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Art and psychoanalysis : a topographical, structural, and object-relational analysis illustrated by a study of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

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ART AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: A TOPOGRAPHICAL, STRUCTURAL, AND OBJECT-RELATIONAL ANALYSIS ILLUSTRATED BY A STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET*

A Dissertation Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

ART AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: A TOPOGRAPHICAL, STRUCTURAL, AND OBJECT-RELATIONAL ANALYSIS ILLUSTRATED BY A STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET*

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In this paper I examine the nature of the relationship between art and reality, arguing for the centrality of the role of art in the creation and cognition of the shared reality which is the human world. I support this argument through reference to the developing discipline of psychoanalysis, specifically considering three "stages" of psychoanalysis: classic Freudian psychoanalysis, ego psychology, and object relations theory. I take the position that if we are to reap the full benefit of the explanatory power of psychoanalysis as it may be applied to an understanding of aesthetics, we must treat psychoanalysis as we do any other growing body of theory, recognizing that initial formulations may be transformed, superceded, or restricted to a circumscribed area of applicability by advances based on new evidence.

To this end, I examine classic Freudian psychoanalysis in terms of concepts such as conscious/unconscious, repression, instinctual derivatives, primary and secondary process functioning, condensation and displacement, phantasy, symptom, and dream. I also consider the development of the psychoanalytic techniques of free association, transference analysis, and interpretation. I look at ego psychology in terms of the

mechanisms of defense, the formation of the superego, adaptation, the "conflict free sphere of ego functioning," and "regression in service of the ego." And I examine object relations theory in terms of Melanie Klein's inner and outer reality, D.W. Winnicott's transitional space, and the elaboration of world and self through mechanisms of identification, introjection, projection, and regression to dependence.

I tie each of the psychoanalytic theories to a theory of aesthetics developed from the psychoanalytic premises, and I provide concrete examples through interpretations of *Hamlet* based on each of the three aesthetic theories. I conclude that Winnicott's object relations theory grounds the most robust theory of aesthetics, one which supports the centrality of the role of art in our constitution of our selves and our world.

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INTRODUCTION

In the *Republic,* Plato raises some interesting and complex issues about the nature of the relationship between art and the individual personality and its grasp of reality. He argues that art appeals to the appetitive and emotional aspects of the personality at the expense of the rational, and that art, as imitative of the objects of appearance in the natural world, is at three[1] removes from the reality represented by the forms of the intelligible world. Art is thus doubly dangerous, in the first place because it promotes an incorrect balance among the parts of the soul, and in the second because it acts as a decoy and prevents the intellect from focusing on the true objects of cognition which are attainable only through reason. Though we have since Plato's time developed a more sophisticated understanding of both the nature of reality and the nature of human psychology, we are still influenced by a number of his assumptions about the nature of art. The perpetually recurring issue of censorship attests to a lingering fear that art, through a tendency to circumvent critical thought, may be subversive of individual or social stability; simultaneously, the tendency to view art as less than essential is reflected not only in the popular educational slogan, "Back to the Basics," but also in the secondary role of aesthetics in departments of philosophy where metaphysics and epistemology have traditionally held pride of place.

What is the nature of the relationship between art and reality? Can objects of art be objects of cognition appealing to our rational selves at the same time that they appeal

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[1]Three removes because the Greeks counted the first as well as the last term of a series.

to our aesthetic and desiring selves? In my dissertation I will look at the developing discipline of psychoanalysis as it has reflected a number of positions regarding the nature of the relationship between art and the human personality and its grasp of reality, and I will argue for the centrality of the role of art in the creation and cognition of the shared reality which is the intersubjective world.

Freud analyzed the symptoms presented by his neurotic patients and developed an interpretive theory which made sense of their illness as the expression of repressed desire. The obsession or hysteria which manifested itself in a bewildering array of incomprehensible behavior yielded to a complex process of translation which read backwards from the surface presentation to the hidden wish. Freud argued that the same process which provided the key to understanding the hysteric's symptoms and the obsessive's compulsions could be applied to dreams, to slips of the tongue and pen, to jokes, even to works of art. He saw the language of rational discourse as constantly disrupted by an archaic "primary" thought process which was driven by desire, found identity in similarity, substituted part for whole, operated in an eternal present, and spoke in symbols.

For Freud, the great foundational event in the constitution of the self was the successful resolution of the Oedipus complex. He saw the renunciation of the desire to sexually possess the mother through the internalization of the father's prohibition as the source of civilized human behavior, while the lingering conflicts of an unresolved Oedipus complex provided the basis for neurotic illness.

Freud's insights have proved to be extraordinarily rich. The argument that humankind moves in a world of meaning which is mediated by repressed desire has both

complemented and undercut the rationalist agenda with its emphasis on man as the knowing subject. After Freud, we think not only in terms of external "reality," but also in terms of a "psychic reality" comprised of a complex interaction between past and present, between what is given and what is remembered and desired.

In the work of psychoanalysts after Freud, however, a new set of clinical data has lead to a corresponding sophistication of psychoanalytic theory. A clearer understanding of the mechanisms of defense and the role of adaptation has lead to a new apprcciation of the complexity of ego functioning. In addition, the analysis of children and the analysis of psychotics (whom Freud had considered beyond the reach of his therapy) have revealed the importance of pre-oedipal issues which make the resolution of the Oedipal complex merely one of a number of events in an ongoing process through which the self continually defines and redefines itself in relation to its objects.

In my dissertation I will argue that if we are to reap the full benefit of the explanatory power of psychoanalysis as it may be applied to understanding of the nature of aesthetics, we must not stop with Freud. Rather, we must treat psychoanalysis as we do any other growing body of thcory, recognizing that initial formulations may be transformed, superseded, or restricted to a circumscribed area of applicability by advances based on new evidence.

Specifically, I will structure my argument according to Norman N. Holland's paradigm of psychoanalysis as falling historically into three phases which can be defined through the polarities which psychoanalysts use to explain events. The first phase (1897-1923) finds the most important distinction to be that between conscious and unconscious, the second (beginning in 1923) that between ego and non-ego, and the third (beginning

around 1950) that between self and not-self.[2] Each of these phases grows out of advances in clinical evidence which give rise to new theoretical formulations. Each, rather than simply replacing an earlier phase, builds on what went before and extends the range of phenomena to which psychoanalytic theory may address itself. I will attempt to explore the relevancy of these advances within psychoanalysis proper to the creation of a psychoanalytic theory of aesthetics which supports the centrality of the role of art in our constitution of our selves and our world.

Chapter One

Although Freud was fascinated by the mutual light which psychoanalysis and works of art could shed upon one another, he never developed a full aesthetic theory based on his new science. Instead, his writings on art and the creative processes may be read as a series of explorations, tentative but promising. Perhaps even more significantly, Freud never applied his later theoretic elaborations which eventually contributed to a mature psychology of the ego to an understanding of the place of works of art within psychic life.

In Chapter 1, I will work through Freud's early contributions to a theory of aesthetics and try to define both the positive aspects and the limitations of this classical psychoanalytic approach. I will structure much of this introductory material through reference to the interpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* advanced by Freud and further elucidated by Ernest Jones. I will argue that the classical approach, while in some ways richly fruitful, is ultimately incomplete. Because it is based on a naive understanding of

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[2]Norman N. Holland, *Holland's Guide to Psychoanalytic Psychology and Literature-and-Psychology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 5.

the nature of reality, it leaves important dimensions of even those art works to which it may be applied either unexplained or only trivially explained, and is, further, open to the criticism that it has no applicability at all to nonrepresentational forms of art or to pure music. In conclusion, I will suggest that these limitations of a classical psychoanalytic approach to aesthetics may be overcome by appeal to advances within the field of psychoanalysis itself, advances which make possible a new kind of psychoanalytic theorizing about creative processes and works of art.

Chapter Two

In Chapter 2, I will examine those implications for a theory of aesthetics implicit in Freud's later work, especially as that work is developed by the ego psychologists. The exploration of the unconscious ego and the mechanisms of defense, the theorization of an "autonomous" sphere of ego functioning, and the understanding of sublimation as a redirection of sexual energy from its instinctual aims and objects to the elaboration and transformation of the ego taken as a whole, all significantly advance the potential of psychoanalysis to provide the basis for a sophisticated aesthetic theory. I will illustrate these advances with a discussion of Norman N. Holland's treatment of *Hamlet,* and I will argue that, while these developments, firmly based in clinical practice and careful theorization, take us far beyond the aesthetic formulations possible under psychoanalysis' first phase, they are yet inadequate, both in terms of their ability to completely theorize the significance of works of art and in terms of their failure to capitalize on the full range of explanatory power available through reference to the "third phase" of psychoanalytic theory.

Chapter Three

In Chapter 3, I will turn to "third-phase" psychoanalysis as exemplified in the work of D.W. Winnicott, an object relations theorist, pediatrician, and psychoanalyst who practiced during the period between 1923 and 1971. Winnicott was part of the loose alliance known as the independent group of the British Psycho-Analytical Society. The independent group consisted of those analysts who refused to align themselves with either of the two factions (one lead by Anna Freud, the other by Melanie Klein) that struggled to dominate the British Psycho-Analytical Society during the 1940s.

Both Anna Freud and Melanie Klein used their work with children to stake out different positions on basic psychoanalytic concepts. Anna Freud worked within the tradition of the classical psychoanalysis and the ego psychologists and sought to elaborate her father's schema of genetic psychosexual stages of development, paying particular attention to the defense mechanisms of the developing ego. Melanie Klein professed a more radical allegiance to Sigmund Freud in her reinterpretation of his concept of the death instinct as it was reflected in the child's fantasy life and played itself out within the psychoanalytic transference. These theoretical differences lead to differences in technique, and each faction sought to control the training through which theory and technique were transmitted. This split within the Society came to an uneasy resolution in 1944 through a compromise engineered by Sylvia Payne that established three groups within two training courses. An "A" group, associated with Melanie Klein, and a "B" group associated with Anna Freud, each controlled major aspects of training within the Society, while a third group of nonaligned analysts worked with both groups but did not control a training program of their own. The members of this nonaligned or "middle"

group (later known as the Independent Tradition), while fully cognizant of the theoretical ferment which swirled around them, emphasized an eclectic and empirical approach, and found their main focus of interest in the relationship of the subject to its objects. It was within this context that third-phase psychoanalysis developed, and among the Independents of the middle group, Winnicott has gradually assumed a preeminent position.

Because third-phase psychoanalysis remains less well explicated as a coherent theory than does either classical psychoanalysis or ego psychology, I will devote this chapter to an exploration of Winnicott's work, to the end of analyzing its applicability to a theory of aesthetics in Chapter 4.

I have chosen Winnicott as an exemplar of third-phase psychoanalysis for a number of reasons. The first is that historically he provides a synthesis of Freudian and Kleinian insights, while theoretically advancing both. Influenced by the ego psychologists and their postulation of a conflict-free sphere of ego functioning and by the object relations theory of Melanie Klein, Winnicott's main focus of attention became the understanding of the way in which an individual creatively connects inner psychic reality with an external intersubjectively experienced world. I have also chosen Winnicott because of the particularly close connection between observation and theory which characterizes his thought. As a practicing pediatrician, Winnicott met in consultation with over 60,000 mother/infant pairs throughout his career; as a psychoanalyst, he worked not only with neurotics but also with the psychotics whom Freud had dismissed an unanalyzable. When reading Winnicott, one is never very far from the clinical practice and a real patient or analysand. All too often, attempts to derive literary or

aesthetic theories from psychoanalysis piggy-back theory upon speculation and end up with a body of work grounded in nothing but abstract thought. With Winnicott, one remains empirically grounded. A further consideration is that Winnicott's work holds up well in the light of current empirical infant studies (see, for example, the work of Daniel Stern).

Finally, Winnicott's work has proven to be especially rich in implications for a transformational psychoanalytic aesthetics. Winnicott theorizes a period of "primary maternal preoccupation" during which the mother provides a "holding environment" and adapts the world to the infant's needs and resulting fantasies in such a way the infant's fantasies are met with a matching reality producing the illusion that the infant has created the externally existing world. It is in this period of "absolute dependence" that the infant is introduced to the world, not in desperation following the failure of hallucination to provide the necessary satisfaction of need, but through the ministrations of the "good enough" mother who sets the stage for a creative relationship to a reality that is intersubjectively negotiated.

The stage of primary maternal preoccupation gives way to a gradual deliberate disillusionment for which weaning provides the paradigm. As the infant's developing ego becomes strong enough to withstand the impingements of reality without losing itself in a panicked reaction to them, the mother gradually allows the infant to interact directly with a world that does not support its omnipotent illusions. There remains, however, for the infant and through adult life, a "potential space" which supports a blending of psychic reality with the external world and which becomes the basis for art, religion, culture, creative scientific thought, and creative living in general.

Chapter 3 will be devoted to a detailed explication of the central concepts within Winnicott's work including, among others, "psyche-soma," "impingement," "primary maternal preoccupation," the "good enough mother," the "facilitating" or "holding" environment, "potential space," "transitional object," "false self" and "true self," and "regression to dependence." I will pay special attention to how these concepts derive from clinical experience and technique and how they contribute to a coherent theory of psychic functioning.

Chapter Four

In Chapter 4, I will use the Chapter 3 explication of Winnicott's thought as the basis for the construction of a "third-phase" psychoanalytic theory of aesthetics. While "first-phase" psychoanalysis was most concerned with the polarity between conscious and unconscious, and "second-phase" psychoanalysis that between ego and non-ego, "third-phase" psychoanalysis is most concerned with the polarity between self and not-self.

In broad outline, one may say that within Winnicott's thought there is no radical split between "inner" and "outer" reality, but rather a continuum between the objective and subjective which allows the creation of the symbolic and intersubjective world. And there is no radical split between rational, discursive thought and fantasy, but rather a continuum which includes the kind of playful imaginative creation which results in works of art and scientific theories. Reality is not imposed on the psyche, nor is it merely a product of human thought. Instead the psyche is connected to a world which it in part finds and in part creates and which becomes the ground for meaningful existence. In this

chapter, I will attempt to make concrete and detailed the vision of aesthetics made possible by Winnicottian psychoanalysis.

Chapter Five

In Chapter 5, I will offer a concrete application of the aesthetic theory developed in Chapter 4 through a reading of *Hamlet* which interprets the play as being about the boundaries between self and world and the way that those boundaries are inter-subjectively negotiated through culture and language. *Hamlet* is about the failure of language in a world where potential space is denied, and the play is itself a paradigmatic example of the ability of language to transcend interpsychic boundaries in the creation of a meaningful intersubjective world.

This reading of *Hamlet* does not replace earlier psychoanalytic readings. It does add significantly to our understanding of why the play has held such a preeminent position within the canon of Western literature, and it arises from an aesthetic theory which not only enriches our understanding of *Hamlet*, but also allows us to understand nonrepresentational art and pure music. Most important, it demonstrates a sophisticated conception of the nature of reality and of the place of aesthetics in its creation.

CHAPTER 1

ART AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

When Sigmund Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899, he considered it to be the key statement of a unified theory of mind which could explain phenomena as diverse as the neurotic's symptoms and the dreamer's night-time fantasies. What the young neurologist had first encountered in the bizarre beliefs and behavior of the mentally ill had shown itself in another guise within his own dreams. In a bold move he would apply the same analysis to works of art. Symptom, dream, artistic creation--all yielded to a single explanatory scheme. Thirty years later, in the preface to the Third (Revised) English Edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud would affirm the work without reservation: "It contains, even according to my present-day judgement, the most valuable of all the discoveries it has been my good fortune to make. Insight such as this falls to one's lot but once in a lifetime."[1]

Freud's work is not easily simplified, but at its heart is the insight which lies at the core of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. "[A] dream" wrote Freud, "is a (disguised) fulfillment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish."[2] Implicit in this definition is the notion

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[1]Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (First Part), in *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. IV, ed. James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), xxxii. (All references to Freud's work will be from the Standard Edition, hereafter SE).

[2]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE IV, 160.

of dynamic unconscious thought--thought which is banished from consciousness yet nevertheless informs one's behavior, beliefs, fears, and motivations. Just as the dreamer's unconscious thoughts make their way (albeit in disguised fashion) into his dreams, Freud's patients not only had thoughts of which they were unaware, those thoughts were manifested in the bewildering array of symptoms which so often dominated their lives.

Through trial and error, Freud found he was able to connect these symptoms to the unconscious thoughts motivating them by employing the technique of free association. This technique, which became the "fundamental rule" of psychoanalysis, required the patient to act as an "attentive and dispassionate self-observer" reporting with absolute honesty whatever came to mind, no matter how unpleasant, trivial, or seemingly irrelevant. Such associations produced a mass of material which was often revealed only after the overcoming of great resistance or with obvious gaps in the associative process. Listening to these revelations with an "evenly suspended attention" (i.e., without reflection or consciously constructed expectations), Freud found that the patient's associations emerged "like allusions . . . to one particular theme" and that it was only a short step from there to the physician's ability to guess at the unconscious wishes hidden from the patient himself.[3]

Applying the technique he had developed for uncovering the hidden meaning of the neurotic's symptoms, Freud was able to make sense of his own dreams, discovering repressed wishes which sought a disguised, hallucinatory fulfillment while he slept.

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[3]Freud, "Two Encyclopedia Articles" in SE XVIII, 238-39.

Similarly, Freud argued, the compelling nature of many works of art could be explained in terms of their appeal to powerful unconscious wishes.[4]

It is this idea of the dynamic unconscious which is the bedrock of all psychoanalysis, with "dynamic" referring to the acting out of what is repressed as well as to the act of repression. That the human mind is best understood as an interplay of interactive forces--some available to consciousness and some actively barred from consciousness--is Freud's central insight. And the development of free association as the technique for uncovering what has been banished from consciousness is one of his most important achievements.

Freud's exploration of the great dichotomy between conscious and unconscious thought and the formulation of his findings occupied him for more than twenty-five years. Norman N. Holland has referred to this period (1897-1923) as "first-phase" or "classical" psychoanalysis.[5] It was during these years that Freud consolidated his ideas

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[4]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE IV, 261-266.

[5]Norman N. Holland, *Holland's Guide to Psychoanalytic Psychology and Literature-and-Psychology*, 5-8. Holland describes "psychoanalysis as having evolved in three chronological phases: a psychology of the unconscious (1897-1923), ego psychology (1923--), and a psychology of the self (c. 1950-)." Arguing that one can "define these phases by the polarity psychoanalytic thinkers use to explain events," Holland sees first-phase psychoanalysis as contrasting conscious and unconscious, second-phase psychoanalysis as contrasting ego and non-ego, and third-phase psychoanalysis as opposing self and non-self. "More whimsically," he adds, "you could contrast these three phases by the parts of speech they would make the word unconscious into. In the first phase, it was an adjective but also a noun, referring to a thing, a system, or even a place--a sort of bin--in the brain. In the second phase, when Freud announced that 'unconscious' was only descriptive, the word became an adjective and only an adjective, as in 'unconscious ego.' Now, one major theorist (Schaefer) has ingeniously suggested that the word has become an adverb--we should think of the whole person doing this or that unconsciously."

about the nature of unconscious thought, advanced his theory regarding the psychosexual stages of development, and refined the technique of free association as the means by which the unconscious is revealed. In this chapter, I will examine first-phase psychoanalysis and the contribution this psychoanalytic position can make to a theory of aesthetics.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory was informed by a wide variety of disparate sources. First was an education both scientifically rigorous and broadly humanistic. He left *gymnasium* having learned six languages: his native German, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, French, and English. He was thoroughly familiar with Shakespeare and the German classics and had taught himself to read Italian and Spanish. Passing examinations in Greek and Latin translation, mathematics, and German composition, he graduated *summa cum laude* at the age of 17 and was admitted to the University of Vienna to study medicine.[6]

At the University of Vienna, Freud was able to study anatomy, physiology, chemistry, and physics at one of the preeminent medical schools in Europe while supplementing the medical curriculum with interests of his own. During his first three years at the university, in addition to his medical studies Freud read philosophy with Franz Brentano and took courses in botany, physics, and mineralogy. He studied "Biology and Darwinism" with the zoologist Carl Claus, a committed Darwinist who had been brought to the university to modernize its zoology department, and he went on to

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[6]Ernest Jones, *The Formative Years and the Great Discoveries 1856-1900,* vol. 1of *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981), 20-21.

take a number of zoology courses with Claus, eventually winning two grants for study at the Zoological Experimental Station which Claus had established at Trieste.[7]

In the autumn of 1876, Freud narrowed his studies to medical subjects and was accepted as a research scholar at Ernest Brücke's prestigious Institute of Physiology. Brücke, along with Emil Du Bois-Reymond, Herman Helmholtz, and Carl Ludwig, was a founding member of the group of physicists and physiologists who set out in the 1840s to discredit the theory of vitalism and institute in its place a view of the living organism as a physical-chemical entity properly investigated through a reliance on the same physical-mathematical methods one would use to study nonliving entities. The four founders of the Helmholtz School were leaders in German physiology, which at that time was the most advanced in the world.[8] Brücke's *Lectures on Physiology* (1874), which Freud greatly admired, applies the notion of the conservation of energy to living organisms and offers an "elaborate presentation of what was at the time known about the transformation and interplay of physical forces in the living organism."[9] In line with this materialist scientific orientation, Brücke was also an evolutionist. Freud, a gifted researcher, thrived in the exacting atmosphere of Brücke's laboratory, publishing a number of studies on the histology of nerve cells. After six years at the Institute, Freud had thoroughly absorbed Brücke's teaching on the function and anatomy of the nervous system and was poised for

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[7]Jones, *Life and Work*, vol. 1, 36-38.

[8]Peter Amacher, "Freud's Neurological Education and Its Influence on Psychoanalytic Theory" in *Psychological Issues*, vol. 14, No. 4, Monograph 16 (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1965), 9.

[9]Jones, *Life and Works*, vol. 1, 41.

a career in the vanguard of neurological research. Such a career proved to be financially impractical, however, and in the summer of 1881, Freud reluctantly began clinical rotations at the Vienna General Hospital in preparation for private practice in the treatment of nervous system disorders.[10]

After a two-month surgical rotation and six and one-half months as *Aspirant* (clinical assistant) under Hermann Nothnagel[11] in Internal Medicine, Freud was named *Sekundarärzte* (a sort of combination Resident and Registrar) in Psychiatry under Theodore Meynert. Meynert was generally considered to be the greatest brain anatomist of his day and 1,400 to 1,600 patients a year passed through his clinic. There were no cures; patients were diagnosed and classified and then sent to other clinics for treatment which generally consisted of an attempt to alleviate symptoms through electric massage, hot or cold baths, or bromide drugs. Freud spent ten hours a day with patients and another two in the laboratory where he continued his anatomical study of the nervous system through dissection of the medulla oblongata of infant brains. His psychiatric rotation was completed in only five months, but he was to continue his work in Meynart's lab for a number of years.[12] His next rotation was as *Sekundarärzte* in Dermatology where he was able to study the important connection between syphilis and disorders of

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[10]Freud remained in Brücke's laboratory for a year after obtaining his medical degree. See Jones, *Life and Work*, vol. 1, 58-59.

[11]Nothnagel had just arrived from Germany to occupy the Chair of Medicine at the University. In that capacity and as head of the Division of Internal Medicine at the General Hospital, Nothnagel had great prestige and influence. Freud secured his position through the help of Theodore Meynert. See Jones, *Life and Work* , vol. 1, 63-64.

[12]Jones, *Life and Work,* vol. 1, 65. For a more detailed exposition of Meynert's work and influence on Freud, see also Amacher, *Freud's Neurological Education*, 21-41.

the nervous system.[13] After three months in Dermatology, Freud became a junior *Sekundarärzte* in the "Fourth Department," a catch-all for baffling diseases, many of them pathologies of the nervous system. He worked in this department for fourteen months encountering patients with all kinds of injuries, muscular atrophies, brain tumors, meningitis, convulsions, sensory disturbances, and hysteria. While immersed in this rich clinical environment, Freud published three case studies on organic nervous diseases, and also found time to continue his anatomical work in Meynert's lab.[14] Two more short rotations, one in Ophthalmology and a second stint in Dermatology[15] completed the formal medical education that had taken Freud thirteen years to finish. In September of 1885, on the basis of his publications and the recommendations of Brücke, Meynert, and Nothnagel, he was awarded the coveted title of *Privatdocent* .[16]

While Freud's psychoanalytic theorizing would go far beyond the medical training he had received at the University of Vienna, it was nevertheless the early

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[13]Jones, *Life and Work*, vol. 1, 65-66.

