O'Donoghue brings these concerns to the foreground, even as Freud often minimizes or disavows them, postulating instead the primacy of sexual wishes in the unconscious. Most of all she argues convincingly that his early childhood trauma had a continuing influence in his unconscious life. But at the same time that she enlarges our awareness of the absence of pre-Oedipal themes in his theory, she counsels against looking at history from the point of view of our modern agenda. She is not disapproving of Freud for his neglect of trauma, now so conspicuous to a contemporary student of his work. O'Donoghue teaches us that we miss the important details when we look at the past without context; just like the Etruscan antiquities dealers, and by extension, like a careless analyst, if we arrange the fragments that we discover to fit our own attractive narrative we will misunderstand the

meaning of the particular artifacts in their own time. Her book is a brilliant example of interdisciplinary studies and a valuable addition to our understanding of Freud.

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