[14]Jones, *Life and Work*, vol. 1, 67-69.

[15]Jones, *Life and Work*, vol. 1, 73.

[16]Jones, *Life and Work*, vol. 1, 70-72. According to Jones, the rank of *Privatdocent* allowed Freud to hold classes at the University of Vienna and guaranteed public recognition of special competence. Few such positions were granted, and the stringent requirements for appointment included evidence of "independent, original, and valuable achievements as documented by a considerable number of publications." The committee recommendation (written by Brücke, but signed by all three) cited the following papers in support of their endorsement: "The Posterior Roots in Petromyzon" (1877-1878), "The Nerve Cells in Crayfish" (1882), "A New Method for Anatomical Preparations of the Central Nervous System" (1879), "A Histological Method for the Study of Brain Tracts" (1884), "A Case of Cerebral Hemorrhage" (1884), "On Coca" (1884), and "Structure of the Elements of the Nervous System" (1884).

physicalist and Darwinian perspectives that provided the framework for his psychoanalytic explorations. In his 1915 paper, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," Freud writes tellingly of the method employed in the creation of a new science:

> The true beginning of scientific activity consists . . . in describing phenomena and then in proceeding to group, classify and correlate them. Even at the stage of description it is not possible to avoid applying certain abstract ideas to the material in hand, ideas derived from somewhere or other but certainly not from the new observations alone. Such ideas–which will later become the basic concepts of the science–are still more indispensable as the material is further worked over. They must at first necessarily possess some degree of indefiniteness; there can be no question of any clear delimitation of their content. So long as they remain in this condition, we come to an understanding about their meaning by making repeated references to the material of observation from which they appear to have been derived, but upon which, in fact, they have been imposed. Thus, strictly speaking, they are in the nature of conventions– although everything depends on their not being arbitrarily chosen but determined by their having significant relations to the empirical material, relations that we seem to sense before we can clearly recognize and demonstrate them.[17]

It is in this sense that Freud's early training came to provide a scaffolding for his psychoanalytic theory. His observations would take place within the realm of psychology rather than that of neurons and synapses, but the shape of Freud's theory comes from his deep understanding of the anatomy and physiology of the nervous system.

Freud's medical education had been deficient in one regard, however. There were few specialists in the clinical study of nervous diseases in Vienna at that time, and no one department in which he could receive such training. The student of nervous diseases was therefore forced to put together a course of study distributed across a number of different

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[17]Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" in SE XIV, 117.

departments, none of them with a primary interest in his subject.[18] It had long been Freud's dream to study at the Salpêtrière with Jean-Martin Charcot, the famous French professor of neuropathology,[19] and, just prior to completion of his medical studies in Vienna, Freud applied for and was awarded a travel grant that would allow him to do so.[20] The grant permitted him to spend October 13, 1885 to February 28, 1886 in Paris where for seventeen weeks he attended lectures and accompanied Charcot on his rounds at the Salpêtrière.[21]

The Salpêtrière, which served as a residential hospital for elderly women afflicted with incurable diseases (many of them of nervous origin), provided Charcot with the opportunity to study patients for periods of time that extended over many years and to relate his clinical studies to anatomical studies after their deaths.[22] Freud was later to

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[18]Freud, "An Autobiographical Study" in SE XX, 11.

[19]Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind, Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (Basic Books, Inc., Publishers: New York, 1983), 28-35. "Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-93) was then at the height of the varied medical career that had led him to the study of neurology, and his stature in French medicine was equaled only by that of the great Louis Pasteur" (p. 28). Sulloway also points out that "almost every prominent French neurologist in the late nineteenth century studied at one time or another under Charcot at the famous Salpêtrière" (29).

[20]See Editor's Note to "Report on My Studies in Paris and Berlin" in SE I, 3. The grant of 600 florins was awarded by the College of Professors in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Vienna and was accompanied by a six-month leave of absence.

[21]Freud reports that, as a foreign student, he was merely one of a large group until his offer to translate Charcot's new volume of lectures into German was accepted and brought him into Charcot's "circle of personal acquaintances" ("An Autobiographical Study" in SE XX, 12).

[22]Freud, "Paris Report" in SE I, 7. Freud cites a somewhat macabre example of Charcot's patience in this regard. "While he was still a student he [Charcot] happened to engage a maid-servant who suffered from a peculiar tremor and could not find a situation

describe Charcot as "not a reflective man, not a thinker: he had the nature of an artist–he was as he himself said, a *'visuel'*, a man who sees."[23] Charcot's method of working was to constantly observe the same phenomena until an understanding of what had previously been overlooked or misunderstood came to him.

> In his mind's eye the apparent chaos presented by the continual repetition of the same symptoms then gave way to order; the new nosological pictures emerged, characterized by the constant combination of certain groups of symptoms. The complete and extreme cases, the 'types,' could be brought into prominence with the help of a certain sort of schematic planning, and, with these types as a point of departure, the eye could travel over the long series of ill-defined cases–the *'formes frustes'*–which, branching off from one or other characteristic feature of the type, melt away into indistinctness.[24]

In 1870, Charcot had begun the project of distinguishing the convulsions of hysteria from those of epilepsy. Believing that the state of hypnosis was very similar to an attack of hysteria, Charcot hypnotized his hysterical patients in order to study their symptoms. Eventually, he succeeded in describing a "lawful" set of symptoms that he believed characterized the hysterical crisis, and so established hysteria as a disease entity rather than mere malingering.[25] While Charcot had been unable to connect the symptoms

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on account of her clumsiness. Charcot recognized her condition as a *paralysie choréiforme,* a disease which had already been described by Duchenne, but whose basis was unknown. Charcot kept this interesting servant, although in the course of the years she cost him a small fortune in dishes and plates. When at last she died he was able to demonstrate from her case that *paralysie choréiforme* was the clinical expression of multiple cerebro-spinal sclerosis" ("Charcot" in SE III, 14).

[23]Freud, "Charcot" in SE III, 12.

[24]Freud, "Charcot" in SE III, 12.

[25]Freud, "Paris Report" in SE I, 10-12.

of hysteria with actual lesions in the nervous system, he maintained that there must be functional or "dynamic lesions" that could not be discovered *post-mortem*.[26] Under Charcot's influence, hysteria became a legitimate area of medical interest.

Charcot had also legitimized the study of hypnosis. In 1882 he delivered a paper to the French Academy of Sciences endorsing the use of hypnosis as a research tool and testifying to the authenticity of the phenomenon. Here, too, his influence brought about a resurgence of interest; and, in France, hypnotism became a medically respectable tool (though it was still viewed suspiciously in the German-speaking countries.)[27]

By the time of Freud's visit, Charcot had begun a study of the paralyses that sometimes followed a major trauma such as a railway accident.[28] He was able to artificially produce, remove, and modify these paralyses through the use of hypnotism, just as he had been able to provoke and remove the symptoms of the grand hysterical attack through hypnotism, and he concluded that traumatic paralyses must be a form of hysteria. Charcot speculated that naturally occurring traumatic paralyses developed when the stricken person was in a state of auto-hypnosis and that the subsequent paralyses (which might not become apparent for days or weeks) could be seen as analogous to the effect of post-hypnotic suggestion in his hysterical patients. Charcot argued that the

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[26]Freud, "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralyses" in SE I, 168. In this paper, Freud argues that the "lesion" must be a psychological phenomenon rather than a physiological one (170).

[27]Freud, "Preface to Bernheim" in SE I, 76.

[28]Such "traumas" were frequently a matter of law suits for the recovery of damages or for insurance claims. It became a matter of controversy as to whether these traumatic paralyses were a matter of malingering or constituted an actual (psychological) injury.

ultimate cause of traumatic paralyses (and grand hysteria) was a hereditary weakness of the nervous system (a "dynamic lesion"); and he believed that the onset of symptoms could be precipitated by ideas that, because of this lesion, remained isolated from normal consciousness yet were "firmly planted within a second region of the mind" as in "the fashion of parasites" at the time of the trauma.[29] One peculiarity of traumatic paralyses that seemed to support this connection between idea and symptom was that the symptoms of traumatic paralyses were delimited, not by the anatomy of the nervous system, but by the layman's everyday ideas about the body.

When Freud, who had glimpsed the important implications of such a lack of correspondence between anatomy and symptom, proposed a research project to confirm that not only traumatic paralyses and grand hysterias, but the symptoms of common hysteria as well, were marked by the same disregard for anatomical correctness, Charcot agreed that this was most probably true. But the project was of no real interest to him.[30] He remained convinced that ultimately hysteria was a form of degeneracy caused by hereditary factors;[31] and his primary interest lay not in psychology, but in nosology and pathological anatomy.[32]

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[29]Sulloway, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind,* 34.

[30]See Freud, "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Paralyses" in SE I, 160-72 for Freud's eventual publication of such a study.

[31]Freud, "Hysteria" in SE I, 50.

[32]Freud, "An Autobiographical Study" in SE XX, 13-14. Also see Freud, "The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in SE III, 27-29.

Nevertheless, the time spent with Charcot proved to be a major turning point in Freud's life. His medical training in Vienna had emphasized nerve functioning and anatomical localization. It was in Charcot's clinic that the major focus of Freud's interest changed from neuropathology to psychopathology.[33] Charcot's demonstration that hysteria could be found in men proved that the disease was not the result of a disorder of female sexual functioning. His discovery that hysteria obeyed lawful regularities made it a legitimate field of medical investigation. The discrepancy between anatomical functioning and the hysteric's symptoms pointed the way to the psychological nature of hysterical symptoms. His use of hypnosis not only demonstrated that there could exist powerful mental processes which nevertheless remained hidden from conscious awareness, but the technique of hypnosis itself provided the first halting step in the development of Freud's technique of free association. And, finally, it was from Charcot that Freud learned the habit of careful clinical observation, or as he was to later put it "to look at the same things again and again until they themselves begin to speak."[34] This debt acknowledged, it must nevertheless be recognized that Freud's use of Charcot's work was very much his own.

Back in Vienna, Freud opened his medical practice, gradually abandoning the treatment of organic nervous diseases and concentrating instead on patients suffering

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[33]Sigmund Freud, "An Autobiographical Study" in SE XX, 11-14. See also editor's note on page 9.

[34]Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement,* SE XIV, 22. This quote is appropriate to Didier Anzieu's contention that while Charcot worked in "visual space," Freud would move to "organize 'psychoanalytic space'" in terms of "distance and listening." (See *Freud's Self-Analysis* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute for Psychoanalysis, 1986), 48.

from neuroses such as hysteria.[35] There was little in the way of effective treatment that could be offered for such disorders: electrotherapy, administered in the physician's office; a referral to an institute offering hydrotherapy; or hypnosis. Freud soon discovered, however, that the process of electro-therapy "had no more relation to reality than some 'Egyptian' dream-book,"[36] and, therefore, unless he wished to refer all of his patients away, he was forced to resort to the less orthodox method of hypnosis. Freud therefore began experimenting with hypnosis, but as he relates in his autobiographical study,

> . . . from the very first I made use of hypnosis in *another* manner, apart from hypnotic suggestion. I used it for questioning the patient upon the origin of his symptom, which in his waking state he could often describe only very imperfectly or not at all.[37]

Freud's inspiration for using hypnosis in this alternate manner was a case confided to him by his older colleague and friend, Josef Breuer. As a student and during his early years of practice, Freud was on intimate terms with Breuer, a prominent

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[35]Freud actually returned home to a dual career. In addition to his private practice he became director of the neurological department at the Institute for Children's Diseases. Freud remained in this position for many years, spending several hours three times a week at the hospital. He published a number of works on neurology from this position, including his first book, *On Aphasia: A Critical Study,* in 1891; a number of articles for Villaret's *Encyclopedic Handbook of Medicine* between 1888 and 1891; a 220-page monograph dealing with unilateral paralyses of children, written with Dr. Oscar Rie, in 1891; the 327-page section on "Infantile Cerebral Paralysis" in Nothnagle's encyclopedia of medicine in 1897; and a number of other important articles on the neurological disorders of children. According to Jones, by 1895 Freud had become "the leading authority on the subject of children's paralyses" (see *Life and Work,* 212-19).

[36]Freud, "An Autobiographical Study" in SE XX, 16.

[37]Freud, "An Autobiographical Study" in SE XX, 19.

Viennese physician with a distinguished scientific background. Even before Freud's trip to Paris, Breuer had discussed with him the strange case of a gifted patient whom Breuer had treated with some success by hypnosis, the case of "Anna O."[38]

"Anna O." was a young woman of twenty-one in the fall of 1880 when she became ill after spending several months caring for her dying father. Her initial symptoms included a gradually increasing state of weakness, anemia, and distaste for food. A severe cough forced her to give up her post at her father's side in the sickroom, and she was overcome by the need for rest in the afternoon. These early symptoms were the precursors of more severe afflictions, including headache, visual disturbances, paralysis of the neck, and contraction and anaesthesia of the right extremities.

There were psychic disturbances as well, with two states of consciousness becoming more distinct as her illness progressed. In the first, she appeared normal, though depressed and anxious; in the second, she became angry and abusive to those around her, and she suffered from hallucinations such as seeing her hair ribbons as black snakes. Upon emerging from these hallucinatory states, she had no memory of what had occurred during her altered stated of consciousness, experiencing only an *absence* or gap in the normal flow of consciousness. These *absences* eventually governed most of her day, and were broken by only brief periods of normal consciousness which were themselves increasingly marked by confusion and anxiety. Anna O. suffered also from a severe deterioration in her ability to use language. At first she merely had difficulty

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[38]It is important to note that Breuer did not set out to use hypnosis as a curative treatment for this patient. Rather, he took advantage of a regularly occurring state of auto-hypnosis into which the patient entered each evening.

"finding the right word," but gradually she lost all sense of grammar and syntax, and her speech was patched together out of four or five different languages. For two weeks she was unable to speak at all, and when her power of speech returned, for the first eighteen months she could speak only English, not her native German.[39]

Breuer treated Anna O. between 1880 and 1882 through a method that was arrived at almost accidentally and that the patient herself called "the talking cure" or jokingly referred to as "chimney sweeping."[40] During the course of her illness, Anna O.'s *absences* during the day were marked by delirium, hallucinations, and personality changes. In the afternoon she became very tired and napped, eventually falling into a deep sleep that lasted about an hour during the early evening. Upon waking, she would be in a state of auto-hypnosis that she referred to as "the clouds." If the doctor was able to make use of her self-induced hypnosis by repeating the phrases that had accompanied her earlier hallucinations, he was able to stimulate her recall of the details of the hallucinations which she then put into words. This practice helped to quiet her psychic distress, and eventually a similar process was used to alleviate her symptoms. Tracing each symptom back through its every occurrence, the patient eventually arrived at the precipitating event, at which time the symptom disappeared. In this hypnotic state, Anna O. showed a remarkable memory for events that had no place in her normal state of consciousness. At one point, she was able, under hypnosis, to "relive" the events of each day of the preceding year in chronological order on the corresponding date of the current

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[39]Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies in Hysteria*, SE II, 55-62

[40]Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies in Hysteria,* SE II, 30.

year. It was possible for Breuer to confirm enough of his patient's memories through independent sources that he was confident they were accurate.[41] This process was exhaustively time consuming, but Breuer found that any attempt to shorten the procedure by asking the patient directly about the first instance of a symptom rendered the treatment ineffective. He also discovered the curious fact that merely remembering the traumatic events that eventually produced her symptoms did not relieve Anna O.'s symptoms. It was only when her memories were accompanied by the discharge of the affect associated with them, that she experienced relief.[42]

Inspired by Charcot and intrigued by Breuer's strange case no less than by his desire to help his own patients, Freud set out to improve his understanding of hysteria and his technical skills as a hypnotist. Subsequent to his visit to the Salpêtrière Freud translated two of Charcot's books into German: the 3rd volume of *Lessons on the Diseases of the Nervous System* (German translation,1886) and *Tuesday Lectures* (German translation with Freud's preface and footnotes, 1892-1894).[43] In the meantime,

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[41] It seems clear that insights derived from this case are due in large part to the intellectual gifts of the patient. Her extraordinary memory and active imagination rendered clear connections that might well have been lost to an ordinary mind.

[42]After a lengthy and seemingly successful treatment, Anna O. (in real life Bertha Pappenheim) suffered a relapse that Freud would eventually diagnose as an unresolved erotic transference (Jones, *Life and Work,* vol. 1, 224). This will be discussed below. Eventually, however, she was able to live a full and productive life. According to Sulloway, "She spent twelve years as director of an orphanage in Frankfurt (1895-1907); she founded a League of Jewish Women in 1904 and a home for unwed mothers in 1907; and she traveled widely in Russia, Poland, and Rumania in order to help orphaned children and to investigate the widespread problems of prostitution and white slavery" (*Freud: Biologist of the Mind,* 37).

[43]Sigmund Freud, "An Autobiographical Study" in SE III, 10.

Hippolyte Bernheim and Bernheim's old teacher, Ambroise Auguste Liébeault[44] had established in Nancy an alternate school for the treatment of hysteria through the use of "suggestion" (of which they considered hypnotism to be merely one form.)

Liébeault had begun from the premise that the state of hypnosis was essentially a normal state much like the state of sleep, and Bernheim and Liébeault argued that all human beings, not just hysterics and neuropaths (as Charcot maintained), were susceptible to hypnotic suggestion. They considered the causes of hypnotic effects to be conscious ideas, and they therefore also opposed Charcot's belief that hypnotism, and thus hysteria as well, were primarily physiological phenomena. Freud had translated Bernheim's book, *Suggestion and its Therapeutic Effects* (1888), adding a long preface of his own to the work in which he compares Charcot's findings with those of Bernstein. While for the most part favoring Charcot, Freud nevertheless attempted to reconcile the two positions,[45] for it seemed to him that while Charcot had concentrated on anatomy to the exclusion of psychology, Liébeault and Bernheim were prejudiced in the opposite direction. Referring to Liébeault's comparison of hypnosis to sleep, Freud asks:

> How does this affect the antithesis between the psychical and physiological phenomena of hypnosis? There was a meaning in it so long as by suggestion was understood a directly psychical influence exercised by the physician which forced any symptomatology it liked upon the hypnotized subject. But this meaning disappears as soon as it is realized that even suggestion only releases sets of manifestations which

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[44]Liébeault was the author of the book, *Of Sleep and Similar States,* published in 1866. (See Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind,* 46).

[45]*The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess,* 1887-1904, ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 17 footnote.

> are based upon the functional peculiarities of the hypnotized nervous system, and that in hypnosis characteristics of the nervous system other than suggestibility make themselves felt as well.[46]

Despite his reservations, however, Freud determined to go to Nancy to learn what he could of the techniques of this new school.[47] He was apparently impressed by what he found,[48] and, in 1890, he translated a second of Bernheim's books, *Hypnotism, Suggestion, and Psychotherapy.* In the long run, Bernheim's views would prevail and Charcot's demonstrations of the connection between *grande hypnotisme* and *grande hystérie* with their physiologically determined stages would be disproved. In his 1889 "Review of August Forel's *Hypnotism*" Freud admits as much.[49]

Charcot's discovery of the discrepancy between anatomical functioning and the symptoms of traumatic paralyses, however, remained unchallenged, and it provided Freud with an important clue. In 1893, Freud published an account of the research project that he had begun seven years earlier while he was still at Charcot's clinic. Freud's paper "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralyses" clarifies what was inherent in Charcot's researches, and it critiques Charcot where he is vulnerable. The first three sections of the paper detail the discrepancies between

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[46]Freud, "Preface to the Translation of Bernheim's *De La Suggestion*" in SE I, 77-85. (The quote appears on page 84.)

[47]Freud, "An Autobiographical Study" in SE XX, 17. (In the summer of 1889 Freud spent two weeks at the Nancy clinic.)

[48]See *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess,* 1887-1904, ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, 17 note.

[49]Freud, "Preface to Bernheim" in SE I, 98.

symptoms and anatomy in hysterical paralyzes as only a neurologist could describe them; these sections were almost certainly written between 1886 and 1888. The final section refers to Freud and Breuer's "Preliminary Communication" and thus could not have been written very much before 1893.[50] Freud points out that the "dynamic" lesions posited by Charcot as the ultimate basis of hysteria cannot, in fact, be linked to anatomy but must be explained psychologically:

> Since there can only be a single cerebral anatomy that is true, and since it finds expression in the clinical characteristics of the cerebral paralyses, it is clearly impossible for that anatomy to be the explanation of the distinctive features of hysterical paralyses. For that reason we must not draw conclusions on the subject of cerebral anatomy that are based on the symptomatology of those paralyses.[51]

Freud therefore proposes that Charcot's dynamic lesions be understood as an "alteration in the *conception,* the *idea,"* of the affected part of the anatomy.[52] This alteration he further defines as a change in the ability of the idea to come into associative contact with other ideas.

> Considered psychologically, the paralysis of the arm consists in the fact that the conception of the arm cannot enter into association with the other ideas constituting the ego of which the subject's body forms an important part. The lesion would

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[50]Freud, "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralyses" in SE I, 157-59 (editor's introductory note). Strachey speculates that this extended incubation period is the result of the "position occupied by this paper on the watershed between Freud's neurological and psychological writings."

[51]Freud, "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralyses" in SE I, 168.

[52]Freud, "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralyses" in SE I, 170.

> therefore be *the abolition of the associative accessibility of the conception of the arm.*[53]

This idea of associative accessibility became key to the conception of hysteria set forth by Freud and Josef Breuer in *Studies on Hysteria,* published in 1896. This book has been called Freud's first truly psychoanalytic work. It is also the work in which Freud exploits to its fullest the gain to be obtained from hypnotism, and then comes up against the inherent limitations of hypnotic technique.

Studies on Hysteria is comprised of a first chapter that consists of a revised version of Freud and Breuer's jointly written "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication" [which had been first published in 1893]; five case histories; a theoretical section by Breuer; and a final section on the psychotherapy of hysteria by Freud. Breuer's only case study is that of Anna O. About his own contribution of four additional cases, Freud writes:

> I have not always been a psychotherapist. Like other neuropathologists, I was trained to employ local diagnoses and electro-prognosis, and it still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science. . . . The fact is that local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the

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[53]Freud, "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralyses" in SE I, 170. Freud, at this point, attributes the inaccessibility of a concept to the "free play" of association with other concepts to an emotionally charged prior association. He offers as an intuitive example of this kind of psychic functioning the comic story of the man who having shaken hands with the sovereign refuses thereafter to use the hand for any lesser purpose. He also points to the custom of breaking the glass from which a marriage toast has been drunk, or to the practice of "savage tribes in antiquity who burnt their dead chief's horse, his weapons and even his wives along with the dead body" in obedience to the idea that no one should touch them after him (170-71).

> use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight into the course of that affection.[54]

Indeed, Freud's case histories do read like short stories, full of suspense and drama. He relates the case of a young governess, Miss Lucy R., who is afflicted by chronically recurring suppurative rhinitis, fatigue, and depression. She is also plagued by the hallucinated smell of burning pudding. Katharina, whom Freud met and interviewed while on vacation in the Alps, suffers from a smothering sensation and horrifying hallucinations of an evil face. Fräulein Elizabeth von R. is tormented by severe pain in her legs and difficulty walking or standing. Frau Emmy von N. is given to sudden terrors; animal phobias; stammering; hallucinations; difficulty eating; physiological disturbances including muscular pains, neck cramps, and anaesthesia of the right leg; and a peculiar clacking of her mouth that Freud tells us his friends describe as sounding like the call of a capercaille.

As a medical practitioner, how does one treat the symptoms of a patient who is plagued by the smell of burning pudding or one whose speech is constantly interrupted by bird calls? Despite their differences, the practitioners at both Charcot's clinic and the Nancy school found the primary therapeutic value of hypnotism to lie in the effects of suggestion. (For example, a patient whose arm was paralyzed would be placed under hypnosis and told, "You can now move your right arm freely.") Following the lead provided by Breuer in the case of Anna O., however, Freud gradually abandoned the

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[54]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 160-61.

method of suggestion and instead used hypnotism[55] to assist the patient's memory in tracing hysterical symptoms back to the circumstances in which they had originated, and for which the symptoms had come to stand as *mnemic symbols.*[56] Comparing their findings to those of Charcot in his study of traumatic paralyzes, Breuer and Freud write:

> Observations such as these seem to us to establish an analogy between the pathogenesis of common hysteria and that of traumatic neuroses, and to justify an extension of the concept of traumatic hysteria. In traumatic neuroses the operative cause of the illness is not the trifling physical injury but the affect of fright–the psychical trauma. In an analogous manner, our investigations reveal, for many, if not for most, hysterical symptoms, precipitating causes which can only be described as psychical traumas. Any experience which calls up distressing affects–such as those of fright, anxiety, shame or physical pain–may operate as a trauma of this kind; and whether it in fact does so depends naturally enough on the susceptibility of the person affected (as well as on another condition which will be summed up later). In the case of common hysteria it not infrequently happens that, instead of a single, major trauma, we find a number of partial traumas forming a *group* of provoking causes. These have only been able to exercise a traumatic effect by summation and they belong together in so far as they are in part components of a single story of suffering.[57]

Freud and Breuer further argue that there is a *continuing* intimate relationship between the traumatic memory and the symptom, for when the patients have revisited in memory and recounted every incident that contributed to their traumas and have released the emotional affects associated with these memories, the symptoms disappear. To the

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[55]Freud's exploration of his patient's inaccessible memories began with hypnotism. However, he was forced to abandon hypnotism and instead used a modified technique of his own (see below) when hypnotism failed.

[56]Breuer and Freud, *Studies On Hysteria,* SE II, 90.

[57]Breuer and Freud, "Preliminary Communication: The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 6-7.

objection that such "cures" might be the result of mere suggestion, they reply that the case of Anna O. went back to 1881, a "presuggestion" era in hypnosis. "A highly complicated case of hysteria [the case of Anna O.]," wrote Breuer and Freud "was analyzed in this way, and the symptoms, which sprang from separate causes, were separately removed. This observation was made possible by spontaneous auto-hypnosis on the part of the patient, *and came as a great surprise to the observer.*"[58]

Freud and Breuer sum up their observations with the following formula: *"Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences."*[59] But what causes the persistence of the memories that make hysterics so ill? Freud and Breuer observe that, in the normal course of events, memories fade, either when whatever affect associated with them has been discharged through an "energetic reaction,"[60] or when the memory enters the "great complex of [the patient's] associations" where it comes into contact with other ideas that may contradict or rectify it, and where the affect attached to the idea is gradually spread over the entire network and dissipated.[61] The traumatic memories resulting in hysteria, by contrast, have not "faded" but remain astonishingly fresh. They are memories of insults

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[58]Breuer and Freud, "Preliminary Communication: The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 7 (italics mine).

[59]Breuer and Freud, "Preliminary Communication: The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 7.

[60]Breuer and Freud, "Preliminary Communication: The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II. "By 'reaction' we here understand the whole class of voluntary and involuntary reflexes–from tears to acts of revenge–in which, as experience shows us, the affects are discharged" (8). The technical term they use for this dispersal of affect is *abreaction.*

[61]Breuer and Freud, "Preliminary Communication: The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 9.

that were not answered at the time of their original occurrence, and the affects associated with them were not discharged. Moreover, these memories are *unconscious,* and therefore they have not entered the web of associations throughout which their dammed up affect might subsequently have been dispersed.[62] According to Freud and Breuer, *"[T]hese memories correspond to traumas that have not been sufficiently abreacted."*[63]

What would prevent the abreaction necessary to forestall neurosis? The authors offer two possibilities: the first concerns the nature of the trauma itself and the second the psychic state of the individual at the time of the trauma. Of the first possibility, they write:

> In the first group are those cases in which the patients have not reacted to a psychical trauma because the nature of the trauma excluded a reaction, as in the case of the apparently irreparable loss of a loved person or because social circumstances made a reaction impossible or because it was a question of things which the patient wished to forget, and therefore intentionally repressed from his conscious thought and inhibited and suppressed.[64]

It is this possibility that Freud found most persuasive, and we encounter here the earliest mention of the concept of "repression" that Freud would eventually make the

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[62]Breuer and Freud, "Preliminary Communication: The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 9.

[63]Breuer and Freud, "Preliminary Communication: The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 10.

[64]Breuer and Freud, "Preliminary Communication: The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 10. They conclude that it "is precisely distressing things of this kind that, under hypnosis, we find are the basis of hysterical phenomena (e.g. hysterical deliria in saints and nuns, continent women and well-brought-up children"!

cornerstone of his psychoanalytic theory.[65] Freud's case histories offer support for this explanation. Miss Lucy had fallen in love with her employer, was forced by his cruelty to realize that he did not return her affections, and tried to simply "put it out of her mind."[66] The smell of burning pudding that accompanied her first recognition of the true situation took the place of the painful memory in her conscious thoughts. The affects of fatigue and depression remained, but they, too, had been detached from the painful situation that caused them. Fräulein Elizabeth was thwarted in her efforts to re-establish her family on a firm footing after the death of her father, and she was made unpleasantly aware of her love for her brother-in-law as she stood at her sister's deathbed. Forcing these painful memories out of consciousness, she found herself "not being able to take a single step

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[65]This does not contradict the assertion that the dynamic unconscious is the most important of Freud's discoveries, for repression is merely the view of the dynamic unconscious as seen "from above."

[66]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 117. Freud asked her after analysis had made clear the cause of her affliction, "But if you knew you loved your employer, why didn't you tell me?" She answered, "I didn't know–or rather I didn't want to know. I wanted to drive it out of my head and not think of it again; and I believe latterly I have succeeded." Freud remarks of this exchange, "I have never managed to give a better description than this of the strange state of mind in which one knows and does not know a thing at the same time. It is clearly impossible to understand it unless one has been in such a state oneself. I myself have had a very remarkable experience of this sort, which is still clearly before me. If I try to recollect what went on in my mind at the time I can get hold of very little. What happened was that I saw something which did not fit at all with my expectation; yet I did not allow what I saw to disturb my fixed plan in the least, though the perception should have put a stop to it. I was unconscious of any contradiction in this; nor was I aware of my feelings of repulsion, which must nevertheless undoubtedly have been responsible for the perception producing no psychical effect. I was afflicted by that blindness of the seeing eye which is so astonishing in the attitude of mothers to their daughters, husbands to their wives and rulers to their favorites" (17, note).

forward," "not having anything to lean on," and her hysterical symptoms were expressed as severe pains in her legs and the inability to walk.

The case of Katharina demonstrated especially clearly the situation of a *delayed* trauma. It was not when her father [in the first editions of this work, Freud disguised the true relation by calling him her "uncle"] first tried to seduce her that her symptoms developed, because she did not realize at the time what was happening to her. It was only after she had seen him having intercourse with her sister that she began to hallucinate his distorted face and "remember" the weight of his body, not as it had actually been, but simply as a feeling of smothering, not being able to breathe.

In each of these three cases, Freud attributed the symptoms to a "conversion" in which a psychical trauma was transformed to a physical symptom which took the place of its conscious memory. Sometimes a convenient physical condition could be used to symbolize[67] the trauma (as, for instance, Fräulein Elizabeth's intensification of a pre-existing arthritic condition to symbolize her inability to "take a step"); at other times a physical condition that accompanied the trauma was isolated to symbolize the entire experience (Katharina's sense of smothering); alternatively, the reason for the distressing affect might be repressed, while the affect remained, connected to an occurrence insignificant in itself (as in the case of Miss Lucy's depression and hallucinations of burning pudding). The case of Emmy von N. was the most complicated. Multiple symptoms lead back to a myriad of traumatic memories; however, it was only the detached

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[67]As Freud points out in his *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* the hysteric's use of symbolism is different from normal symbolism in that the symbol has wholly taken the place of what it symbolizes, whereas normally a symbol indicates a relationship, both aspects of which are available to consciousness (SE I, 349).

affects of fright and horror, along with a host of inexplicable phobias, inhibitions, and symptoms that were accessible to her conscious awareness.

Freud and Breuer also considered the possibility that abreaction might be forestalled by the psychic state of the individual at the time of the traumatic incident. In particular, if a patient was already in a "hypnoid" state, that is, a state split off from normal consciousness at the time of the trauma, the ideas would remain isolated and inaccessible to abreaction.

> For we find, under hypnosis, among the causes of hysterical symptoms, ideas which are not in themselves significant, but whose persistence is due to the fact that they originated during positively abnormal psychical states, such as the semi-hypnotic twilight state of day-dreaming, auto-hypnoses, and so on. In such cases it is the nature of the states which makes a reaction to the event impossible.[68]

This explanation, in line with Charcot's reasoning, was the one that Breuer favored (probably because it most closely fit his experience with Anna O.), but Freud, who had been willing to advance it in the "Preliminary Communication" written in 1892, was already having doubts about both hypnosis and the nature of hysteria by the time his concluding theoretical chapter to *Studies in Hysteria* ("Psychotherapy of Hysteria") was written in 1894.

In "Psychotherapy of Hysteria," Freud breaks with Breuer's position on the importance of the hypnoid state and argues for what is essentially a transformed theory of the neuroses. Freud had encountered two main difficulties when he set out to see if he could duplicate Breuer's findings in the case of Anna O. The first was that not everyone

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[68]Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, "Preliminary Communication: The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" in *Studies on Hysteria, SE,* II, p. 11.

who exhibited symptoms of hysteria could be hypnotized. The second was that many who could be successfully hypnotized and treated with the cathartic method were obviously suffering from neuroses other than hysteria. He therefore concluded that "the psychical mechanism revealed by the 'Preliminary Communication' could not be pathognomonic for hysteria."[69]

To bring clarity to the situation, it was necessary for Freud to categorize all of the neuroses in terms of their aetiology and psychical mechanism. To accomplish this, he needed a method that would allow access to the altered and normally inaccessible states of consciousness that hypnosis was only sometimes able to uncover.

Freud's solution to the problem of method came from a demonstration that he had witnessed while visiting Bernheim. One of Bernheim's patients, while in a state of somnambulism, was induced to have a "negative hallucination" that made Bernheim's presence invisible to her even though he attempted vigorously to attract her attention. Once she had awakened, he asked her to describe what had happened while she was under hypnosis and she was unable to do so. Bernheim insisted, laying his hand upon her forehead to help her remember. Freud reports his surprise that, under this compulsion, she was able to recall the events that had taken place during her altered state of consciousness: "And lo and behold! she ended by describing everything that she had ostensibly not perceived during her somnambulism and ostensibly not remembered in her waking state."[70]

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[69]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 256-57.

[70]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 109-111.

Taking this lead from Bernstein, Freud abandoned attempts to hypnotize those patients who did not easily fall into a hypnotic state. Instead he had them lie down, close their eyes, and "concentrate" as he asked the same questions that he would have asked them under hypnosis. Once he had reached a point where the patient insisted that he or she remembered nothing further, Freud would exert pressure on the patient's head, insisting that something would come to mind.[71] Invariably, something did. Most often what came to mind were mental pictures, though it might be only isolated key-words, or highly stylized symbols.[72] Ordinarily, however, it was not the scene of the original trauma that the patient remembered, but an intermediate link between the current symptom and the traumatic situation.

It was only by the laborious process of tracing these associations back through prior associations that the instigating trauma was eventually discovered. This was not accomplished without a great deal of effort on the therapist's part, and Freud reflected that this effort was necessary to combat a psychical force in the mind of the patient that could only be characterized as *resistance.* This resistance had made itself visible earlier in his experience with patients who refused even to try hypnosis. Furthermore, it occurred to Freud that the resistance encountered in the therapeutic process was simply another manifestation of the same psychic force that had lead to the repression of the pathogenic ideas and the generation of the neurotic symptoms in the first place. Thus, Freud came to understand resistance as the clinical expression of repression and he had no difficulty

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[71]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 268-70.

[72]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 273-78.

understanding its motivation, for he had already found it in the traumatic ideas uncovered in earlier analyses.

> . . . I already had at my disposal a few completed analyses in which I had come to know examples of ideas that were pathogenic, and had been forgotten and put out of consciousness. From these I recognized a universal characteristic of such ideas: they were all of a distressing nature, calculated to arouse the affects of shame, of self-reproach and of psychical pain, and the feeling of being harmed; they were all of a kind that one would rather forget. From all this there arose, as it were, automatically, the thought of *defence.*[73]

Freud concluded that ideas become pathogenic precisely because they are unacceptable to the ego and therefore are repressed and barred from entering the normal web of associations. Complicating matters was the fact that what Freud typically found was not a single symptom that related to a single trauma, but rather *"successions* of *partial* traumas and *concatenations* of pathogenic trains of thought."[74] In order to understand the neurosis, Freud found he must follow the structure of the psychic material itself. As in the case of Anna O., each thematic train of thought would be temporally ordered. It would also be "stratified concentrically round the pathogenic nucleus" in terms of the degree of resistance it aroused. And it would be arranged "according to thought content," zig-zagging in a "broken line which would pass along the most roundabout paths from the surface to the deepest layers and back, and yet would in general advance from the

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[73]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 269. On the same page, Freud names these painful ideas "incompatible" ideas, and he attributes their banishment from consciousness to a "censorship" that guards the unity of ideas in the ego.

[74]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 288.

periphery to the central nucleus, touching at every intermediate halting-place."[75] Attempting to penetrate straight to the nucleus of a pathogenic organization was impossible. The meaning of the trauma lay precisely in the web of associations that were made in the process of its discovery. Even if the analyst could guess at the pathogenic core, the "patient would not know what to do with the explanation offered to him and would not be psychologically changed by it."[76]

Insofar as those suffering from the psychoneuroses ordinarily came to Freud seeking remedy for their illnesses, the alleviation of symptoms was a primary goal. Freud found, however, that the symptoms offered a valuable guide to the progress of the treatment. As he approached the pathogenic core of a symptom's aetiology, he found the symptom would increase in severity. Freud referred to this as the symptom's "joining in the conversation."

> The intensity of the symptom (let us take for instance a desire to vomit–increases the deeper we penetrate into one of the relevant pathogenic memories; it reaches its climax shortly before the patient gives utterance to that memory; and when he has finished doing so it suddenly diminishes or even vanishes completely for a time. If, owing to resistance, the patient delays his telling for a long time, the tension of the sensation–the desire to vomit–becomes unbearable, and if we cannot force him [the patient] to speak he actually begins to vomit. In this way we obtain a plastic impression of the fact that 'vomiting' takes the place of a psychical act (in this instance the act of utterance), exactly as the conversion theory of hysteria maintains.[77]

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[75]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 288-89. (Compare to hypertext connections in HTML.)

[76]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 292.

[77]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 296.

Freud found that such visible, objective indications often lent support to the verbal associations his patients were presenting. He also pointed out that physical indicators such as facial expressions had to be taken into account.[78] Therefore the method demanded a close observation of the patient's physical states as well as attention to the threads connecting psychic themes.

A further complication of this technique that impressed itself on Freud even at this early stage was the necessity of managing the relationship that developed between patient and doctor. For himself, he stated: "I cannot imagine bringing myself to delve into the psychical mechanism of a hysteria in anyone who struck me as low-minded and repellent, and who, on closer acquaintance, would not be capable of arousing human sympathy; whereas I can keep the treatment of a tabetic or rheumatic patient apart from personal approval of this kind."[79] Of the patients, he admits: " . . . [I]t is almost inevitable that their personal relation to him [the doctor] will force itself, for a time at least, unduly into the foreground."[80] At first impatient with this complication, Freud came to realize that the patient's relationship to the doctor could be a powerful motivating force in overcoming resistance. The most astonishing aspect of the patient's relationship to the doctor was the "transference" of [often erotic] ideas on to the person of the doctor. Just as the symptom or an innocuous accompanying phenomenon provided the occasion for a symbolic representation of incompatible ideas, so, too, did the solicitous presence of the doctor

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[78]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 294.

[79]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 265.

[80]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 266.

during treatment provide the occasion for a renewal of repressed ideas of an erotic nature. This transference could be interpreted, just like any other symptom, and Freud found that it seemed to make no difference if the interpretation took place in terms of the original relationship or the transference relationship in which he himself so prominently figured.[81] The transference, like everything else connected to the treatment, became yet another subject of analysis.[82]

Having devised a workable technique for penetrating those areas of the patient's psyche that had previously seemed accessible only under hypnosis, Freud set about exploring the neuroses. His first observation, supported by the evidence of the transference as well, was that the aetiology of all neuroses was to be found in a sexual factor. In other words, his patients' associations lead to the conclusion that the traumatic events from which they suffered had been sexual in nature. He next attempted to differentiate the various neuroses in terms of the precise role that sexuality played in their formation, and, in this manner, he was able to separate out neurasthenia, obsessional neurosis, and anxiety neurosis. Neurasthenia and anxiety neurosis he classed as "actual" neuroses; that is, he attributed them to current sexual practices that had deleterious physical effects. With an actual physical basis, these conditions could not be "cured" through psychotherapy; they had no "psychical mechanism." In obsessional neuroses, on

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[81]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 303-04.

[82]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 304. The equivalent danger for the physician–the use of the current situation to symbolize or act out old desires–would not become clear to Freud for some time. Unacknowledged unconscious reactions could seriously disrupt an analysis as Freud learned in the Dora case. In the work of the object-relations theorists, interpretation of countertransference as well as transference phenomena became an important analytic technique.

the other hand, Freud found "a complicated psychical mechanism, an aetiology similar to that of hysteria and an extensive possibility of reducing it by psychotherapy."[83] Hysteria and obsessional neurosis, Freud classified as psychoneuroses.

Freud found that hysteria itself rarely appeared in a pure form and that many of the symptoms previously attributed to it (such as "perversion and degeneracy") ought to be separated out from the essential definition of the disorder. In the normal patient, neuroses would be "mixed," and symptoms would be more or less amenable to treatment by psychotherapy according to their status as symptoms of actual neuroses or psychoneuroses.[84] Looking retrospectively at the case histories he had reported in *Studies on Hysteria,* Freud found in the case of Emmy von N., "an anxiety neurosis which originated from sexual abstinence and had become combined with hysteria"; in that of Miss Lucy R., "a marginal case of pure hysteria"; and in that of Katharina, "a combination of anxiety neurosis and hysteria." Two of the cases, that of Fräulein Elizabeth von R. and that of Anna O. herself had not been investigated as sexual neuroses, and so their aetiology was less clear.[85]

While the picture presented in *Studies on Hysteria* is still very far from the mature theory of psychoanalysis, a number of key psychoanalytic concepts, including defense, resistance, repression, and transference make an appearance in this early work. The

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[83]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 257-58.

[84]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 258-59.

[85]Freud's later discovery that Anna O.'s treatment had ended in a hysterical pregnancy that she attributed to the attentions of her physician Breuer confirmed an underlying sexual neuroses in her case as well.

technique of free association is shown in its developmental stages, and symptoms are recognized as mnemic symbols open to an interpretation that leads back to ideas that have been repressed. With the notion of repression, we have the beginning of a *dynamic* theory of psychical functioning (though this will not be complete until Freud rethinks the notion of sexual trauma and comes to an understanding of infantile sexuality.) All of these concepts, however, are but variations of a single theme, and that theme is the problem of the relationship of consciousness to psychic functioning in general.

There is another way that psychoanalysis looks at psychic phenomena, and that is in terms of the "circulation and distribution of an energy . . . that can be quantified, i.e., is capable of increase, decrease and equivalence."[86] This perspective is known as the *economic* point of view, and it, too, is a key concept in *Studies on Hysteria,* for it is from the economic point of view that the need for abreaction is theoretically justified.

The work of Helmholtz and du Bois-Reymond had firmly established the principle of electric conduction through the nervous system, and both Breuer and Freud had been educated by Brücke who argued that the entire nervous system worked as a "reflex arc" in which stimulation at one extremity of the system (the "afferent" nerves) was "transferred" to the other end, the "efferent" nerves, where it was discharged in action.[87] Stimulation was thus seen as setting up a flow of electrical "excitation" through the nervous system. According to Brücke, such excitation could pool at various points as a "summation of

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[86]J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973), 127.

[87]Amacher, "Freud's Neurological Education" in *Psychological Issues,* vol. 14, 9-20. I am indebted to this work for my understanding of the extent of Brücke and Meynert's influence on Freud.

stimuli" until sufficient quantity was reached to effect the appropriate action for removal of the stimulus. At this point the system would return to its previous state of rest.[88]

Brücke was essentially interested in the peripheral nervous system and deferred to the psychiatrist Meynert when it came to the physiology of the brain. Meynert, too, subscribed to the reflex arc theory of nerve functioning, even within the brain itself, and argued that ". . . there is nothing more certain about the functions of the cerebral organism than that the centripetal sensory nerves are the keys which wind up the mechanism connected with the muscles, and excite the latter to action."[89]

Meynert differentiated between cerebral and subcerebral functioning to the extent that he thought that subcerebral pathways were innate, while cerebral pathways were built up over the lifetime of the individual. The cerebral cortex, like other parts of the nervous system, connected afferent and efferent peripheries; however, within the cortex, the excitations laid down permanent "images," and images laid down simultaneously or in rapid succession became connected through "association bundles" (i.e., nerves which connect one part of the cortex with another). Meynert believed that the *ego* or "nucleus of individuality" was built up from this network of associations, and that intelligence was

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[88]Amacher, "Freud's Neurological Education" in *Psychological Issues*, vol. 14, 14.

[89]Theodore Meynert, *Psychiatry,* trans. B. Sachs (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons), 1985, 139, quoted in Amacher, "Freud's Neurological Education" in *Psychological Issues*, vol. 14, 24.

demonstrated by the ability to match new excitations or perceptions with those already laid down.[90]

Meynert and Brücke (like others of their time) assumed a psychological/physical parallelism which allowed them to speak of mental phenomena partly in physical and partly in psychological terms.[91] Thus, Meynert had no problem equating "excitations" with "images" and he saw the functioning of the cerebral cortex as the perfect physical parallel to the association psychology to which he subscribed.[92]

Meynert was able to describe both normal and pathological nervous functioning in terms of these cortical networks. He believed that, in infancy, associations would tend to be random and confused, while over time, experience would stabilize associative pathways through the elimination of random connections. In mental illness more recently established pathways would break down, leaving the mind in its original state of confusion. He attributed "Meynert's amentia," a disease process characterized by hallucinatory confusion, to just such a breakdown of the strong ideas which made up the stable ego, and argued that the same kind of breakdown could be seen under conditions of physical exhaustion such as during sleep.[93]

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[90]Amacher, "Freud's Neurological Education" in *Psychological Issues*, vol. 14, 21-35.

[91]Amacher, "Freud's Neurological Education" in *Psychological Issues*, vol. 14, p. 16.

[92]Amacher, "Freud's Neurological Education" in *Psychological Issues*, vol. 14, 27-41.

[93]Amacher, "Freud's Neurological Education" in *Psychological Issues*, vol. 14, 37-41.

In *Studies on Hysteria,* Breuer argues for a modified reflex arc theory of mental functioning, in which a physiological regulatory principle works to keep the energy ("tonic excitation") in the brain at a constant optimum level. Breuer attributed the varying psychical states between deep, dreamless sleep and full wakefulness to the level of tonic excitation available to the brain. When the individual is awake, the level of tonic excitation is relatively high and conduction throughout the system is facilitated.

> [E]very act of will initiates the corresponding movement; sense-impressions become conscious perceptions; and ideas are associated with the whole store present in potential consciousness. In that condition the brain functions as a unit with complete internal connections.[94]

On the contrary, while the individual sleeps, the level of tonic excitation is low and conductive capability diminished. This diminished conductive capability leads to the dissociated character of dreams (where, for instance," we find ourselves talking to a dead person without remembering that he is dead.")[95] At the two extremes of tonic excitation, we have the total unconsciousness of dreamless sleep on the one hand, and the extinction of thought and perception in an overpowering affect such as fear, rage, or lust on the other.

Breuer suggests that periods of sleep allow the brain to recover from a too great depletion of the energy available to it, while spontaneous awakening signals that the level has risen to the point where discharge is again sought. Thus, Breuer argues that the system itself is capable of producing excitation and that a mechanism of self-regulation

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[94]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 193.

[95]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 193-95.

gives the organism a "'tendency to keep intracerebral excitation constant.'"[96] As supporting evidence for this hypothesis, Breuer cites the pain of boredom (i.e., the need to discharge mental energy) and the pacing of a person under stress. Breuer argues that this necessity to regulate intracerebral excitation is no more mysterious than the need of a warm-blooded organism to regulate its temperature.[97] It is this assumption that the organism has a need to regulate intracerebral excitation that lies behind Freud and Breuer's insistence on the pathogenic nature of traumas that have not been *abreacted.*

Thus, we find in *Studies on Hysteria* not only the case histories of the neurotic patients treated by Freud and Breuer, but also the rudiments of a theory of normal psychical functioning based on physicalist and economic principles. Freud would expand this enterprise in his *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* written just a few months after the publication of *Studies on Hysteria,* but not published during his lifetime. In the *Project,* Freud seeks to found psychology as a natural science, or, as he says in his introduction, "to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles."[98] In a letter written to Wilhelm Fliess on May 25, 1895, Freud further describes the *Project* as an attempt to

> discover what form the theory of psychical functioning will

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[96]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 197. Breuer attributes this idea to Freud. Strachey points out that this is the first explicit enunciation of Freud's 'principal of constancy'.

[97]Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria,* SE II, 198. "That the organism should tend to maintain the optimum of excitation and to return to that optimum after it has been exceeded is not surprising, but quite in keeping with other regulating factors in the organism."

[98]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 283.

> take if a quantitative line of approach, a kind of economics of nervous force, is introduced into it, and, secondly, to extract from psychopathology a yield for normal psychology.[99]

Though Freud eventually abandoned the *Project* as a hopelessly difficult endeavor, its influence can be seen throughout his writing all the way to the 1938 *Outline of Psycho-Analysis*. In fact, Richard Wollheim goes so far as to claim that "most of his greatest work [was] achieved in its shadow."[100]

It is not surprising that Freud would turn to his medical training for this first attempt to systematize his clinical discoveries. Freud had discovered that "[p]rocesses such as stimulus, substitution, conversion and discharge" which were necessary to a description of his clinical findings "directly suggested the conception of neuronal excitation as quantity in a state of flow."[101] Thus, inspired by the fit between his psychological observations and the understanding of nervous functioning being developed at that time,[102] Freud hypothesized a psychical system which consisted of two elements:

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[99]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, SE I, 283.

[100]Richard Wollheim, *Sigmund Freud* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1971), 59.

[101]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, SE I, 295-96.

[102]Sulloway, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind,* 115-16. Sulloway points out the many similarities between the model of the mind presented in Freud's *Project* and Theodore Exner's *Sketch of a Physiological Explanation of Psychical Phenomena* published in 1894.

Q,[103] (understood as a flow of energy or "excitation") and the neurone (conceived as the basic building block of the nervous system.)

To this he added the principle of "neuronal inertia" which could be stated simply as the fact that "neurones tend to divest themselves of Q."[104] Of course, this principle gives rise to the well-known reflex arc; however, while the reflex arc may be sufficient to understand simple actions such as withdrawal from painful stimuli, it does not adequately account for a complex organism's ability to engage in higher-level responses. Therefore, Freud argues, it is specifically the somatic needs of a complex organism–the need for nourishment, respiration, sex–that force the system to modify the principle of neuronal inertia. Instead of decreasing the amount of Q'η to zero, the system is forced to retain a certain amount of Q'η in order to generate the "specific actions" that relieve these endogenously generated stimuli. Even so, the system continues to follow the original trend to divest itself of Q'η in that it now attempts to maintain Q'η at a constant minimum rather than at zero. A rise in Q'η above this constant minimum is experienced as pain while the discharge of Q'η is experienced as pleasure.

Freud explains that his second postulation–that of the neurone–was borrowed from the recent discovery of the anatomical neurone:

> [T]he nervous system consists of distinct and similarly constructed neurones, which have contact with one another through the medium of a foreign substance, which

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[103]Freud's use of Q and Q'η is inconsistent and somewhat confusing. The general idea seems to be that Q refers to Quantity in general and Q'η refers to the quantity of excitation within a neurone or within the neuronal system.

[104]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, p. 296.

> terminate upon one another as they do upon portions of foreign tissue, [and] in which certain conditions are laid down in so far as they [the neurones] receive [excitations] through cell-processes [dendrites] and [give them off] through an axis cylinder [axon].[105]

Combining the account of neurones with the idea of Q'η, Freud came to the notion of a "cathected" neurone, i.e. one that is filled with a certain amount of Q'η. According to the unmodified principle of neuronal inertia, Q would flow freely from one neurone to another, until it was discharged in motor action. However, in keeping with the necessity of retaining the constant minimum of Q'η necessary to perform "specific actions," Freud assumes that in some neurones resistances will prohibit the complete discharge of Q'η. These resistances, Freud attributes not to differences in the neurones themselves, but to differences in the substance that connects them. Thus, he posits the existence of *contact-barriers*[106] that will in varying degrees inhibit the flow of Q'η from one nerve cell to the others to which it is connected. This difference in permeability of the contact barriers among neurones, Freud attributes to the process of conduction itself, assuming that over time the passage of Q'η wears away the resistance offered by a given contact barrier.

Freud uses this idea of the differential permeability of the contact barriers to model two systems representing perception and memory. Perception (the ϕ system) is completely permeable to Q'η and unaltered by its passing. Therefore new perceptions are

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[105]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, SE I, 297-98. The brackets are the editors'. The *Project* was never finished and polished–indeed parts of it were written on a train. Therefore, some sections exist in rough, almost note form.

[106]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Project,* SE I, 298, editor's note 3. The term "synapse" was introduced by Foster and Sherrington in 1897.

not disturbed by residual images from past perceptions.[107] Q reaches ϕ from the external world by way of the sensory organs and is transmitted as Q'η through ϕ to the ψ system. Q'η also reaches ψ directly from stimuli arising within the interior of the body.[108] Memory (the ψ system) is characterized by resistance to the flow of Q'η such that the passing of Q'η leaves permanent changes in the system (called "facilitations"), and these changes encode memories. Freud assumes that the changes to the ψ system consist mainly in the lowering of resistance between ψ neurones, or, as he states, "We can therefore say still more correctly that *memory is represented by differences in the facilitations existing between the ψ neurones."*[109] Freud further supposes that (through the *"basic law of association by simultaneity"*) facilitations will most often be laid down between the psychic representatives of specific needs and the memory of experiences of satisfaction through which the tension connected with these needs was discharged.[110] The free flow of

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[107]Breuer had accounted for the same necessary distinction between mechanisms of perception and of memory in *Studies on Hysteria.* As he put it, "The mirror of a reflecting telescope cannot at the same time be a photographic plate" (188-89).

[108]These endogenous stimuli will eventually provide the basis for Freud's theory of the instincts.

[109]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 298-300. (Quote on page 300.)

[110]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 318-19. Freud is modeling here the "compulsion to associate" in consciousness things that happen simultaneously. If one assumes that two ideas (represented by "neurones") have at some time been cathected simultaneously, that is the same as assuming that the pathway between the neurones has been facilitated. Freud states, "It follows in terms of our theory that a Q'η passes more easily from a neurone to a cathected neurone than to an uncathected one. Thus the cathexis of the second neurone operates like the increased cathexis of the first one. Once again, cathexis is here shown to be the equivalent, as regards the passage of Q'η, to facilitation" (319).

Q'η without interference along such facilitated paths to discharge Freud terms the primary function of the ψ system (later the "primary process.") [111] Similarly, facilitations will be laid down between experiences of pain (i.e., sudden eruptions of large quantities of Q into the ϕ or ψ systems) and memories of the hostile object associated with the pain. Freud calls the "residues" of these two experiences (i.e. the experience of pleasure and the experience of pain) "affects and wishful states." According to Freud,

> Both states are of the greatest importance for the passage [of quantity] in ψ, for they leave behind them motives of a compulsive kind. The wishful states result in a positive *attraction* towards the object wished-for, or, more precisely, towards its mnemic image; the experience of pain leads to a repulsion, a disinclination to keeping the hostile mnemic image cathected. Here we have primary *wishful attraction* and *primary defence* [fending off].[112]

Freud also hypothesizes that a certain subset of the ψ neurones will remain constantly cathected, and the memories associated with these cathected neurones will be bound in a stable relationship to one another. These permanently cathected and bound

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[111]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 300-01.

[112]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 321. While it is easy enough to understand wishful attraction, the mechanism of primary defence is more obscure. Freud had intended to write a fourth section to the *Project* that would deal with repression, but apparently gave up as no such section has ever been found. At this point he offers a description only: "It is harder to explain primary defence or repression–the fact that a hostile mnemic image is regularly abandoned by its cathexis as soon as possible. Nevertheless, the explanation should lie in the fact that the primary experiences of pain were brought to an end by reflex defence. The emergence of another object in place of the hostile one was the signal for the fact that the experience of pain was at an end, and the ψ system, taught *biologically*, seeks to reproduce the state in ψ which marked the cessation of pain" (322).

neurones constitute the *ego*.[113] The ego is able to channel the energy at its disposal in such a way that it can perform the specific actions necessary to fulfill somatic needs. It does this through the use of a secondary mechanism by which the flow of Q'η throughout the system may be controlled. This secondary mechanism Freud terms *side-cathexis* or *inhibition*. The possibility of side-cathexis Freud attributes to the hypothesis that a "Q'η in neurone " will go not only in the direction of the contact-barrier which is best facilitated, but also in the direction of the barrier which is cathected from the further side."[114] In an inhibition or side-cathexis, the ego alters the course that a quantity of energy Q'η (seeking discharge) would take if it were to simply follow prior facilitations. It does this by raising the level of the cathexis of adjacent neurones through the use of its store of Q'η and thus "attracting" the flow toward the newly cathected neurones and away from the previously facilitated path.[115] This use of inhibitions to direct the flow of Q'η Freud terms the secondary process.

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[113]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 322-23. Freud attributes the "store" of energy at the disposal of the ego to the constant flow of Q'η arising from the interior of the body. On pages 315-16, Freud calls this flow of Q'n from the interior of the body the *"mainspring"* of the psychical mechanism. This flow of endogenous energy will eventually be theorized as instinct. In "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," Freud writes, "If now we apply ourselves to considering mental life from a biological point of view, an 'instinct' appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body" (SE XIV, 121-22).

[114]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 319.

[115]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 323-24.

Now it is easy to see why the ability to override primary process facilitations is critical to the effective operation of the system, for the pathways that are facilitated in the primary process are between representatives of bodily needs and *memories* of experiences of satisfaction. When the rising endogenous tension again seeks discharge, it will look for satisfaction in the cathected memory rather than through an object in the external world, unless some indication of reality alerts the ego to inhibit the primary process facilitation. Similarly, facilitations exist between memories of objects that have caused pain and key neurones that signal the release of Q'η from the interior of the body. This release of Q'η is, of course, experienced as unpleasure which is capable of escalation into pain.[116] Again, it is necessary for the psychical system to be able to differentiate between the memory of a hostile object and the actual presence of one, if the arousal of pain is to serve a real biological purpose.[117]

Where does this indication of reality come from? In addition to the systems representing perception and memory, Freud adds a third to represent consciousness (the ω system). This system is excited by temporal characteristics of the flow of Q'η as well as by very small amounts of Q'η itself. These temporal excitations allow the ω

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[116]It is interesting that Freud pictures these two sets of facilitations as working in reverse order. In the case of a positive experience, the re-aroused need again seeks the memory of the satisfying object, while in the case of pain, the memory of the hostile object arouses a somatic charge experienced as unpleasure or pain. This postulation of "key neurones" fits neatly with Freud's later theory of signal anxiety.

[117]Sigmund Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I. "Inhibition of this kind is, however a decided advantage to ψ. Let us suppose that *a* is a hostile mnemic image and *b* a key-neurone to unpleasure. Then, if *a* is awakened, primarily unpleasure would be released, which would perhaps be pointless and is so in any case [if released] to its full amount" (324).

system to generate conscious sensations of quality which are accompanied by the discharge of the minute amounts of Q'η.[118] These discharges of excitation from ω are perceived by ψ as indications of reality.[119] It is at this point that the system can break down, however, for it is only if the cathexis of a mnemic image takes place subject to inhibition, that the criterion holds good. If a mnemic image is cathected to the point of hallucination, it, too, will be perceived by ω as having quality and the same discharge and indication of reality will ensue as if the perception had been an external one. It is therefore only if the cathexis of the mnemic image is controlled through inhibition by the ego that the indication of reality will be reliable.[120] Freud has thus demonstrated two ways in which the mind may function.

> Wishful cathexis to the point of hallucination [and] complete generation of unpleasure which involves a complete expenditure of defence are described by us as *psychical primary processes;* by contrast, those processes which are only made possible by a good cathexis of the ego, and which represent a moderation of the foregoing, are described as *psychical secondary processes.* It will be seen that the necessary precondition of the latter is a correct employment of the *indications of reality,* which is only possible when there is inhibition by the ego.[121]

The difference between primary process functioning and secondary process functioning became a central tenet of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. We might ask of these processes, as Freud did of the ϕ and ψ systems, were they invented or were they

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[118]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 308-09.

[119]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 325.

[120]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 326.

[121]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 326-27.

discovered?[122] In any case they provided the link that allowed him to assimilate phenomena as diverse as dreams, symptoms, jokes, and works of art to a single explanatory scheme.

According to Paul Ricoeur, the *Project*

> stands as the greatest effort Freud ever made to force a mass of psychical facts within the framework of a quantitative theory, and as the demonstration by way of the absurd that the content exceeds the frame . . .. Nothing is more dated than the explanatory plan of the 'Project,' and nothing more inexhaustible than its program of description. As one enters more deeply into the 'Project,' one has the impression that the quantitative framework and the neuronic support recede into the background, until they are no more than a given and convenient language of reference which supplies the necessary constraint for great discoveries.[123]

In the *Project,* we see the bare bones of Freud's thought. To find this skeleton clothed in flesh and blood, we must look to his later work where many of the highly compressed ideas of the *Project* are expanded into a more accessible form. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, for example, Freud is able to present far more clearly the dynamic aspect of the interaction of the psychic systems, positing an *unconscious* that seeks the expression of sexual or infantile material, a *preconscious* that opposes this expression because of the "unpleasure" thus produced, and a *conscious* that has been reduced to "a sense organ for the perception of psychical qualities."[124] As Freud summarizes his position in "On Dreams":

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[122]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 303.

[123]Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 73.

[124]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE V, 614-15.

> Our hypothesis is that in our mental apparatus there are two thought-constructing agencies, of which the second enjoys the privilege of having free access to consciousness for its products whereas the activity of the first is in itself unconscious and can reach consciousness only by way of the second. On the frontier between the two agencies, where the first passes over to the second, there is a censorship, which only allows what is agreeable to pass through and holds back everything else. According to our definition, then, what is rejected by the censorship is in a state of repression. Under certain conditions, of which the state of sleep is one, the relation between the strength of the two agencies is modified in such a way that what is repressed can no longer be held back.
> . . . Since, however, the censorship is never completely eliminated but merely reduced, the repressed material must submit to certain alterations which mitigate its offensive features. What becomes conscious . . . is a compromise between the intentions of one agency and the demands of the other.[125]

While his work with patients suffering from neuroses had lead Freud to the recognition that there is a realm of psychical functioning that takes place outside the arena of consciousness, in his study of dreams he was able to study the nature of this "other scene" in far more detail. Positing the conflict and ensuing compromise between the preconscious and unconscious systems in the formation of dreams not only explains the strange nature of dreams, it also provides insight into psychic functioning other than rational discursive thought normally associated with consciousness. Freud argues that associated with the preconscious and unconscious psychic systems are two very different sets of principles which govern the functioning of these two systems. On the one hand, the unconscious system is characterized by "primary process" thought, while the

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[125]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE V, 676.

preconscious (and conscious) systems operate according to the principles of "secondary process" thinking.

The unconscious, as the more primitive of the systems, has as its aim the establishment of a "perceptual identity . . . with the idea upon which an original experience of satisfaction has conferred a special value," and it seeks this identity by the shortest available route, i.e., by means of hallucinatory reproduction.[126] Because it need not heed the constraints of reality, the primary process thinking of the unconscious is further characterized by displacement, condensation, compromise formation, and superficial associations that stand in stark contrast to secondary process thinking.[127]

The conscious and preconscious systems, by contrast, seek a "thought identity" with the earlier source of pleasure, that is, the establishment in reality of the earlier source of pleasure through "waking thought, attention, judgment, reasoning and controlled action" which are the mark of secondary process thinking.[128]

While the primary process functioning of the unconscious is governed by the principle of "unpleasure," (i.e., the avoidance of all thoughts associated with painful affects), the secondary processes associated with the preconscious must modify this rule of avoiding unpleasure at all costs if it is to be successful in its search for real as opposed to hallucinatory satisfactions. Thus, the preconscious is able to contemplate ("cathect') even

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[126]Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, 339-40.

[127]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, 597.

[128]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE V, 588-609.

potentially unpleasurable thoughts so long as it is in a position to control or "inhibit" the development of any unpleasure which might proceed from them.[129]

The primary processes of the unconscious, however, are primary not only because of their relatively primitive functional efficiency, but also because of their chronological priority in the development of the individual.[130] Therefore, says Freud,

> the core of our being, consisting of unconscious wishful impulses, remains inaccessible to the understanding and inhibition of the preconscious; the part played by the latter is restricted once and for all to directing along the most expedient paths the wishful impulses that arise from the unconscious.[131]

Among this core of infantile wishful impulses are some which are unacceptable to the preconscious and whose fulfillment would not generate an affect of pleasure but rather of unpleasure if allowed into consciousness. In the case of such wishes, there ensues a struggle between the unconscious in its drive to fulfill the wish that is unacceptable to consciousness and the preconscious which, because the unpleasurable affect of the wish lies beyond its control, turns away from the wish and from any thoughts which have become associated with it.[132] However, says Freud,

> from the moment at which the repressed thoughts are strongly cathected by the unconscious wishful impulse and, on the other hand, abandoned by the preconscious cathexis, they become subject to the primary psychical process and their one aim is motor discharge, or, if the

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[129]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE V, 601.

[130]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, 603.

[131]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE V, 603.

[132]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, 605.

> path is open, hallucinatory revival of the desired perceptual image.[133]

It is precisely this process that results in the formation of the dream. The unconscious wishful impulses that motivate the dream, Freud calls the "latent dream thoughts"; the primary process "disguises" that seek to elude the censorship of the preconscious constitute the "dream work"; and the part of the dream that becomes available to conscious memory is the "manifest dream." Through the process of interpretation, one is able to move from the manifest dream through a chain of associations that have been disguised by condensation, displacement, symbolization and considerations of representability back to the latent wishful impulses of the unconscious. The "meaning" of the dream will inhere in the entire network of associations thus constructed.

Thus, it is not merely the conflict of the two systems, but the different nature of their functioning which must be understood if one is to make sense of the bizarre and perplexing nature of dreams. Freud calls the aim of the unconscious in its search for perceptual identity with ideas associated with earlier sources of satisfaction a "wish," and it is the ascendancy of primary process thought in the dream states that leads to his definition of the dream: "a dream is a (disguised) fulfillment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish."[134]

According to Freud, a similar interplay of unconscious and preconscious thought results in the formation of hysterical symptoms, and they, too, are to be regarded as the

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[133]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, 605.

[134]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE IV, 160.

fulfillment of unconscious wishes.[135] Freud argues, for example, that "... the pathological mechanisms which are revealed in the psychoneuroses by the most careful analysis have the greatest similarity to dream processes."[136] He describes the dream state as "above all discontinuous. What becomes conscious is not a whole succession of associations, but only separate stopping points in it,"[137] and, in a parallel manner, the hysteric fails to bring to consciousness those links in the associative chain of ideas which would render her compulsions intelligible.[138]

Despite the gap between the richness of Freud's clinical observations and the ability of the *Project* to theoretically systematize those observations,[139] Freud argues that both dreams and neurotic symptoms rely on displacement and symbol formation to disguise the wishes that motivate them.[140] In each case, an interplay of conscious (or preconscious) and unconscious ideas is unified in the production of a single psychic phenomenon--dream or symptom. Thus, two unities are posited in the *Project.* The first is that different psychic phenomena are explicable in terms of the same principles of psychic functioning. The second is that the individual psychic phenomenon itself is

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[135]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE V, 569.

[136]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 336.

[137]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 341.

[138]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 348-9.

[139]Sulloway, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind*, 118-131. Sulloway details Freud's difficulties in representing pathological repression within the framework of the *Project*, pointing to the missing fourth section of the work which was to have dealt definitively with this problem, and which was apparently never completed to Freud's satisfaction.

[140]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 360.

expressive of a unification of thoughts which are derived from unconscious as well as conscious sources.

Above all, the *Project* posits a self that cannot be equated with consciousness. In fact, the insights grounded in Freud's work in psychopathology and systematized in the *Project* render the self problematic to consciousness, not merely in the dream state or as a hypnotist's trick, but practically and systematically. The hysteric suffers from the compulsions generated by those ideas repressed from consciousness,[141] and Freud's theory postulates a consciousness whose role in the total functioning of the self falls between two possible extremes. On the one hand, Freud writes, within "an advanced mechanistic theory," consciousness might be seen as a "mere appendage to physiologico-psychical processes and its omission would make no alteration in the [passage of psychical events];" on the other hand, consciousness might be seen as "the subjective side of all psychical events and . . . thus [as] inseparable from the physiological mental process." The theory developed in the "Project," says Freud,

> lies between these two. Here consciousness is the subjective side of one part of the psychical processes in the nervous system, namely of the ω processes; and the omission of consciousness does not leave psychical events unaltered but involves the omission of the contribution from ω.[142]

Within this passage, Freud breaks through the professedly physicalist orientation of the *Project*, making clear its nature as a model of psychic functioning, and allowing us to see in embryonic form the mature theory of the unconscious that will evolve from it. Faced

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[141]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 350-51.

[142]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 311.

with the problem of constructing a model that would demonstrate an unbroken associative chain of thought making sense of the hysteric's compulsions, Freud could not equate thought with consciousness. He could have posited an unbroken chain of physical events, of which thought was a mere accidental and inessential appendage, or a theory of the mental events of consciousness interspersed with and connected by non-mental (neuronal) events, but such a move would have made the *Project* the reductive caricature of thought it is often portrayed to be. Freud's insistence that only a theory of unconscious mental events will serve his purpose is the result of a clear differentiation between mental and physical events, even in the face of the *Project's* physicalist framework.[143] In the final section of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud quotes with approval Lipps' observation that "the problem of the unconscious in psychology is less *a* psychological problem than *the* problem of psychology."[144] "The unconscious," writes Freud,

> is the true psychical reality; *in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented*

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[143]In his book *On Aphasia* (1891), Freud asked rhetorically, "Is it justifiable to take a nerve fiber, which for the whole length of its course has been a purely physiological structure and has been subject to purely physiological modifications, and to plunge its end into the sphere of the mind and to fit this end out with a presentation or a mnemic image?" In that paper, he argued for a psycho-physical parallelism which, while sharply differentiating psychological and physiological events, nevertheless subscribed to a kind of "appendage theory" of consciousness, with "presentations" (or "psychical phenomena") being regarded as "dependent concomitants" accompanying some physiological events (*SE* XIV, 207-08). Thus the *Project's* position on unconscious thought represents an advance toward a fully psychological theory. In his 1915 paper on "The Unconscious" Freud explicitly rejects psycho-physical parallelism.

[144]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, 611.

by the data of consciousness as is the external world
by the communications of our sense organs.[145]

How do works of art and aesthetic processes fit into this early stage of psychoanalytic exploration? As I read through Freud's work, the author's voice is a constant presence, assuming now one persona, now another: there is Freud, the conquistador, taking possession of new territory; Freud, the archeologist, uncovering the buried past; Freud, the somewhat authoritarian physician, "into whose hands" his patients are "delivered." Perhaps the strongest voice I hear, however, is that of Freud, *the solver of riddles.* Wherever there is evidence of mind, there is a riddle to be solved; and he has no more than introduced a patient or a dream than he is probing, interrogating, following up one train of thought after another, trying to answer a question, or a series of questions, that he himself has posed. Freud approaches art and aesthetic processes in just this way. *Is a novel like a dream? Is a dream in a novel like a real dream? Why does beauty make us sad? What makes the portrayal of tragic events on stage enjoyable? How does a work of literature produce a feeling of uncanniness? Why does Hamlet delay? What is the relation between the artist's life and his work?* In each case, we have the Freud who asks the question, then endlessly complicates it, and then triumphantly finds the neat solution that ties up all of the loose ends *or uncovers another set of questions to be answered.* What we discover in Freud, therefore, is not so much a fully developed theory of art as a series of riddles and answers.

There is another way to think about Freud's approach to aesthetics. I remember vividly being given a microscope as a child. Under the microscope, whole new worlds

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[145]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE V, 613.

appeared, and my sisters and I were in a delirium of discovery. In a similar way, Freud focused his new instrument, psychoanalytic theory and technique, on first one aspect of mind and then another, providing new answers to old questions even as he uncovered new questions. The theory elucidated the phenomena, and he looked to the phenomena for confirmation of the theory. In this way, enabled and constrained by the possibilities of his instrument, Freud assimilated art to his general view of psychic functioning.

Now, if we think back to Freud's formulations in the *Project,* we are at once reminded that the sole purpose of all mental processes is the fulfillment of wishes. Furthermore, we have learned that these wishes are equivalent to the memories of experiences of satisfaction resulting from the successful discharge of psychic energy arising from the stimuli associated with endogenous needs. Some of these wishes (for the most part infantile egoistic and sexual wishes) have been subjected to repression because they are incompatible with that group of ideas that forms the mature ego. This means that they have been barred from association with that group of ideas which make up the ego and are they are therefore unavailable to consciousness. Freud has also differentiated two contrasting modes of operation in the psychic apparatus: the primary process, which functions solely according to considerations of pleasure and unpleasure; and the secondary process, which, in its search for satisfaction, takes into account the demands of reality.

Freud has also made further discoveries that we have not examined as closely. There is, for example, the tendency of that which has been repressed to continually seek satisfaction even while in the repressed state. Because the process of undergoing repression has left the now isolated idea (and its accompanying affect) "unbound," it is subsequently free to link up with any other idea that is not safely bound by the ego. Such

ideas may be found among others that have been repressed or among the many ideas that have merely escaped the ego's attention. These links may be formed upon the loosest and most irrational of associations, and through them the repressed idea may make its way back into consciousness in a disguised form. Freud calls this irruption of a repressed idea or its associated affect into consciousness the "return of the repressed."[146] Dreams and symptoms are two examples of these *derivatives* of unconscious wishes that have re-emerged into consciousness.[147]

A special kind of unconscious derivative is the *fantasy*, a highly organized formation that shares in many of the qualitative aspects of a secondary process production but nevertheless operates at an unconscious level.[148] To begin with, a fantasy is a *scenario*, a kind of dramatization representing the fulfillment of an unconscious wish. Freud first encountered fantasies in the stories of sexual seduction related to him by his neurotic patients, stories that he later understood to represent not actual scenes of seduction but fantasies associated with infantile sexual wishes. He also considered unconscious fantasies to be the starting point of the process of dream formation, and he

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[146]Freud, "Repression" in SE XIV, 154.

[147]Freud, "The Unconscious" in SE XIV, 180-95.

[148]Freud, "The Unconscious" in SE XIV, 190-91. In this work, Freud writes, "Of such a nature are those phantasies of normal people as well as of neurotics which we have recognized as preliminary stages in the formation both of dreams and of symptoms and which, in spite of their high degree of organization, remain repressed and therefore cannot become conscious" (191). As Laplanche and Pontalis point out, however, Freud does not always differentiate sharply between day-dreams and fantasies (*The Language of Psycho-Analysis,* 316). If we were to make day-dreams analogous to dreams, we might suppose that fantasies are unconscious formations on which the conscious day-dream is based.

considered day-dreams to be intimately connected with unconscious fantasies as well. One of the characteristics peculiar to fantasy is a temporal order.

> The relation of a phantasy to time is in general very important. We may say that it hovers, as it were, between three times–the three moments of time which our ideation involves. Mental work is linked to some current impression, some provoking occasion in the present which has been able to arouse one of the subject's major wishes. From there it harks back to a memory of an earlier experience (usually an infantile one) in which this wish was fulfilled; and it now creates a situation relating to the future which represents a fulfilment of the wish. What it thus creates is a day-dream or phantasy, which carries about it traces of its origin from the occasion which provoked it and from the memory. Thus past, present and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them.[149]

In "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming,"[150] Freud compares creative writing to child's play, noting how each "re-arranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him." Freud observes that, while the child takes his play-world very seriously, he does not mistake it for real. In fact, the child retains a lively interest in the real world "and he likes to link his imagined objects and situations to the tangible and visible things of the real world." Freud then argues that this linking of play with the objects of the real world is the only thing that distinguishes play from fantasy. Once the child has "grown up and ceased to play," however, he may once again seek pleasure in a world of his own making, but "instead of *playing,* he now *phantasies,*" that is, he day-dreams. Freud observes that while the adult "cherishes" these day-dreams as among his "most intimate possessions," he is nevertheless ashamed of them and "would rather confess his misdeeds than tell

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[149]Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" in SE IX, 147-48.

[150]Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" in SE IX, 143-153.

anyone his phantasies." Both play and fantasy express wishes. In the child's case, his play expresses the wish to be grown up and enjoy all the perceived prerogatives of an adult. In the adult, however, fantasies are generally egoistic or erotic, and they are based on childish wishes that the adult has long since repressed. Now, Freud asks himself, is the creative writer simply one who has substituted child's play with fantasy? "May we really attempt to compare the imaginative writer with the 'dreamer in broad daylight', and his creations with day-dreams?"

Considering first the works of "the less pretentious authors of novels, romances and short stories," Freud argues that they all have the stamp of the day-dream. The invincible hero through whose "revealing characteristic of invulnerability we can immediately recognize His Majesty the Ego" is "the hero alike of every day-dream and of every story." The fact that all of the women in the novel invariably fall in love with this hero "can hardly be looked on as a portrayal of reality." Freud concludes that the formula that governs the creation of a dream or symptom applies to these literary creations as well:

> [S]ome strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfilment in the creative work.[151]

If there *is* a way in which the creative writer may be sharply contrasted to the day-dreamer, however, it is through the two-faceted observation that the creative writer is willing to share his day-dreams *and* we are not repelled by them. Freud suggests that it is through the *incentive bonus* or *fore-pleasure* of form, that the reader is enticed into sharing the writer's fantasy. According to Freud, all of the purely aesthetic pleasure the writer

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[151]Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" in SE IX, 151.

offers is due to this pleasure in form, while the sharing of the fantasy that underlies the content of the work provides us with a "greater pleasure arising from deeper psychical sources," the "liberation of tensions in our minds."

We can derive a whole agenda of Freudian studies in aesthetics from this short paper. The work of art is seen to be the result of an interweaving of conscious and unconscious mental processes. "Primal fantasies" place at the artist's disposal the great literary themes that transcend time and place. Much of the power that works of art have over us can be understood as being the result of the fact that our own repressed fantasies are somehow engaged by the artwork, and that response to the work of art involves a change in the economy of psychic energy. There is also implied the notion that a work of art may be interpreted just like a dream or symptom; thus, we are prompted to look at the details of the work for evidence of the condensation and displacement that are likely to disguise or obscure its deeper meaning. (Conversely, we might also assume that the artist's unconscious can speak directly to our own, allowing the work to weave its magic without our understanding how this occurs.) There is, furthermore, the notion that the sharing of fantasies somehow acts to legitimate them. And, finally, we are lead to question what life experiences or qualities of character differentiate the creative writer from the ordinary person who hides his or her fantasies and would only succeed in repelling us if he or she did not?

On the other hand, the limitations of a Freudian aesthetics are nowhere more evident than in these ten pages. We find over and over the unbridgeable gulf between the artist's creation and the external world. Freud loses track of the important connection between child's play and reality, [i.e., that the child "likes to link his imagined objects and

situations to the tangible and visible things of the real world"], when he introduces fantasy as the successor to child's play. Fantasy, by contrast to child's play, is secret, shameful. It is indulged in by those who have not learned "to suppress the excess of self-regard" that they enjoyed in the "spoilt days" of childhood. It is only the "unreality of the writer's imaginative world" that allows intrinsically distressing situations to be represented as exciting. Even worse, Freud tells us,

> There is a great deal more that could be said about phantasies; but I will only allude as briefly as possible to certain points. If phantasies become over-luxuriant and over-powerful, the conditions are laid for an onset of neurosis or psychosis. Phantasies, moreover, are the immediate precursors of the distressing symptoms complained of by our patients. Here a broad by-path branches off into pathology.[152]

In assimilating the work of the creative writer to the symptom or dream, Freud loses sight of the fact that the artistic creation is a *work.* It does not "produce itself" out of fantasy like a symptom or dream, but is the result of a process that requires intellectual analysis and synthesis, effort over time as well as inspiration. To say that creative writing is a "continuation" of child's play is not to say that it is *nothing but* child's play. Freud's theoretical premise that there exists a sharp differentiation between wishful fantasy and external reality, blinds him to the significance of the contributions of mind–artistic and otherwise--to the construction of the real world.

To say that first-phase or "classical" psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the dichotomy between conscious and unconscious aspects of mind, cannot provide the foundation for an ontologically significant aesthetic theory does not mean that it does not

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[152]Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" in SE IX, 148.

offer significant insights within the framework of its self-imposed limitations.[153] Perhaps one of the most lasting of Freud's contributions to aesthetics will be his interpretation of the psychological dynamics of those two masterpieces of Western literature, *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet.* Having discovered within himself the intense love of his mother and jealousy of his father that he would later formulate as the Oedipus complex, Freud advanced the same primal fantasy as the key to the emotional power of these two plays. Of *Oedipus Rex,* he writes to his confidant, Wilhelm Fliess:

> . . . the Greek legend seizes upon a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he senses its existence within himself. Everyone in the audience was once a budding Oedipus in fantasy and each recoils in horror from the dream fulfillment here transplanted into reality, with the full quantity of repression which separates his infantile state from his present one.[154]

In the *Interpretation of Dreams,* Freud extends this insight to Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* "another of the great creations of tragic poetry" that "has its roots in the same soil as *Oedipus Rex.*"[155] Freud's interpretation of *Hamlet,* extended by Ernest Jones, is predicated upon the understanding that Hamlet is caught between a powerful conscious inhibition and an equally powerful unconscious fantasy. As Jones puts it:

> It is his moral duty, to which his father exhorts him, to put an end to the incestuous activities of his mother (by killing

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[153]See for example Freud's contribution to Aristotle's theory of catharsis in "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" or his elucidation of the framing assumptions that lead to the experience of "uncanniness" in "The Uncanny." In both cases it is the interplay of conscious and unconscious modes of thought that produce the described effect.

[154]*The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904,* translated and edited by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, 272. (Letter of October 15, 1897)

[155]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE IV, 264-66.

> Claudius), but his unconscious does not want to put an end to them (he being identified with Claudius in the situation), and so he cannot. His lashings of self-reproach and remorse are ultimately because of this very failure, i.e. the refusal of his guilty wishes to undo the sin. By refusing to abandon his own incestuous wishes he perpetuates the sin and so must endure the stings of torturing conscience. And yet killing his mother's husband would be the equivalent to committing the original sin himself, which would if anything be even more guilty. So of the two impossible alternatives he adopts the passive solution of letting the incest continue vicariously, but at the same time provoking destruction at the King's hand.[156]

Freud concludes his discussion of *Hamlet* in *The Interpretation of Dreams* by admitting that just as symptoms and dreams are "capable of being 'over-interpreted' and indeed need to be, if they are to be fully understood, so all genuinely creative writings are the product of more than a single impulse in the poet's mind, and are open to more than a single interpretation."[157] I will conclude this chapter with that thought as well, and in the next chapter, we will examine another interpretation of *Hamlet,* made possible by advances in the theory of psychoanalysis itself.

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[156]Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1976), 90-91.

[157]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* SE IV, 266.

CHAPTER 2

ART AND THE STRUCTURAL THEORY

Freud's clinical work had forced a preoccupation with the distinction between conscious and unconscious thought. The realization that ideas not available to consciousness could make his patients ill made the study of the unconscious the earliest concern of psychoanalysis. With the 1923 publication of *The Ego and the Id,* however, Freud introduced a major revision to his theory of psychoanalysis. While continuing to maintain that the "division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premiss of psycho-analysis,"[1] he nevertheless acknowledged that unconsciousness "becomes a quality which can have many meanings, a quality which we are unable to make, as we should have hoped to do, the basis of far-reaching and inevitable conclusions."[2]

As we have seen, Freud had formulated a description of mental functioning that was based in large part on the relationship of various psychical subsystems to consciousness. He had named the transient and fleeting condition of immediate perception the system conscious *(Cs.* or *Pcpt.-Cs.),* pointing out that an idea that is conscious at one point may have disappeared a moment later, only to be brought back into consciousness after an interval, during which it is "--we do not know what."[3] Freud had discovered that, while this period during which an idea is not immediately

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[1]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 13.

[2]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 18.

[3]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 14.

conscious but is *latent* or *capable of becoming conscious* is descriptively unconscious, it is different from other states of unconsciousness "in which mental dynamics play a part."[4] These dynamics are made apparent by powerful ideas which have the same effects in mental life as ordinary ideas, yet are not available to consciousness. That is, they are actively *repressed*, and he found that this repression is manifested during psychoanalysis as *resistance.* Freud divided these two areas which are both descriptively unconscious into the systems preconscious *(Pcs.)* and unconscious *(Ucs.),* with the *Pcs.* consisting of ideas that are latent but capable of becoming conscious and the *Ucs.* consisting of ideas that are repressed and actively resisted during analysis.[5]

Freud further ascribed differing characteristics to each system, with the *Pcs.* and *Pcpt.-Cs.* functioning according to the reality principle (i.e., in accordance with the demands of secondary process thought and the external world) and the *Ucs.* functioning according to the pleasure principle (i.e., in accordance with instinctual demands and primary process ideation.)[6] In addition, he saw the *Pcs.* as the site of the "censor" that determined whether or not an unconscious (repressed) idea might enter into consciousness. His studies on aphasia and work with hysterics lead him to believe that, in order for an unconscious element (a "thing presentation") to become conscious, it must first be (re)connected with language (i.e., "hypercathected" through attachment to a "word-presentation"), and that, alternatively, when an idea is repressed, the link between

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[4]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 14.

[5]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 14.

[6]See Chapter One of this dissertation.

the idea and the corresponding word is broken.[7] He argued that it is through the reconnection of language and repressed thought that psychoanalysis can help to recover for consciousness that which has been rendered unconscious. According to Freud,

> . . . only something which has once been a conscious perception can become conscious, and . . . anything arising from within (apart from feelings) that seeks to become conscious must first transform itself into an external perception: this becomes possible by means of memory-traces.[8]

In this way the memory of new experiences becomes the vehicle by which older (unconscious) memories or fantasies are hypercathected and thus made available to consciousness. In the optimal case of psychoanalysis, these new memory traces will be verbal (i.e., word-presentations); however, in some special cases (e.g., hallucinations or dreaming) "optical mnemic residues, when they are of *things*" may provide the means for a special kind of "visual thinking" where "what becomes conscious . . . is as a rule only the concrete subject-matter of the thought."[9] In the case of such visual thinking, the relations between the elements of the subject matter are not given expression, and the unconscious thoughts are not brought to complete consciousness (see, for example, how

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[7]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 21. In a clarifying discussion of this admittedly obscure process, Hans Loewald suggests that very early experiencing takes place in a conaesthetic "flow" of which language is simply one of many sensory components. It is only with the later acquisition of language as symbol that early experience can be articulated into its component elements and reconnected at a higher level of mental organization that becomes "perceptible", i.e. available to secondary process consideration. See Hans W. Loewald, "Primary Process, Secondary Process, and Language" in *Papers on Psychoanalysis,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 178-206. There is no problem in understanding how thought and word can become disconnected after language has achieved its symbolic function.

[8]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 20.

[9]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 21.

the "day residue" provides latent dream thoughts only partial and disguised access to consciousness). Thus Freud saw no direct link between the *Pcpt.-Cs.* and *Ucs.* Their relationship was always mediated by the *Pcs.*

By 1923, a number of considerations lead Freud to the conclusion that the relationship of psychic subsystems to consciousness was no longer adequate to capture the intricacies of his clinical observations. Perhaps the most decisive of these considerations was the realization that not only is the repressed material of the *Ucs.* unavailable to consciousness, the *resistance* to the discovery of such material is unavailable to consciousness as well. In order for his theory of intrapsychic conflict to work, the repressive forces had to be assigned to a system operating under the rules of the secondary process and opposing the impetus for immediate discharge of instinctual energy that reigns within the *Ucs.* This meant that there was no place in Freud's theory that would adequately account for the unconscious resistance that was demonstrated by his patients. Its opposition to instinctual discharge meant it could not be part of the *Ucs.*, while its unavailability to consciousness meant it could not be part of the *Pcs.* or *Pcpt.-Cs.* And, yet, such unconscious resistance was undeniable. Thus, it became clear that the simple principle of availability to consciousness provided an insufficient basis for defining mental structures.

Freud began his reformulation of psychic functioning by considering the "ego," a term he had loosely associated with the *Pcpt.-Cs.* and *Pcs.* in his earlier system.

> We have formed the idea that in each individual there is a coherent organization of mental processes; and we call this his *ego.* It is to this ego that consciousness is attached; the ego controls the approaches to motility–that is, to the discharge of excitations into the external world; it is the mental agency which supervises all its own constituent processes, and

> which goes to sleep at night, though even then it exercises the censorship on dreams. From this ego proceed the repressions, too, by means of which it is sought to exclude certain trends in the mind not merely from consciousness but also from other forms of effectiveness and activity. In analysis these trends which have been shut out stand in opposition to the ego, and the analysis is faced with the task of removing the resistances which the ego displays against concerning itself with the repressed. Now we find during analysis that, when we put certain tasks before the patient, he gets into difficulties; his associations fail when they should be coming near the repressed. We then tell him that he is dominated by a resistance; but he is quite unaware of the fact, and, even if he guesses from his unpleasurable feelings that a resistance is now at work in him, he does not know what it is or how to describe it. Since, however, there can be no question but that this resistance emanates from his ego and belongs to it, we find ourselves in an unforeseen situation. We have come upon something in the ego which is also unconscious, which behaves exactly like the repressed–that is, which produces powerful effects without itself being conscious and which requires special work before it can be made conscious. *From the point of view of analytic practice, the consequence of this discovery is that we land in endless obscurities and difficulties if we keep our habitual forms of expression and try, for instance, to derive neuroses from a conflict between the conscious and the unconscious. We shall have to substitute for this antithesis another, taken from our insight into the structural conditions of the mind–the antithesis between the coherent ego and the repressed that is split off from it.*[10]

Freud thus abandons his first theory–the topographical theory–which is based on the relationship of the subsystems *Pcpt.-Cs, Pcs.,* and *Ucs.* to consciousness; in its place he puts a second theory–the structural theory–which is based on the "antithesis between

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[10]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 17 (italics mine).

the coherent ego and the repressed that is split off from it."[11] The split-off part of the mind, "unknown and unconscious," Freud terms the "id."[12]

At this point, the structural theory portrays the mind as divided into the ego and the id, with parts of the ego being conscious (or preconscious) and parts of it (the forces responsible for resistance and repression) being unconscious. The ego (which has its "nucleus" in the former system *Pcpt.-Cs.* and extends to include the earlier system *Pcs.*) rests upon the surface of the id and merges into it. Clearly, the ego and the id are not subject to the strict differentiation that held between the systems *Cs.* and *Ucs.*; in fact Freud argues that "it is easy to see that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world."[13] As such, it functions according to the reality principle and seeks to impose this principle on the id in which the pleasure

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[11]Jacob A. Arlow and Charles Brenner, *Psychoanalytic Concepts and the Structural Theory,* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1964), 6. The distinction between these two theories is a matter of accepted nomenclature. Freud did not actually name them as such.

They are also sometimes distinguished as the "first" and "second" topography. See Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis,* 449-453. Laplanche and Pontalis point out that the various subsystems of both of these theories have "distinctive characteristics or functions and a specific position vis-a-vis the others, so that they may be treated, metaphorically speaking as points in a psychical space which is susceptible of figurative representation." Freud specifically refutes the idea that the "topographies" correspond to the "anatomical localization of function." They cannot, however, be "isolated from the *dynamic view,* equally essential for psycho-analysis, according to which the [sub] systems are in conflict with one another" (451-52).

[12]*SE,* XIX, p. 23. Freud borrows this term from Georg Groddeck who argued that we are "'lived' by unknown and uncontrollable forces" which he called *das Es.* The German *das Es* literally translates as *the it*, an impersonal term that captures the feeling of "otherness" inspired by the unconscious. In the *Standard Edition, das Es* is translated into the Latin *Id.*

[13]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 24-25.

principle "reigns unrestrictedly."[14] Despite its efforts, however, the ego remains under the control of the id in terms of its basic aims. While the ego controls access to motility, Freud likens it to a horseback rider who has to control a horse that is much more powerful than himself:

> Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own.[15]

The ego accomplishes this by linking unconscious thoughts to word- or thing-presentations and thus allowing them to become conscious and, through conformity to the reality principle, achieve some level of satisfaction.

The anomaly of unconscious resistance was not the only consideration that forced Freud's reformulation of the first topographical system. He had encountered within the analytic situation what he termed a "far stranger" phenomenon that also became a motivating factor in his revision.[16] Freud observed that certain aspects of moral and ethical functioning–ideas which should be completely ego-syntonic and thus available to consciousness–often function in an unconscious and self-punitive way.[17] In his 1917 paper, *Mourning and Melancholia*, he pointed out that in such cases:

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[14]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 25.

[15]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 25. Freud would revise this assessment of the ego's strength in 1926 in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety* (SE XX, 91-100.) In this later work, he posits a greater amount of strength to the ego, which he attributes to its control of motility and consciousness and to its nature as an organized structure. He also points out in this work that the ego, as a part of the id, may draw upon the powers of the id itself to effect repression.

[16]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 26.

[17]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 26-27.

> one part of the ego sets itself over against the other, judges it critically, and, as it were, takes it as its object. . . . What we are here becoming acquainted with is the agency commonly called 'conscience'; we shall count it, along with the censorship of consciousness and reality-testing, among the major institutions of the ego, and we shall come upon evidence to show that it can become diseased on its own account.[18]

Freud had theorized that in cases of melancholia, the ego, in the process of giving up an object, identifies itself with the object and thus draws to itself the instinctual cathexis formerly lavished on the object. This identification of self and object is made possible by a *regression* from a genetically more advanced form of object-choice to the earlier stage of *narcissism,* a stage in which the ego takes itself as its own object.[19] To the extent that ambivalence is a part of the original object relationship, libidinal pressures that help to enact the narcissistic identification will be accompanied by feelings of hate directed toward the part of the ego identified with the lost object.[20]

In *The Ego and the Id,* Freud expands this notion of a special agency within the ego through the formulation of the "super-ego" as a third subsystem of the psyche. He begins with a statement that generalizes his observation of the processes that had first become obvious in mourning and melancholia:

> When it happens that a person has to give up a sexual object, there quite often ensues an alteration of his ego,

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[18]Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" in SE XIV, 247.

[19]For a fuller discussion of narcissism, see "On Narcissism: An Introduction" in SE XIV, 73-102. "Thus we form the idea of there being an original libidinal cathexis of the ego, from which some is later given off to objects, but which fundamentally persists and is related to the object-cathexes much as the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out. . . . We see also, broadly speaking, an antithesis between ego-libido and object-libido. The more of the one is employed, the more the other becomes depleted" (75-76).

[20]Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" in SE XIV, 250-51.

> which can only be described as a setting up of the object inside the ego, as it occurs in melancholia . . .. It may be that by this introjection, which is a kind of regression to the mechanism of the oral phase, the ego makes it easier for the object to be given up or renders that process possible. It may be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects. At any rate the process, especially in the early phases of development, is a very frequent one, and it makes it possible to suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object cathexes and that it contains the history of those object choices.[21]

Not surprisingly, Freud argues the "first and most important identification" is the one that is formed through the child's relationship to its parents,[22] and it is from this complicated and evolving relationship which culminates in the Oedipal stage of psycho-sexual development that Freud derives the genesis of the super-ego. In its simplest form, the Oedipal stage will find the child enmeshed in a triangular relationship with the two parents in which love of the parent of the opposite sex is accompanied by feelings of hatred and rivalry toward the parent of the same sex. If, for simplicity, we take the case of the male child, we find that it is only the recognition that his father/rival is more powerful than he, and, furthermore, capable of exacting horrific punishment if the child persists in his love attachment to his mother, that persuades him to give up his claim. The child does this, in part through identification with his powerful father from whom he "borrows" the strength to effect his renunciation. But, as Freud points out, this is only

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[21]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 29.

[22]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 31. "This [primary pre-oedipal identification process] is apparently not in the first instance the consequence or outcome of an object-cathexis; it is a direct and immediate identification and takes place earlier than any object-cathexis. But the object-choices belonging to the first sexual period and relating to the father and mother seem normally to find their outcome in an identification of this kind, and would thus reinforce the primary one."

one side of the picture, for the little boy also loves his father and is engaged in a rivalry with his mother for the father's affection.[23] This "negative" aspect of the Oedipus complex is the result of the bisexuality inherent in each individual. In this case, the little boy will protect himself (and in part satisfy his longing for his father's love) by identifying with his mother. It is through the renunciation of each of the parents as a sexual object, accomplished in part through an identification with the parent of the opposite sex of the desired parent, that a "resolution" of the complete Oedipus complex is effected. As Freud concludes:

> *The broad general outcome of the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipus complex may, therefore, be taken to be the forming of a precipitate in the ego, consisting of these two identifications in some way united with each other. This modification of the ego retains its special position; it confronts the other contents of the ego as an ego ideal or super-ego.*[24]

Thus, according to Freud the super-ego, formed through the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, is the heir and representative of powerful id impulses as well as of internalized parental prohibitions. As such it is more closely related to the repressed unconscious than

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[23]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 31-34. See also "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety" in SE XX, 101-118 for examples of the positive Oedipus Complex ("Little Hans") and the negative Oedipus Complex ("The Wolfman"). Freud also identifies the specific fear that prompts the renunciation of the desired parent in each case as the fear of castration.

[24]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 34 (Italics Freud's). Freud also points out that the "super-ego is, however, not merely a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices. Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: 'You *ought to be* like this (like your father).' It also comprises the prohibition: 'You *may not be* like this (like your father)–that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative."

to the ego and it is capable of combining the energy of instinctual forces with the punishing identification that was the basis of its initial institution.[25]

Freud brings one more consideration to bear in his formulation of the super-ego. In accordance with his belief in an "archaic inheritance" through which phylogenetic vicissitudes are preserved in individual memory, he argued that in the id, "which is capable of being inherited, are harboured residues of the existences of countless egos; and, when the ego forms its super-ego out of the id, it may perhaps only be reviving shapes of former egos and be bringing them to resurrection."[26] Thus Freud sees the super-ego as gaining id strength, not only from libidinal energy but also from prehistoric (or perhaps, following Laplanche and Pontalis, *a-historic*) racial memories that oppose it.

Hand in hand with Freud's revised model of psychic functioning went a revised theory of the instincts. Prior to 1920, Freud had divided the instincts into the ego

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[25]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 48. "The super-ego owes its special position in the ego, or in relation to the ego, to a factor which must be considered from two sides: on the one hand it was the first identification and one which took place while the ego was still feeble, and on the other hand it is the heir to the Oedipus complex and has thus introduced the momentous objects into the ego."

[26]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 38. It is specifically Freud's notion of the primal horde and its relation to the "father-complex" that he has in mind here. See also *Totem and Taboo* and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Id* for a further discussion of this notion. Arlow and Brenner (1964, p. 68) point out that Freud's explanations "based on regression to phylogenetic antecedents are nowadays regarded as hardly acceptable from the scientific point of view." However, Laplanche and Pontalis, *(The Language of Psycho-Analysis,* 332-33), in their discussion of 'Primal Phantasies', argue, "Whatever reservations may be justified as regards the theory of an hereditary, genetic transmission, there is no reason, in our view, to reject as equally invalid the idea that structures exist in the phantasy dimension *(la fantasmatique)* which are irreducible to the contingencies of the individual's lived experience." This issue will provide a major point of differentiation between Winnicott and Klein (see Chapter Three of this dissertation).

instincts and libidinal (sexual) instincts.[27] With the publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 1920, he conceded that arguments he had advanced in support of this duality could not be sustained in the face of the narcissistic stage of development in which the ego itself is taken as an libidinal object thus obviating the difference between ego and sexual energy. This collapse of the earlier duality, (plus clinical observations that included the repetition compulsion and sadism), lead him to propose a new instinctual duality between Eros (the life instinct, comprising both ego and libidinal instincts) and its opponent, the death instinct (manifesting itself in destructiveness).[28] The self-destructive tendencies which Freud had begun to examine closely in his 1915 paper, *Mourning and Melancholia,* pointed a way to the integration of the structural theory and the revised drive theory. In answer to his own question of why the superego manifests itself in such criticism and harshness toward the ego, Freud writes:

> If we turn to melancholia first, we find that the excessively strong super-ego which has obtained a hold upon consciousness rages against the ego with merciless violence, as if it had taken possession of the whole of the sadism available in the person concerned. Following our view of sadism, we should say that the destructive component had entrenched itself in the super-ego

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[27]Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction" in SE IV, 77-79. Freud sees the two instincts as embodying the common distinction between hunger and love. He also argues that there is a biological basis for their distinction: the ego instincts work for the preservation of the individual and the sexual instincts for the preservation of the species.

[28]In *The Ego and the Id,* Freud describes the hypothesis of the death instinct as based on theoretical considerations, supported by biology. From a biological point of view, he saw all life as comprising two contrary trends. On the one hand is the trend that leads from the organic to the inanimate state; on the other is a trend "which seeks a more and more far-reaching combination of the particles into which living substance is dispersed." On the physiological level, he compared these two trends to the processes of anabolism and catabolism (40-41).

> and turned against the ego. What is now holding sway in the super-ego is, as it were, a pure culture of the death instinct . . ..[29]

Freud saw the life and death instincts as "fused, blended, and alloyed" in each individual, and he suggested that instinctual energy could be "neutralized."[30] He speculated that the primary mechanism for such neutralization was the already established procedure by which the ego takes back to itself libidinal energy which has been invested in objects. He hypothesized as "plausible" the notion that this "narcissistic store of libido" (i.e., "desexualized Eros") could become active in both the ego and the id where it would be "employed in the service of the pleasure principle to obviate blockages and to facilitate discharge."[31] In the id, the service of this displaceable energy would be manifested in the "looseness" of primary process functioning where the object of instinctual satisfaction is often a matter of indifference. In the ego, it would be manifested in *sublimations* in which desexualized libido which still retains its primary purpose (that of "uniting and binding") is made available for such nonsexual processes as thinking or artistic production. Similarly, in inherently ambivalent situations where the object is invested with both love and hate, Freud speculated that neutralized energy could be added to either impulse, again, in order to facilitate discharge. Furthermore, he argued that if instincts could be fused, they could also be defused. He saw later phases of

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[29]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 53.

[30]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 44. Freud thus envisioned three kinds of psychic energy: erotic and destructive impulses deriving from instinctual sources would be qualitatively differentiated, while "neutralized" energy could be added to either to "augment its total cathexis." We see that Freud speaks of energy in two ways: qualitatively and quantitatively. Freud speculated that the qualitative aspect of energy might be a function of its temporality.

[31]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 44-45.

psycho-sexual organization as marked by a fusion of instincts dominated by Eros, while regressions to earlier phases entail a defusion of instincts with a "marked emergence of the death instinct" [i.e., aggression or destructiveness].[32]

We thus see Freud's structural theory of psychic functioning as presenting a picture that is far more fluid and complicated than that of the earlier topographical theory. Each of the three psychic structures is intimately connected with the others. The ego is merely a differentiated part of the id (i.e., the part of the id that has been altered by its contact with reality). The super-ego is part of the ego in the sense that it is a precipitate of early object relations, but also part of the id in that in derives its energy from instinctual demands. Elements of both the ego and the super-ego may be unconscious. Derivatives of id impulses, when they are not met with resistance, are available to consciousness. And the ideas of instincts themselves has changed. Instead of the instincts of self-preservation ['ego-instincts'] and libido ['sexual instincts'], we find Eros and the death instinct, the first tending to unification and binding together and the second toward dissolution and destructiveness. Energy from these instincts may be fused or defused, with regression to earlier psycho-sexual stages tending to promote defusion and maturation to the full genital stage of psycho-sexual development promoting fusion.

This new orientation dramatically changed the aim of psychoanalysis. No longer was its task simply to make conscious that which had been unconscious. Rather, as Anna Freud was to write in 1936:

> At the present time we should probably define the task of analysis as follows: to acquire the fullest possible knowledge of all the three institutions of which we believe the psychic personality to be constituted and

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[32]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 41-42.

> to learn what are their relations to one another and to the outside world. That is to say: in relation to the ego, to explore its contents, its boundaries, and its functions, and to trace the history of its dependence on the outside world, the id and the superego; and in relation to the id, to give an account of the instincts, i.e., of the id contents and to follow them through the transformations which they undergo.[33]

Anna Freud continues by arguing that it is only through the ego that we come to know anything about the other two agencies. What we know of the id are only the derivatives that make themselves felt in the ego, and, likewise, the superego becomes perceptible only through "the state which it produces in the ego" as, for instance, in the sense of guilt. She concludes: "Now this means that the proper field for our observation is always the ego."[34]

Anna Freud thus set out the agenda for what became known as ego psychology. With this conceptual shift, we enter what Norman Holland has termed "second-phase" psychoanalysis in which the primary polarity in that between ego and non-ego. At first it seems unlikely that the ego should command such attention. It is, as Freud describes it in *The Ego and the Id*, "a poor creature owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world, from the libido of the id, and from the severity of the superego".[35] But Freud had already recognized the control of perception and motility as major ego strengths. And, in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety,* published three years after *The Ego and the Id,* he demonstrated that the affect of

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[33]Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* Revised Edition, (Madison, Connecticut: International Universities Press, Inc., 1966), 4-5. (First published in 1936.)

[34]Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* 2.

[35]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 56.

anxiety also serves as a powerful ally in the ego's struggle to maintain equilibrium among the competing psychic systems.

Freud's early observations of cases of hysteria had lead him to believe that the repression of instinctual representatives lead to the transformation of the libidinal energy with which they had been invested into the affect of anxiety. As late as 1915 in his paper "Repression" Freud reiterated the formulation that a possible vicissitude of instinctual energy would be its transformation (through processes of repression) into affect, especially anxiety.[36] In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, however, the consideration of two cases of animal phobia [that of 'Little Hans' and the 'Wolf Man'] forced Freud into a radical reversal of his former position:

> Here, then, is our unexpected finding: in both patients the motive force of the repression was fear of castration. The ideas contained in their anxiety–being bitten by a horse and being devoured by a wolf–were substitutes by distortion for the idea of being castrated by the father. . . . But the *affect* of anxiety, which was the essence of the phobia, came, not from the process of repression, not from the libidinal cathexes of the repressed impulses, but from the repressing agency itself. The anxiety belonging to the animal phobias was an untransformed fear of castration. It was therefore a realistic fear, a fear of a danger which was actually impending or was judged to be a real one. *It was anxiety which produced repression and not, as I formerly believed, repression which produced anxiety.*[37]

Anxiety thus came to be understood as a danger signal that alerts the ego to activate defensive measures–in the case of hysteria, repression, and in the case of phobia, avoidance of the substitute that has replaced the instinctual danger. The danger to which the ego reacts Freud more generally defined as "a *growing tension due to need,* against

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[36]Freud, "Repression" in SE XIV, 153.

[37]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 108-09 (Italics mine).

which it [the ego] is helpless."[38] Prototypical examples of such anxiety-provoking situations are birth, the absence of the mother, the fear of castration (or, in the case of the girl, an analogous loss), and, finally, the ego's fear that the superego will "be angry with it or punish it or cease to love it."[39] Thus, symptoms and inhibitions form in reaction to anxiety generated by fear of being overwhelmed or annihilated, abandoned, or punished. Such fears may stem from the demands of objective reality, libidinal instincts, or superego prohibitions. The signal of anxiety serves not only to warn the ego to activate defensive measures, but also, by arousing the pleasure-unpleasure regulatory principle throughout the psyche, helps the ego to co-opt the id's assistance in diverting the instinctual process which is placing the ego in danger.[40]

While Freud had originally used the terms "repression" and "defense" without clearly differentiating them, in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety,* he defines "defense" as "a general designation for all the techniques which the ego makes use of in conflicts which may lead to a neurosis". He retains the term "repression" for the special form of defense which had become apparent in his early studies of hysteria.[41] In repression, exciting ideas of an instinctual nature are excluded from consciousness and become

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[38]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 137. (Italics are Freud's).

[39]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 137-143. Freud traced the physiological characteristics of anxiety to the physiological reaction to the process of birth. Each of the other "realistic" fears are set in motion by peremptory id demands. It is evident that these fears appear with the progression of maturational stages; however, earlier fears are not replaced but reinforced and extended with each new stage.

[40]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 125. "We have said that as soon as the ego recognizes the danger of castration it gives the signal of anxiety and inhibits through the pleasure-unpleasure agency (in a way we cannot as yet understand) the impending cathectic process in the id."

[41]Freud, *The Ego and the Id,* SE XIX, 163.

evident in disguised fashion as symptoms, dreams, slips of the tongue, etc. Other defensive techniques that Freud describes in the same paper include regression, reaction formation, isolation, and "undoing" (all derived from his study of obsessional neuroses). In an earlier paper, "Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality" (1922), he describes the defenses of introjection, or identification, and projection; in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915), he introduces the processes of turning against the self and reversal;[42] and from "Mourning and Melancholia" we learn of sublimation, ("the displacement of instinctual aims" onto culturally sanctioned activities).

In *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* Anna Freud attempts to summarize and systematize the concept of defense. In the process she adds a number of additional defense mechanisms including identification with the aggressor, denial in fantasy, denial in word and fact, restriction of the ego, "altruistic surrender," and the intellectualization and asceticism of puberty.[43] Particularly striking in her analysis is the recognition that many defenses originate in activities that are normal at an earlier stage and may remain normal within limits. She also points out that the form of defense mechanisms evolves from id processes as well as ego processes: "We may conjecture that a defense is proof against attack only if it is built up on this twofold basis–on the one hand, the ego and on the other, the essential nature of the instinctual processes."[44] Roy Schaefer extends the formulation of this double nature of defense mechanisms:

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[42]Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* 44.

[43]Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* 69-172. She attributes the term "altruistic surrender" to Bribing.

[44]Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* 175.

> I submit that the study of the defense mechanisms will remain incomplete so long as they are regarded chiefly as wardings off, renunciations and negative assertions; their study will have to be rounded out with an account of defenses as implementations, gratifications and positive assertions. In other words, they must be viewed as expressing the unity of the ego and id and not just the division and enmity of the two. [45]

Thus, defenses have come to be recognized as more than the "compromise formations" that hysterical symptoms were recognized to be. They are, more broadly speaking, solutions to psychic problems and ultimately encompass an almost endless range of activities which are on a continuum with the activities of normal life. The ego's defensive function is part of its tendency toward unification. When defenses fail, we can tease out the conflicting impulses; when they work, "normal," efficient psychic functioning is the result.[46]

It is important also to note the part played by defense in the creation of psychic structure. The institution of the superego as a precipitate of the dissolution of the Oedipus complex is the most obvious example. Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein further

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[45]"The Mechanisms of Defense" in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* vol. 49, 1968. Schafer's comments should be read in a larger context of criticism of the limitations of the structural approach to psychoanalysis.

[46]Both Roy Schafer and Anna Freud cite R. Waelder's important theoretical paper, "The Principle of Multiple Function: Observations on Over-determination" in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly,* vol. 5, 45-62. In this paper, Waelder writes: "According to this principle of multiple function the specific methods of solution for the various problems in the ego must always be so chosen that they, whatever may be their immediate objective, carry with them at the same time gratification of the instincts." His principle of multiple function went further than just a consideration of ego and id functions, however. He saw the ego as solving problems placed before it by the id, reality, the superego, and the compulsion to repeat. In addition, he argued, the ego sets for itself certain problems: namely the attempt to achieve ever greater integration with each of the other agencies without being "swamped" by the demands of any of them.

elaborate this inter-relationship of defense mechanism and psychic structure in their paper "Formation of Psychic Structure":

> The term "defense" should not suggest the misapprehension that the process here referred to is either pathological or only of a negative importance. Rather is it correct to say that the human personality is formed by psychic mechanisms which serve, also, the purpose of defense. Some of these mechanisms first operate in other areas; thus projection and introjection are used in order to establish the distinction between the self and the non-self; regression, as a regular and temporary transformation of psychic functioning, accompanies the daily cycle from awakeness to sleep; and denial of the unpleasant represents probably an initial phase in the elimination of all disturbing stimuli. These and other mechanisms, which in the infant's life serve the function of adjustment and may be rooted in the reflex equipment of the newborn, may later function as mechanisms of defense and thus produce changes in the child's personality.[47]

Anna Freud describes how these processes may become pathological through reference to Wilhelm Reich's *Charakterpanzerung* ("armor-plating of character") in which "bodily attributes such as stiffness and rigidity, personal peculiarities such as a fixed smile, contemptuous, ironical, and arrogant behavior" are understood to be "residues of very vigorous defensive processes in the past which have become dissociated from their original situations (conflicts with instincts or affects) and have developed into permanent character traits . . .."[48] Such "petrified" character traits become obvious within the analytic setting, along with the "living flow" of symptoms, resistances, and transformations of affect.[49]

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[47]Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, and Rudolph M. Loewenstein, "Comments on the Formation of Psychic Structure" in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child,* vol. II, 1946, 28.

[48]Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* 33.

[49]Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* 34.

Under the impulse of the above considerations, ego psychology (Holland's "second-stage psychoanalysis") expanded to include character analysis and the analysis of resistance and defense. Instead of merely seeking to uncover repressed material by eliminating resistance (as for example through hypnotism), the analyst attempts to trace the history of id and superego events by understanding the structure of the ego and its choices of defense. In her discussion of defenses, Anna Freud argues that free association must be recognized as an impossible demand, but its very failures provide opportunities for a deeper understanding of the psyche in all of its manifestations. The value of free association lies not only in the unconscious material that is brought to light by its adoption, but also in the conflict which results from any attempt to follow it unwaveringly. At the point where associative material is met with resistance, one encounters ego material to be analyzed. Similarly, not only id impulses but also the ego's attempts to defend against them are met with in the transference and both become material for analysis.[50]

Thus, we can see that the formulations of second-stage psychoanalysis capture more comprehensively the complicated phenomena of psychic functioning than do those of first-stage psychoanalysis. Even so, many of Freud's theoretical constructs remained unsystematized and unevenly developed.[51] The most thorough-going attempt to bring precision and order to Freud's later work was undertaken by Heinz Hartmann who spent a lifetime attempting to clarify and synchronize Freud's concepts into a general

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[50]Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* 18-22.

[51]Roy Schafer, *A New Language for Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 58.

psychology[52] and, in the process, made a number of theoretical advances that would prove crucial to a sophisticated theory of aesthetics.

In his most important work, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* Hartmann looks at psychic functioning from the point of view of adaptation to environmental requirements for survival. From this vantage point, he derived the idea of a *conflict-free ego sphere*, the term that he applied to "that ensemble of functions which at any given time exert their effects outside the region of mental conflicts."[53] Among such functions, he included "perception, intention, object comprehension, thinking, language, recall-phenomena, productivity," as well as "the well-known phases of motor development, grasping, crawling, walking," and "the maturation and learning processes implicit in all these [activities]."[54] By calling such functions "conflict-free" Hartmann did not mean that they cannot become involved in intra-psychic conflict, but rather, that at any given time, they may be operating outside the area of mental conflict. Moreover, Hartmann argued that "memory, associations, and so on, are functions which cannot possibly be derived from the ego's relationships to instinctual drives or love-objects, but are rather prerequisites of our conception of these and of their development."[55] Functions, such as intelligence, which can be used defensively (e.g., Anna Freud's intellectualization as a defense in puberty), are likely to arise originally as adaptations to

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[52]For a critical overview of Hartmann's contributions, see Roy Schafer, "An Overview of Heinz Hartmann's Contributions to Psychoanalysis" in *A New Language for Psychoanalysis,* 57-101.

[53]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* 8-9.

[54]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* 8.

[55]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* 15.

reality. On the other hand, a defense, over time, may lose its connection with instinctual conflict and become an automatized action which "through a change of function turns from a means into a goal in its own right."[56]

Hartmann also introduces the biological principle of "fitting together" and cites A.E. Parr's definition of fitting together as an "'organization of the organism' by which [is meant] 'the lawful correlation of the organism's individual parts.'" Hartmann finds the psychoanalytic correlate to this principle in the ego's synthetic function[57] and he applies the idea of "fitting together" to the notion of the regulatory principles governing ego functioning. Freud had postulated that the reality principle retains as its aim the satisfactions demanded by the pleasure principle--though doing so while acknowledging the demands of reality. But, as Hartmann points out, it cannot be this "reality principle in the narrow sense" which guarantees the adaptiveness of the organism to its environment.

> No instinctual drive in man guarantees adaptation in and of itself, yet on the average the whole ensemble of instinctual drives, ego functions, ego apparatuses, and the principles of regulation, as they meet the average expectable environmental conditions, do have survival value. Of these elements, the function of the ego apparatuses . . . is "objectively" the most purposive. The proposition that the external world "compels" the organism to adapt can be maintained only if one already takes man's survival tendencies and potentialities for granted.[58]

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[56]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,*, 26. Hartmann's term for this achievement is "secondary autonomy."

[57]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* 40.

[58]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* 46.

Hartmann argued that these "survival tendencies and potentialities" may be found in all aspects of psychic structure and function, but the most important of them arise from the conflict-free sphere of ego functioning. It is, for example, the *function of anticipating the future* (which develops in the conflict-free sphere) that guarantees that the reality principle (in the narrow sense) will replace the pleasure principle in those cases where operating solely according to the pleasure principle would be dangerous. This wider tendency of the organism to regulate itself in accordance with survival principles, Hartmann calls the "reality principle in the broader sense," and he suggests that the independent ego functions that guarantee this adaptability can themselves become secondarily sources of pleasure.[59] (An example of this would be the pleasure that one may take in the process of thought.) Hartmann points out that the sources of this pleasure in ego functioning will change as the individual matures and develops, and he argues for the need of a "characterization and qualitative differentiation of the various categories of pleasure experiences." Thus, Hartmann expands the individual's pleasure potentialities far beyond the satisfaction of the id's instinctual demands on which Freud had concentrated. According to Hartmann:

> First, those feelings of pleasure which have strong somatic reverberations (primarily sexual ones) could be distinguished from the pleasure qualities of the aim-inhibited, sublimated activities. But even these could be further subdivided, as in Scheler's (1927) classification: sensory feelings or experience feelings; somatic and vital feelings; pure psychic feelings (pure self-feelings); mental feelings (personality feelings).[60]

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[59]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* 46.

[60]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* 46-47. Hartmann's reference is to M.F. Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik,* (Bern: Francke, 1954), 344ff.

Furthermore, Hartmann argues that the newborn infant encounters the world not only with the drives of the id, but also with the "constitutional factors important in ego development." These factors include a developing tolerance for anxiety, intelligence, and tendencies toward structuralization and unification (which in turn imply differentiation and integration). Differentiation "finds psychological expression not only in the formation of the mental institutions, but also in reality testing, in judgment, in the extension of the world of perception and action, in the separation of perception from imagery, cognition from affect, etc." However, as Hartmann points out, structural development also increases the lability of the mental apparatus, "and, therefore, we must expect temporary (and occasionally enduring) dedifferentiation phenomena." Both differentiation and synthesis may serve adaptation, depending on the external circumstances, and Hartmann refers to the adaptive return to dedifferentiated states as "regressive adaptation."[61] These formulations mean that we can speak of ego strength, not only in terms of the ego's ability to regulate tensions among the various psychic structures (id, ego, and superego), but also by way of its "purposive coordination and rank order of functions–in terms of adaptation, differentiation, and synthesis–*within* the ego."[62]

Hartmann also attributes a "process of progressive 'internalization'" to the course of evolution, and he argues that the "inner world" resulting from this internalization becomes a "central regulating factor" in psychic processes. The inner world with its

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[61]Circumstances in which undifferentiated states are adaptive may include consolation in nature (Freud's "oceanic feeling"), the culmination of the act of love, and aesthetic experiences in relation to works of art.

[62]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* 53-56.

associated functions of perception, memory, imagery, thinking, and action–ultimately and taken together, *intelligence*--has great utility for adaptation. Intelligence, as an organizing principle, or regulatory function guarantees "an equilibrium of the *whole person.*" It allows neither immediate response to external or instinctual stimuli, nor strict adherence to an impoverished rationality. Instead, it takes into account, not only external reality, but also insight into its own role in the total personality. It is this "superordinate organizing function of intelligence," this maintenance of equilibrium, that serves adaptation.[63] While based in the structural system set forth by Freud in 1923, Hartmann's work also includes major advances within psychoanalytic theory. The concepts of a conflict-free sphere of ego functioning, change of function, secondary autonomy, regressive adaptation, pleasure in functioning, differentiation and synthesis, the hierarchical organization of psychic functioning, and psychic equilibrium have far-reaching consequences that not only extend, but, in some cases, challenge Freud's work.

The question now becomes: *How are we to integrate the insights of this expanded psychoanalytic theory into our understanding of art and the aesthetic processes?* For a systematic and sustained attempt to derive an aesthetic theory from second-stage psychoanalysis, we will turn to *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*[64] by Ernst Kris. As one of Hartmann's chief collaborators as well as a major theorist of

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[63]Hartmann, *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation,* 57-75.

[64]Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art.* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1965).

psychoanalysis and art in his own right,[65] Kris describes early psychoanalytic explorations of art as focusing on three areas of inquiry:

> . . . first, the "ubiquity" in mythological and literary tradition of certain themes known from or related to the fantasy life of the individual; second, the close relationship between the artist's life history in the psychoanalytic sense and his work; and, third, the relationship between the working of creative imagination, the productive capacity of man, and thought processes observed in clinical study.[66]

Kris felt that significant progress had been made in the first of these areas of inquiry. The universality of id impulses both elucidated and was confirmed by the thematic constancies found in art. Kris argued, however, that while psychoanalysis had done a good job of exploring universal phenomena associated with id functioning, it had done little to explain the unique contributions of specific individuals under specific historical conditions. Kris believed that ego psychology would address these specifics and help to answer the question: "Under specific cultural and socioeconomic conditions, during any given period of history or in the work of any one of the great creators within each period, how have the traditional themes been varied?"[67]

Kris also argued that limitations inherent in Freud's approach to the relationship between the artist's life and work left key issues unaddressed. Even given Freud's reconstruction of the constellation of experiences and patterns of defense evident in

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[65]Norman N. Holland, *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare,* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 7. Holland refers to art historian turned psychoanalyst Kris as "the most brilliant of psychoanalytic literary theorists after Freud." Kris is renown for a major analysis of caricature, and his aesthetic formulations encompass the plastic arts, drama, and dance as well as literature.

[66]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 17.

[67]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 18.

Leonardo's life, for example, we still have no answer as why Leonardo was destined to become a *great* artist. Instinctual drives and patterns of defense cannot in themselves explain magnitude of talent. Kris argued that the "frame of reference in which creation is enacted" (i.e., the historical and social forces shaping the function of art in a particular period) must be considered as integral to the relationship between an artist's life and work. According to Kris, not only the stringencies[68] of this framework, but also "the freedom to modify these stringencies are presumably part of the complex scale by which achievement is being measured."[69] Here again, he found psychoanalysis mute: ". . . there is little which psychoanalysis has as yet contributed to an understanding of this framework itself; the psychology of artistic style is unwritten."[70]

The third approach to a psychoanalytic understanding of art–the study of creative imagination–Kris considered to be most fully worked out in psychoanalytic studies of literature as art. But, again, Kris argued, "[r]ecurrent themes in the works of certain writers, treatments of certain conflicts and avoidance of others," while yielding valuable insights, cannot in themselves afford an adequate theoretical foundation for an understanding of creative imagination.[71]

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[68]Ernst Kris and Abraham Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 252. They define *stringencies* as restrictions on the "possible modes of behavior by which [a] problem may be 'legitimately' dealt with." In science, stringencies are maximal. In art, they are minimal, and this allows room for the use of art as a means of expression.

[69]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 19-21.

[70]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 21.

[71]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 23.

Kris therefore set out to formulate a systematic theory which would integrate the insights already won and fill those gaps which ego psychology could address. Seeking to avoid "abridgments and simplifications," he attempted to create an aesthetic theory based on "synthesizing hypotheses which have been formulated during the total course of the development of psychoanalysis."[72] As a sophisticated reader of Freud, Kris carefully incorporates Freud's insights on art into his own formulations. But he goes beyond Freud and considers aesthetic productions and processes from the point of view of individual endowment, the cultural and socioeconomic historical situation, and the complex functioning of the total psyche, including autonomous ego functions as well as strategies of defense.[73]

Kris takes as his starting point and most basic premise the idea that "art is a specific kind of communication from the one to the many," and that, as with any communication, there is a sender, there are receivers, and there is a message.[74] Distinguishing the nature of artistic communication from that of the propagandist (who calls for action), the priest (who invites participation in a common spiritual experience), and the educator (who works to enlighten his pupils' insight), Kris argues that artistic communication in our civilization refers to another function: "The message is an invitation to common experience in the mind, to an experience of a specific nature."[75]

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[72]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 16. See also his statement on page 31: "We propose to take structural, dynamic, and economic changes which seem to be characteristic of what one might call the aesthetic experience into account."

[73]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 29.

[74]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 16.

[75]Kris, "Approaches to Art" *in Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 39.

How does Kris give substance to this abstract definition? He begins with the tale of a small boy who, when frightened by an large Alsatian dog, runs away screaming. Kris speculates that the child might integrate this incident into his general store of experiences in any number of ways. He might dream about it at night and during the day transform the actual incident into a daydream in which he tames the dog who then becomes a special friend and protector. He might act out these fantasies of danger and mastery in play with his toys or incorporate them in games with other children. This preoccupation with thoughts of the dog might get mixed up with other concerns that occupy his mind.[76] Eventually, as he grows older, he may forget the whole incident, or he may preserve some derivative of it in his choice of occupation. He might in his adult life continually seek out situations of danger. He might become a scientist of animal behavior. Or he might become a writer, and, as a writer, he might impose a narrative order on this memory and offer it to others in a guise which allows them to share his experience. In doing so, he will take pleasure in his fantasy of mastering danger and in the action of reproducing and elaborating the experience in such a way that others may share in this pleasure. The admiration and approval of those who respond to his story will provide yet another source of pleasure. As Kris concludes:

> Let us assume that our subject was one of the endowed individuals, a poet, by whatever interaction of factors this may come about; then in his account the age-old theme of child against beast may be transposed into a world where Mowgli lives, abandoned by man, protected

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[76]See Freud above on the relationship between animal phobias and the Oedipus complex. Kris elaborates: "The trauma of the scene of our model is therefore itself the result of experiences rooted in the successive phases of earliest childhood, when the demand for love and protection, the response of the environment of these demands, and the striving of independence in the child, first mold the human personality" (32).

by wolves, pursued by Shir Khan–the pet of the jungle
and later its master.[77]

Kris contrasts this scenario to others in which fantasy cannot rise to the level of art because it remains too close to the level of immediate instinctual gratification to engender anything but disgust in an audience. (Productions of such raw material will remain pornography or propaganda; that is, not invitations to a mental experience, but calls to action.)

At the other end of the spectrum, Kris places the productions of psychotics. Such productions cannot be considered art because they are not communications; they "do not reverberate in others."[78] The productions of psychotics become increasingly stereotypical and repetitive as the illness progresses, and the significance of these productions shrinks to that of a private system of delusion whose function changes from communication to magic. For example, Kris gives an account of a schizophrenic patient who came to identify himself with God. The patient produced a number of works which he "signed" with a triangle that pointed sometimes up and sometimes down: "He studied them [his drawings] as documents that indicate the course of events. They were verdicts of damnation and announcements of salvation. And the signature indicated the prevailing

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[77]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 31-39. It is also important to note here that a fantasy has become shareable in part because it has been *verbalized.*

[78]Kris, "The 'Creative Spell' in a Schizophrenic Artist" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 168. Kris considers that a comparison of the productions of the insane with those of the artist "add[s] precision to Plato's distinction" between "productive insanity" and pathological processes. "Art as an aesthetic–and therefore as a social– phenomenon is linked to the intactness of the ego" (169).

intention: the triangle with the peak turned downward is, in the patient's words, 'the sign of destruction.' 'If I am merciful,' he added, 'the triangle points upward.'"[79]

We thus have a continuum of experience that stretches between untransformed reality and outright delusion. At some point along this continuum lies a form of experience that Kris terms "the aesthetic illusion." The idea of the aesthetic illusion is intimately connected with the philosophical problem of the proper "distance" at which a work of art is appreciated,[80] but Kris derives it exclusively from psychoanalytic considerations. For Kris, the aesthetic illusion is rooted in the derivation of art from magic[81] and also in the child's ability to "'evoke' the need-gratifying object" during the developmental period in which the pleasure principle reigns supreme and there is no firm line between need and perception (i.e., hallucination). This blurring of need and reality lives on in imagination and may be expressed in the child's play (which also serves the tendency to actively repeat through processes of identification what has been passively experienced). On the side of adaptive defense, imaginative play fosters the identification of the child with his or her parents and helps the child to sort out the real from the

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[79]Kris, "The 'Creative Spell' in a Schizophrenic Artist" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 159.

[80]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 46. Kris traces this notion of distance to an important problem in the philosophy of art since Kant and Schiller and the idea that "the dispassionate spectator alone can appreciate beauty." E. Bullough theorized that "underdistance" results in a "too strong" participation on the part of the audience, while "overdistance" refers to a lack of interest leading to detachment. Kris speculates that overdistance may arise when there is no point of identification between work and the audience, or when there is insufficient "incentive for energy discharge" (46-47).

[81]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art.* See his account of the development of Greek dramatic art from ritual magic in "Approaches to Art,"(40) and his discussion of "image magic" in "The Principles of Caricature" coauthored with E.H. Gombrich, (189-203).

possible. But denial may also be operative, and an understanding that the play world is only "make believe" can co-exist with a belief in the "reality of play." "Here," says Kris, "lie the roots of aesthetic illusion."[82]

In the realm of aesthetic illusion the magical thought and intense wishes and fears of childhood live on, "adapted to but still unhampered by reality." At some point the child becomes able to accept, in place of his own fantasies, the fantasies of others, and thus in stories and fairy tales, the child finds "a pattern for his emotional reaction offered to him with the consent of adults."[83] This step is the bridge to what will become in the adult world the ability to take pleasure in art.

It is in this sense that we can speak of art as an "invitation to common experience in the mind, an experience of a specific nature." The artwork invites a regression to an earlier psychic state in which the primary process held sway and instinctual life was felt with great intensity. Members of the audience thus experience the work of art as "real" (in the sense that while under its spell they are in a state where reality testing does not apply). As in childhood play, the process of identification becomes a key element. Under the influence of the aesthetic illusion, primary process modes of thought such as one encounters in dreams–symbolism, condensation, and displacement--tend to become operative. And, yet, the regression takes place under the control of the ego. The tensions that are released in the enjoyment of the work of art are controlled in part by the structure of the situation and the structure of the artwork itself and in part by the ego's recognition of the possibilities afforded by the situation and the work of art. In the articulation and

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[82]"Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations of Art,* 41-42.

[83]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations of Art,* 42.

elaboration of the artwork (both in its creation and in its appreciation), we see ego processes on display: the capacity for delay of discharge of instinctual tension being the most obvious. Furthermore, the fact that art is a socially sanctioned activity "guarantees freedom from guilt, since it is not our own fantasy we follow."[84] Therefore, in art we find not only the pleasure of release, but also the pleasure of control. Kris names this ability of the ego to use primary process thought for its own purposes *regression in service of the ego.*[85]

Explicit in Kris's analysis is a symmetry between the creative activity of the artist and the re-creative activity of the audience. He begins with the artist:

> Schematically speaking we may view the process of artistic creation as composed of two phases which may be sharply demarcated from each other, may merge into each other, may follow each other in rapid or slow succession, or may be interwoven with each other in various ways. In designating them as inspiration and elaboration, we refer to extreme conditions: One type is characterized by the feeling of being driven, the experience of rapture, and the conviction that an outside agent acts through the creator; in the other type, the experience of purposeful organization, and the intent to solve a problem predominate.[86]

The process of creation, therefore, involves both an active and a passive stage. In the first stage, the creator relaxes the constraints of the ego and passively awaits the

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[84]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 45-46.

[85]Kris, "The Psychology of Caricature" in *Psychoanalytic Exploration in Art,* p. 177. "Regression in service of the ego" is related to Hartmann's idea of "regressive adaptation." Hartmann attributes the possibility of regressive adaptation to the "superordinate organizing function of intelligence," i.e. to the conflict-free ego sphere. In "Approaches to Art" Kris makes the point that "regression in service of the ego," a "process in which the ego controls the primary process and puts it into its service–need be contrasted with the opposite, the psychotic condition, in which the ego is overwhelmed by the primary process" (60).

[86]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 59.

"inspiration" that seems to come from without, but is actually the result of an eruption of unconscious or preconscious ideas into consciousness. This passive experience is accompanied by a feeling of intense excitement, often of a sexual kind.[87] However, this flow of ideas or fantasies from the unconscious is controlled by the ego, which, using the neutralized energy under its control, "works over" the material in the process of elaboration and so makes it communicable. During this process, the ego disappears[88] into two different identifications. At first, there is only the work and the artist identifies with it in the sense that he "is" the work. In the second identification, in so far as the artist looks at the work "from the outside," he feels himself part of the audience.[89] Kris further characterizes these "extreme phases of creative activity" as involving "shifts in psychic levels, in the degree of ego control and by shifts in the cathexis of the self and the representation of the audience."[90]

The artist's audience, through a series of identifications, undergoes a parallel experience involving shifts in psychic level. In the audience, however, the process is

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[87]Kris, "On Inspiration" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 301-02. Kris states (on the basis of clinical experience and biographical evidence from artists), "it is my impression that in the fantasies connected with inspiration the genital elaboration of pregenital experiences is evident, and that the pregenital layers constitute nothing specific."

[88]Although Kris does not use the term, I think the essence of the process he is describing may be captured more clearly in Roy Schafer's notion of *reflective self representation* (see "Influence of Primary-Process Presences" in *Aspects of Internalization* [New York: International Universities Press, Inc. 1968], 91-97.) During the process of creation, the artist loses this reflective self representation and merges first with the work and then with the audience. Of course these two steps are perhaps better described as positions, for during the process of creation each will be experienced many times.

[89]Kris, "On Inspiration" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 293.

[90]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 61.

reversed and "proceeds from consciousness, the perception of the art work, to preconscious elaboration and to the reverberations of the id."[91] We can speculate that the audience's recognition of the work of art *as art* is due to what Norman Holland has called a "frame."[92] The frame signals the invitation to "an experience of a specific kind," and, in accepting the invitation, the audience relaxes ego control, opening a "way to interplay with the id."[93] In this stage, the audience identifies with the *work,* "taking it in" and making the work its own. This identification opens the way to id experiences which are in part "contained" by the structure of the work. In a second stage of the process, the audience identifies with the *artist* (not as a person, but as creator of the artwork) and seeks to understand how the artwork has been contrived to have the effect it has. This process takes place under the control of the ego, and it is in part a defense, just as the artist's creative activity also served as a defense.

Thus, in the case of artist and audience, pleasure arises from a regulated regression that permits the discharge of instinctual tension under control of the ego which makes use of neutralized energy to control the speed and intensity of the discharge. As Kris puts it, the "core of the process lies in the shift of cathexis between the psychic systems and in the function of the ego during those shifts."[94]

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[91]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 62.

[92]Norman N. Holland, *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare,* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 27. "Jokes, for example, have a 'frame,' as serious literature does, that marks them off from ordinary experience and leads us into an attitude of playful attention, a special combination of involvement and distancing, the aesthetic stance, just as the appearance of a poem on the page does."

[93]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Exploration in Art,* 63.

[94]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 62.

But we may take the process one step further. These shifts in cathexis are pleasurable in themselves, and Kris speculates that one way we may evaluate works of art is "according to the responses they elicit from wide or limited, contemporary and noncontemporary, audiences, i.e. according to their survival value as art." Critical to this evaluation will be the "dynamic effectiveness of the experience in the audience." Thus, the continuing impact of Greek tragedy, for example, is due not only to the universality of its themes, but also to the intricacy of psychic shifts experienced by its audience. Kris relates these psychic shifts to Aristotle's concept of *catharsis*:

> The process of catharsis Aristotle has in mind is determined by the complexity of the tragedy as work of art and hence by the variety of reactions it stimulates in the audience. They all can be described as shifts in psychic levels, as transitions from activity to passivity, and as varying degrees of distance in participation.[95]

Thus, we can imagine the audience, identifying first with the tragic hero and experiencing the intense emotions provoked by primary process mental functioning; the cathartic "purging" or release would be the result of a shift away from the primary process to secondary process thinking. This would involve a "distancing" that not only lessens the identification but also signals a return to ego control with its tendency toward unification of experience. The intense emotions evoked by the tragic work can then be worked over and integrated into the total personality.

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[95]Kris, "Approaches to Art" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 62. Kris here quotes Aristotle: "Tragedy is the representation in dramatic form of a serious action, of a certain magnitude, complete in itself, expressed in agreeable language, with pleasurable accessories, with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions." Kris acknowledges that his" view implies some revision of the traditional interpretation of this passage."

In "Aesthetic Ambiguity,"[96] written in collaboration with Abraham Kaplan, Kris brings psychoanalytic insights to yet another traditional topic in aesthetics. In this paper they attempt to discover the kind of ambiguity specific to poetic language, to relate this ambiguity to poetic processes in general (i.e., to processes of artistic creation and re-creation), and to establish explicit standards for the interpretation of ambiguity.[97]

Kris and Kaplan define the meaning of a word (or group of words) in terms of the "clusters" of responses that may be associated with it. Each cluster is composed of a group of responses in which each term within the group, when used as a stimuli, evokes each of the other members of the group. Any given word may evoke a number of such clusters. Kris and Kaplan further differentiate between *codes* and *symbols* in terms of the constancy of the clusters they evoke in different contexts. A code word will have a fixed meaning regardless of the context, while a symbol will be context sensitive. "One cannot speak, therefore of *the* meaning of any symbol, but can only specify its range of responses and the clusters into which these tend to be grouped."[98] This functioning of language as symbol, they refer to as *ambiguity*. Ambiguity does not apply to a failing of language, but rather to its potential for expression.

Kris and Kaplan go on to specify a number of kinds of ambiguity, pointing out that ambiguity does not necessarily refer to the "uncertainty of meaning, but [rather] to its multiplicity." They call ambiguity *disjunctive* when the separate meaning clusters

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[96]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 243-64.

[97]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 242-43.

[98]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 243.

function as alternatives (as, for example, with homonyms or amphibole.) *In additive* ambiguity, alternative meanings are "no longer fully exclusive but are to some extent included one in the other" (i.e. there will exist a set of clusters with a common center and a varying range.) *Conjunctive* ambiguity occurs when "separate meanings are jointly effective in the interpretation." In this case a single cluster will be comprised of paired n-tuples with differing–perhaps opposed–meanings. In conjunctive ambiguity, antithetical responses will be evoked simultaneously (as occurs, for example, in irony or in jokes.) A fourth kind of ambiguity is *integrative.* A word or phrase results in integrative ambiguity when "all of its meanings evoke and support one another." In terms of meaning clusters, there will be a "stimulus-response relation between the clusters as well as within them. [The clusters] interact to produce a complex and shifting pattern: though multiple, the meaning is unified."[99] While these various forms of ambiguity shade off into one another, they give us a way to think of the complicated multiplicity of meaning inherent in a work of art without succumbing to the belief that the work has only a "vague" meaning. In fact, Kris and Kaplan specify a final type of ambiguity–*projective* ambiguity–which captures our notion of vagueness; in projective ambiguity "clustering is minimal, so that responses vary altogether with the interpreter."[100]

How does ambiguity fit into the communicative function of artistic activity? We have already seen that the work of art establishes communication between artist and

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[99]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 245-48.

[100]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 250.

audience on more than one psychic level. "Regression in service of the ego" brings the artist into contact with primary process thinking where

> [t]he symbols . . . are not so much vague and indeterminate as 'overdetermined,' loaded down with a variety of meanings. An action (including an act of producing symbols) is said to be overdetermined when it can be construed as the effect of multiple causes. Such overdetermination is characteristic of almost all purposive action; but it is especially marked when the psychic level from which the behavior derives is close to the primary process. Words, images, fancies come to mind because they are emotionally charged; and the primary process exhibits to a striking degree the tendency to focus in a single symbol a multiplicity of references and thereby fulfill at once a number of emotional needs.[101]

Now it is clear that there is a relationship between communicative ambiguity and the overdetermination inherent in primary process thinking. In order to make this relationship more specific, Kris and Kaplan introduce the concept of "the *potential* of a symbol as the obverse side of its overdetermination." Whereas overdetermination refers to a multiplicity of causes, "a symbol has a high potential in the degree to which it may be construed as cause of multiple effects." An overdetermined symbol will not necessarily correspond to a symbol with high potential. Some primary process (overdetermined) symbols are highly personal and so do not have a potential to invoke meaningful multiple effects in the audience. Other symbols come to have a potential contrary to the artist's intent.[102] But, in favorable cases, the symbolic contribution to the aesthetic experience is that it provides a bridge between the artist's experience and the re-

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[101]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 254.

[102]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 255. They authors here point to the reading of Virgil as a Christian author as an example.

creation of that experience in the audience. More specifically, the symbol--overdetermined from the point of view of the artist and full of potential from the point of view of the audience--will evoke responses that involve a sharing of shifts in psychic level.[103]

As discussed above, shifts in psychic level correspond to shifts in psychic distance. An appropriate response to poetry will contain elements of identification and psychic states related to trance and dream *and* elements of critical distance related to a strict and controlled rationality. Just as the psychotic artist may produce works that are "unintelligible," the overly rational artist may create works that are "uninspired." In neither case will processes of identification be stimulated. Similarly, an audience may over-intellectualize its response to the work of art, "reconstructing" it rather than re-creating it, or it may be caught up in "blind rapture" if the ego is overwhelmed. In the first case the audience will fail to identify with the work and in the second case, it will fail to achieve critical distance. Kris and Kaplan point out that one function of poetic form is to emphasize latent ambiguities and thus point the way to the appropriate shifts in psychic level and distance that characterize the aesthetic response.[104]

Given the necessity for ambiguity in the communication of an experience that is to be re-created rather than simply reacted to,[105] Kris and Kaplan turn to the problem of

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[103]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 255.

[104]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 255-56.

[105]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 254-55. Kris and Kaplan argue that the work is re-created rather than merely reacted to. "And re-creation is distinguished from sheer *reaction* to the work precisely by the fact that the person responding himself contributes to the stimuli for his response."

standards of interpretation. How does one guard against mere projection upon the work of art? Kris and Kaplan propose three sets of standards. Standards of *correspondence,* i.e. of reference to subject matter outside of the artwork itself, provide stringencies which constrain the possible meaning of ambiguities. Thus, the reference within the artwork to certain myths or its relationship to a particular poetic tradition must be taken into account. Standards of *intent* limit possible interpretations by relating them to knowledge of the artist or of his society. In contrast, standards of *coherence* expand interpretations to include whatever may be made to "fit in" to the work as a unified whole. While all three sets of standards will be operative at the same time, in given situations one or the other will predominate.[106]

Kris and Kaplan point out that ambiguity may be an essential element in the evaluation of a work of art. Highly ambiguous works may remain open to re-creation over longer periods of time because they allow for a wide range of interpretations. In addition, highly ambiguous works may be presumed to be close to primary processes which contribute not only to the form of the work, but also to its content:

> Functional regression makes available as poetic material themes, like love and death, which are directly related to basic needs and desires, and which approach cultural universality far more closely than the patterns of satisfying such needs or the values structures controlling these satisfactions.[107]

On the other hand, however, if the ambiguity of the work relies on external knowledge or the author's intent, its longevity will be curtailed. Therefore, Kris and Kaplan propose

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[106]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 259-62.

[107]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 263.

that "[s]urvival may thus be presumed to be maximal for those works which have as high a degree of interpretability as is compatible with containing within themselves their own sources of integration."[108]

Thus, building on the work of Freud, Hartmann, and others, Ernst Kris has expanded our understanding of the processes of inspiration and elaboration, the roles of identification and the aesthetic illusion, and the appeal of the artwork to various levels of psychic functioning. With this discussion of shifts in level of psychic functioning and the connection between ambiguity and primary process mentation, he has given us new tools for the evaluation of works of art. His most important contribution, the formulation of "regression in service of the ego"[109] and the importance of this regression to both artistic production and artistic appreciation, is a major achievement in applying the insights of second-stage psychoanalysis to an understanding of the aesthetic processes.

Norman N. Holland has integrated many of the insights of Kris and other ego psychologists into his own interpretations of the works of Shakespeare. Specifically, we will look at how Holland's interpretation of *Hamlet* both encompasses and supersedes that of Freud and Jones. As we saw in Chapter 1, although the scattered elements of a more sophisticated theory exist piecemeal in Freud's writings on aesthetics, he most often

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[108]Kris and Kaplan, "Aesthetic Ambiguity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art,* 263-64.

[109]Freud had spoken of "sublimation," the change from Libido to desexualized energy accompanied by a switch from a sexual object to one that is socially acceptable. Hartmann and Kris used the idea of "neutralized" energy as a broader term for a similar process that could be applied to either aggressive or libidinal energy. In their view, not only sexual energy but energy associated with destructiveness could be neutralized and redirected. Neutralized energy, under control of the ego, could be used as a mechanism for psychic regulation, with the autonomous part of the ego allocating neutralized energy in such a way as to promote aggressive, libidinal, or fused energic discharges.

used works of art as evidence for or confirmation of the theory of unconscious mental functioning that he first derived from the analysis of symptoms and dreams. Within works of art, Freud points to the expression of disguised infantile wishes that motivate the author and move the audience. Similarly, Freud treats stage characters as real people, assessing them psychoanalytically, as one might assess a patient. Thus, in his analysis of *Hamlet*, he shows little interest in the structure or language of the play, and instead concentrates on the central character, Hamlet, whose "oedipus complex" provides the stimulus for one of Freud's most basic formulations. By contrast, Holland, working in the tradition of second-stage psychoanalysis, examines the play not only from the point of view of infantile wishes, but also from the point of view of the mature ego and its defensive and autonomous functions. As Holland puts it:

> Adult and child coexist; but the orthodox critic sees only the adult mind, and the psychoanalytic critic, all too often, sees only the child. The truth lies rather in the continuum between them. The religious, aesthetic, social, moral, or intellectual themes the orthodox critic develops have their roots in infantile fantasies and conflicts the psychoanalytic critic points out. Indeed, it is only because infantile basis and orthodox superstructure exist in us together that these intellectual concerns can have at all the emotional power that they do in art.[110]

Holland argues that the unique contribution of psychoanalysis to aesthetics is its ability to address the entire continuum of mature and infantile elements inherent in the creation and re-creation of the work of art. Furthermore, by giving rich and precise scientific meanings to literary terms such as "catharsis, sympathetic imagination, negative capability, stock response, irony, etc.," psychoanalysis provides a bridge between the

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[110]Holland, *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare*, 324.

external aims of the sciences and the internal aims of the humanities.[111] In order to carry through this synthetic program, however, psychoanalysis must work not only at the level of identification with the central character, but at the multiplicity of levels inherent in the exploration of the work as a whole, giving due consideration to an analysis of the formal elements of the work.[112]

In this spirit, Holland rejects the question historically asked: "Why does Hamlet delay?" and begins his own analysis of *Hamlet* with the question, "Why *both* Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?"[113] According to Holland, this question has the 'virtue of leading us into the play as a whole, not just to one character," and he goes on to point out that it is not only the identical characters of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that appear as doubles in this play; the form of the play itself falls naturally into two "waves." The first of these waves is marked by the appearance of the Ghost to Hamlet on the battlements, and the

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[111]Holland, *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare,* 348. See also Holland's quote on page 315

[112]This is in accordance with Kris's principle that there are two aspects to aesthetic creation and re-creation: inspiration and elaboration. The audience, who under the spell of inspiration merely identifies with a central character fails to achieve the critical distance necessary to elaboration. That is, the audience does not go on to identify with the *artist* and attempt to understand the process by which the work as a whole was made to have the effect it has. However, as Holland points out, the fact that members of the audience, in one aspect of their experience of the work of art, do accept it as a form of reality in its own right and experience the characters as real people inhabiting this world, means that it is part of a legitimate critical approach to try to understand how it is that this effect is achieved. To do so may mean examining the character as a real person. "Psychoanalytic analysis of character does not logically conflict with psychoanalytic criticism of the play as a totality: it simply represents a different accent, a stress on a different side of the *audience's reaction*" (Holland, *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare,* 322, italics mine).

[113]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 159-60.

second by the appearance of the Ghost to Hamlet in his mother's bedroom. After the first appearance of the Ghost, comes the part of the play marked by *words:*

> The first wave begins with the Ghost's command to Hamlet to "Revenge his foul and unnatural murther." Hamlet responds by playing mad, saying a lot of odd words; in fact, he says, "Words, words, words." The King responds to Hamlet's madness by setting on him first Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, then Ophelia, to find out what is wrong with Hamlet. Again, a verbal action. Hamlet produces the play-within-the-play. Again, words. The King tries to purge himself of his crime by prayer. Again, words. Hamlet speaks words like daggers to his mother. Finally, this verbal wave of action culminates in the false killing, the "play" killing of Polonius, that creature of words who had served as the King's ally and Hamlet's foil in the first wave.[114]

The second wave of the play, according to Holland, is the wave of *action:*

> The Ghost's second appearance marks the beginning of the second wave of action, in which the King's ally and Hamlet's foil is the man of action, Laertes. Laertes returns and immediately whips up a revolution. Ophelia drowns herself. Hamlet and Laertes wrestle in Ophelia's grave. There is a sea battle offstage. The King and Laertes set up and carry out the crooked fencing match. In that last, bustling scene, murders fairly abound: Laertes, the Queen, Claudius, finally Hamlet himself. . . .[115]

Holland points out that it is not only the play that falls into this disjunction of words and action, but also the character of Hamlet. On the one hand, we have Hamlet, the quick-witted punster, the scholar and courtier, who speaks "exquisitely on the nature of human character, of destiny, of philosophy, of life after death."[116] On the other hand, we have Hamlet, the man of action, fighting off Horatio and the watchmen to see the

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[114]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 160.

[115]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 160.

[116]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 160.

Ghost alone, stabbing Polonius, sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their death, fencing with Laertes.[117]

The problem, according to Holland, is that Hamlet cannot seem to coordinate words and action. His words come in the first wave of the play; his actions in the second. "He can talk beautifully, and he can act on impulse, but he seems unable to formulate a verbal plan and then bring it into being by action."[118] Thus, Holland sees this split between words and action as the central problem of the play–a problem that is expressed in the formal structure of the play and in its central character. In this play, according to Holland, "Action seems to turn around and strike back at the man who thought it up. Thought, on the other hands, seems to inhabit action. . . . It is almost as though thought and action together make a kind of disease, in which each corrupts the other."[119]

This theme of splitting is further carried out through the use of secondary characters who reflect the split in Hamlet. Hamlet's friend Horatio, the man of words who lives to tell Hamlet's story, is contrasted to Fortinbras, the warrior and man of action who takes Hamlet's place on the throne of Denmark. Holland points out that each has "succeeded" in his own role at the end of the play, while Hamlet, "a man of words *and* a man of action" lies dead between them.[120] We also find Hamlet reflected in Ophelia and Laertes: Hamlet pretends to go mad and Ophelia actually does go mad; Hamlet's "fitful efforts to avenge his father's death" are thrown into relief by Laertes' impetuous

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[117]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 161.

[118]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 160-61.

[119]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 161-62.

[120]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 164-65.

challenge of first the King and then Hamlet upon the death of Polonius. Again, Holland finds a common denominator in death: "It is as though Shakespeare were saying through this splitting of Hamlet's madness and his revenge into Ophelia and Laertes, that all action, whether it is real or just pretended action, "play," ends in the grave."[121]

In other cases, pairs of characters bring together reverberating themes. Gertrude and Ophelia portray physical, earthy reality; Laertes and Polonius represent "verbal reality, formalities, and shows."[122] Similarly, the two main antagonists, Hamlet and Claudius, seem to embody "the tension between external and internal reality." Claudius tries to balance his interior guilt with his role as King; Hamlet is torn between philosophical abstraction and the dirty, physical details of sex and death.[123]

Throughout the play images of corruption, vegetative passivity, and animal physicality are contrasted with images of "the purity of abstract thought." This thought is reflected in language and therefore, there is a great deal of interest within the play in language: the ceremonial language of Claudius; the circumlocutionary, evasive language of Polonius; the emotion-laden language of the actors; Ophelia's mad verses; and Osric's pretentious inanities. Also ranged against these images of animal corruption, we find a concern with nations, trades and occupations, "But most of all," according to Holland, "we see those two strange professions, the actor and the gravedigger. The one puts up a

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[121]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 165.

[122]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 170.

[123]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 170-71.

show, a ritual, a ceremony of words; the other digs and probes in the dirtiest dirt of physical reality."[124]

And thus Holland returns to his question: "Why *both* Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?" And his answer is that there had to be two of them "because everything in Hamlet is fragmented and broken into pairs."[125] The plays leaves us with the sense that the division between our godlike reason and our physical selves is the ultimate fact of life. As Holland concludes:

> There is something final and rotten in this state of division. The world of Hamlet is a world of disease, garbage, filthy animals, obscenity, a world from which the rational and sensitive man retreats into abstract speculation. Digging, probing, splitting things to find their core, we find something is rotten in the state of Denmark. It is as though the very state of schism were decomposition; we long, metonymically, for the abstract, the pure, the speculative, but it comes to us only as the raw, physical grime of reality. In a religious sense, *Hamlet* is a play about original sin, or primal crime that endowed man with his sinfulness, his mortality. If we wish to be modern, we can say that the Oedipus complex is itself that primal fall, that shadow, that imposes itself on the godlike world of childhood. However we describe it, it is this flaw, this hidden impostume that defines the world of Hamlet.[126]

We see in this outline of Holland's interpretation of *Hamlet* several significant differences from the earlier Freud/Jones interpretation. Holland concentrates on the text of the play, treating the character of Hamlet as simply one aspect of that text. While finding in the play the Oedipal theme that was Freud's main contribution to the understanding of *Hamlet,* Holland finds in this theme not only a disguised re-enactment

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[124]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 176-77.

[125]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 178.

[126]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 179.

of the infantile situation, but also the adult tensions that are its latest incarnation: "the tension between words and deeds, between thought and actions, between mind and body, between the exterior and the inward man, between mental abstractions and dirty, physical reality."[127] Holland's arrives at this expanded understanding of the "meaning" of the play by paying careful attention to the defense mechanism of "splitting" which can be found not only in the characters, but also in the language, structure, and theme of the play.

And, finally, Holland alludes to the variations in psychic distance that mark this play. He points out a curious parallel between the scene where Hamlet, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern converse with the actors and the scene where the two grave diggers prepare Ophelia's grave. In each scene, there is a break in the "aesthetic illusion" and suddenly the world of Elizabethan England intrudes into the world of Denmark. The players discuss the current affairs of the theater world–as they actually existed in England–with the young courtiers; similarly, the grave diggers pause in their work when one is sent to a local pub for beer–a pub that actually existed in the real world of the audience. According to Holland,

> By breaking up the dramatic illusion, Shakespeare says, in effect, 'See? Every play is your play, every grave is your grave.'[128]

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[127]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 171.

[128]Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination,* 166-67.

CHAPTER 3

OBJECT RELATIONS: D.W. WINNICOTT

"There is no such thing as a baby."[1] With this observation D.W. Winnicott used his dual vantage points as pediatrician and psychoanalyst to set in motion a line of inquiry which would expand the scope of psychoanalysis to include the earliest maternal/infant bond. A member of the "middle school" or "independent tradition" within the British Psychoanalytic Society, Winnicott capitalized on the work of Sigmund and Anna Freud, the ego psychologists, and object relations theorists--especially Melanie Klein and W.R.D. Fairbairn–to transform psychoanalysis while remaining firmly anchored within the psychoanalytic tradition. In simple, nontechnical, but often elusive language Winnicott subtly differentiated himself from his predecessors. As Greenberg and Mitchell observe,

> These formal characteristics of Winnicott's writing--his elusive mode of presentation and his absorption yet transformation of theoretical predecessors--parallel his central thematic interest: the delicate and intricate dialectic between contact and differentiation.[2]

Classical psychoanalysis had concerned itself with the relationship between the conscious and unconscious aspects of the personality, and ego psychology explored the interaction of ego and id. In Winnicott one finds that preoccupation which characterizes

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[1]D.W. Winnicott, "Anxiety Associated With Insecurity" in *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975), 99.

[2]J. R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 189-90.

third-phase or "object relations" psychoanalysis--the relation of the self to its objects. From Winnicott's vision of the infant in the care of the "ordinary devoted mother,"[3] we can derive a powerful aesthetic theory which is true to human developmental processes, and I will attempt to do just that in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I will set out Winnicott's theory as simply and straightforwardly as possible, paying special attention to areas of divergence from his peers and predecessors.

Winnicott was exceptionally well placed within the psychoanalytic tradition to exploit the work of others who would provide him with vital reference points for his own thinking. He was in analysis for ten years with James Strachey who was himself analyzed by Freud and who translated the Standard Edition of Freud's work into English.[4] Of this analysis, Winnicott wrote in Strachey's obituary:

> I would say that Strachey had one thing quite clear in his mind as a result of his visit to Freud: that a process develops in the patient, and that what transpires cannot be produced but it can be made use of. This is what I feel about my own analysis with Strachey, and in my work I have tried to follow the principle through and to emphasize the idea in its stark simplicity. It is my experience of analysis at the hand of Strachey that has made me suspicious of descriptions of interpretative work in analysis which seem to give credit to the interpretations for all that happens, as if the process in the patient had got lost sight of.[5]

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[3]Winnicott, "Primary Maternal Preoccupation" in *From Paediatrics Through Psycho-Analysis,* 302.

[4]Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory,* 190. Winnicott began his ten-year analysis with James Strachey in 1923.

[5]D.W. Winnicott, *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis,* 50,129: 1969.

While this statement demonstrates Winnicott's ability to craft a "distinctively Winnicottian line of descent"[6] from Freud, in its subtle reworking of the Freudian "process" (and its oblique critique of Melanie Klein)[7] it also demonstrates his ability to use the theoretical standpoint of others as a place from which to take off rather than as a resting place. The "processes" which Freud set in motion involved the use of free association and the analysis of dreams and the transference to uncover unconscious conflict in neurotics who had achieved the Oedipal stage of psychic development. Winnicott concentrated on preoedipal development and saw the countertransference not only as a bit of unanalyzed resistance on the part of the analyst, but rather as a tool which could be used to create a "facilitating environment"[8] in which the analyst adapted to the needs of patients who had not yet reached the integration which is a prerequisite of

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[6]Adam Phillips, *Winnicott* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 137-38.

[7]Klein emphasized the importance of interpretation within her analyses. Winnicott, who dealt with patients who had regressed to earlier stages of development, considered the entire analytic set-up with its provision of a "holding environment" to be more important than any individual interpretations that might be offered. In such severely regressed cases, interpretations were premature and not useful to the patient. See D.W. Winnicott, "Mirror-role of Mother and Family" in *Playing and Reality,* "Psychotherapy is not making clever and apt interpretations; by and large it is a long-term giving the patient back what the patient brings. It is a complex derivative of the face that reflects what is there to be seen. I like to think of my work this way, and to think that if I do this well enough the patient will find his or her own self, and will be able to exist and feel real. Feeling real is more than existing; it is finding a way to exist as oneself, and to relate to objects as oneself, and to have a self into which to retreat for relaxation." (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), 117.

[8]D.W. Winnicott, "The Mentally Ill in Your Caseload" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1965), 223.

Oedipal conflict or whose illness required a regression to such an unorganized state.[9] While Freudian analysis can be characterized as a "three-person" psychology, Winnicott explored the development of the "two-person" relationship between mother and child that develops out of the "one-person" matrix of the combined mother/infant psyche.[10]

Winnicott would repeatedly define his own position by reshaping or transforming the formulations of others in the light of his own experience, demonstrating an almost uncanny ability to gather from diverse theoretical sources the conceptual equipment that would allow him to forge his own view without being captured by the systems from which he borrowed. His position within the British Psycho-Analytical Society is illustrative of this intellectual independence.

The Society, which had been founded by Ernest Jones in 1919, quickly gained momentum as a major center for the dissemination of the new science of psychoanalysis. Gregorio Kohon describes the major achievements of the first ten years as follows:

> From the day of its creation, the life of the Society developed very quickly indeed. Papers on diverse topics were presented at its Scientific Meetings, some of them predicting the subsequent interest particular to British analysts: 'The Psychology of the New-born Infant' by Forsyth was, according to the 'Minutes', the first paper discussed (15 May 1919). This was followed by 'Note-taking and Reporting of Psycho-Analytic cases', presented by Barbara Low, emphasizing the British preoccupation with the immediacy of the clinical situation (12 June 1919). The organization and publication of the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* (1920); the foundation

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[9]Winnicott, "Counter-Transference" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,* 158-65.

[10]Winnicott, "On the Kleinian Contribution" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,*176.

> of the Institute of Psycho-Analysis (1924); the setting up of the London Clinic of Psycho-Analysis (1926); the organization of the Eleventh International Psycho-Analytical Congress in Oxford (1929), were all projects accomplished during the first ten years of the Society's life. It was a remarkable achievement.[11]

An exciting mix of medical and lay analysts, the British Psycho-Analytic Society was, from the first, more independent than those societies formed on the continent.[12] A number of the British analysts were working with children, and Ernest Jones saw the analysis of children as an important area in which the British Society could distinguish itself.[13]

Meanwhile, two competing theories of child analysis were developing on the continent, one lead by Anna Freud working with H. von Hug-Helmuth in Vienna and a second lead by Melanie Klein who was working with Karl Abraham in Berlin. Klein was developing a play technique for the analysis of children, and she felt that play and the child's associations to it could be interpreted in the same way that free association in adults could be interpreted.[14] Anna Freud maintained that play gave insufficient grounds for psychoanalytic interpretation.[15] While Klein approached the analysis of children as a

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[11]*The British School of Psychoanalysis: The Independent Tradition,* edited by Gregorio Kohon (London: Free Association Books, 1986), 27-28.

[12]M. Masud R. Khan in his 1975 Introduction to D.W. Winnicott's *Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,* p. xiii. See also Kohon, *The British School of Psychoanalysis,* 46-49.

[13]Phyllis Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), 159.

[14]Judith M. Hughes, *Reshaping the Psycho-Analytic Domain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 66-67.

[15]Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* 38-39. "While play therapy might give us a very good insight into id processes, play is accomplished without

procedure essentially the same as that of adults (except for the technical adjustments necessary because of their lack of facility with language), Anna Freud saw her own work with children as more straightforwardly educational in that the analyst provided an appropriate ego-ideal for the young child. Anna Freud concentrated on gaining the child's trust and confidence and worked within a positive relationship, while Melanie Klein allowed for both positive and negative transference phenomena and gave interpretations as she would have done with a mature analysand.[16] Those who followed Klein considered Anna Freud's technique, with its emphasis on the external, "real" environmental situation, to be non-analytic.

With a number of members of the British Society going to Berlin for analysis and training, word soon filtered back on the work that Klein was doing, and her observations corroborated evidence the British analysts were encountering in their own work with young children. In 1925, encouraged by Alix and James Strachey, Klein offered to do a course of lectures for the British Society. The offer was eagerly accepted and Melanie Klein and the lectures well received. Shortly thereafter, she moved to London and became an active member and leading theorist of the British Society.

The difficulties between Anna Freud and Melanie Klein intensified with Anna Freud's publication of *Introduction to the Technique of Child Analysis* in 1927. The book (which explicitly challenged Klein's work) was soundly critiqued within the British

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the conflict that is aroused by free association and the fundamental rule; thus the insight into the mechanisms of defense is obscured."

[16]Kohon, *The British School of Psychoanalysis*, 38. See also Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory,* 144.

Society,[17] and when Sigmund Freud expressed his displeasure Ernest Jones refused to back down.[18] This was somewhat of a British declaration of independence, and there began to develop within the British Society a line of inquiry which was to eventually challenge Freudian orthodoxy. Anna Freud championed her father's formulation of the psychosexual stages culminating in the Oedipus conflict and the introjection of parental prohibitions as the basis for the formation of the superego; Klein and other British analysts saw evidence of superego formation (as revealed by a sense of guilt) in children much younger than the four to five-year age range that Sigmund Freud had postulated. The British analysts, concentrating on stages of development considered "preoedipal" by the Freudians gradually developed their own theory and techniques--ostensibly within the Freudian framework, but radically divergent in important aspects. The role of phantasy in infancy and childhood, the status of internal objects, the mechanisms of projection and introjection, and the importance of countertransference as an analytic tool became staples of the Kleinian-lead British faction.

Klein enjoyed a "harmonious honeymoon" within the British Society until about 1935[19] when the presentation of her paper, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States" made clear just how far she had traveled from traditional Freudian theory.[20] It was not simply a matter of the timing of the Oedipus complex which distinguished Klein from the Freuds. In her postulation of the "depressive

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[17]Hughes, *Reshaping the Psycho-Analytic Domain,* 66-67.

[18]Kohon, *The British School of Psychoanalysis,* 39.

[19]Kohon, *The British School of Psychoanalysis,* 38.

[20]Kohon, *The British School of Psychoanalysis,* 40.

position" resulting from the infant's integration of "good" and "bad" objects, she advanced a new explanation for the genesis of superego functioning. Such apostasy was bound to provoke a reaction among the more conservative members of the British Society, and this reaction was intensified by the society's changing membership. An influx of European analysts who emigrated to London during World War II and were welcomed into the British Psychoanalytic Society lent weight to the conservative faction. The arrival of Sigmund and Anna Freud in London in 1938 further exacerbated the split.[21] What had begun as a difference of opinion regarding technique between the two women became instead a battleground for the heart and soul of psychoanalysis.

Between January of 1943 and May of 1944, there took place within the British Society a series of meetings termed the "Controversial Discussions," the purpose of which was "to clarify Klein's position *vis-a-vis* the metapsychology of Sigmund Freud."[22] Rather than heal the split within the Society, however, these discussions merely demonstrated more clearly the differences between the Kleinian position and that of orthodox psychoanalysis. While there was to be no consensus on matters of theory and technique, eventually a working compromise was reached. The Society was split into three groups and two training courses: an "A" group with a training program controlled by the Kleinians, a "B" group with a training program controlled by the Anna Freudians, and a third "group" consisting of nonaligned or independent analysts who refused to ally themselves with either of the two main groups. This third group had no training program

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[21]See Kohon, *The British School of Psychoanalysis*, 40-41 for a discussion of the impact of the influx of European emigrants on the British Psycho-Analytic Society.

[22]Kohon, *The British School of Psychoanalysis*, 41-45.

of its own; however, both A and B group trainees would take their first training case under the supervision of an analyst aligned with their own group and their second training case under the supervision of one of the nonaligned analysts.[23]

Winnicott was one of the independents who refused to align himself with either the Kleinians or the Freudians. While he would draw on the theoretical contributions of both groups,[24] his own formulations would be firmly grounded in clinical observation; and, in a career that spanned more than forty years, he was presented with ample opportunity to observe. As a pediatrician (and, later, a pediatric psychiatrist) at Paddington Green Children's Hospital from 1923 to 1963, Winnicott managed approximately 60,000 cases,[25] and this extensive clinical experience informs all of his psychoanalytic thinking. In 1940 he was appointed Psychiatric Consultant to the Government Evacuation Scheme in the County of Oxford and thus had the opportunity to observe and work with hundreds of children who were displaced by the German air raids and placed into youth "hostels" for their physical safety. Experience with these children provided a psychological laboratory for the observation of the effects of child/parent separation and the environmental adaptations required to minimize the psychic damage

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[23]Kohon, *The British School of Psychoanalysis*, 45

[24]See Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, xii. "Naturally, facts that can be elicited need to be interpreted, and for full use to be made of information given or observations made in a direct way on the behavior of babies, these need to be placed in relation to a theory. "

[25]F. Robert Rodman, *The Spontaneous Gesture: Selected Letters of D.W. Winnicott.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), xiv.

inherent in such separation.[26] As early as 1946, he was able to write (in "Child Analysis in the Latency Period"):

> In my practice I have treated thousands of children of this age group by child psychiatry. I have (as a trained analyst) given individual psychotherapy to some hundreds. Also I have had a certain number of children of this age group for psychoanalysis, more than twelve and less than twenty. The borders are so vague that I would be unable to be exact."[27]

At the same time he had begun to treat psychotic adults in his private practice.[28] He was thus ideally positioned to combine infant observation with the insights to be gained through the psychoanalytic treatment of severely regressed older children and adults. It was this environment of theoretical innovation and challenge combined with extraordinary opportunities for clinical observation that provided the unique experiences grounding Winnicott's very personal vision of psychic development.

In a paper presented before the Candidates of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society on October 3,1962,[29] Winnicott recounts the intricate interweaving of his own observations and Melanie Klein's early work. He first sets forth the problem posed by his own observations:

> I was starting up as consultant paediatrician at that time, and you can imagine how exciting it was to be taking innumerable case histories and to be getting

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[26]Adam Phillips, *Winnicott,* 62-65.

[27]Winnicott, "Child Analysis in the Latency Period" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*, 115.

[28]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,* 145.

[29] Winnicott, "A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution" in *Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,* 171-78.

> from uninstructed hospital-class parents all the confirmation that anyone could need for the psycho-analytic theories that were beginning to have meaning for me through my own analysis. At that time no other analyst was also a paediatrician, and so for two or three decades I was an isolated phenomenon.
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> I mention these facts because by being a paediatrician with a knack for getting mothers to tell me about their children and about the early history of their children's disorders, I was soon in the position of being astounded both by the insight psychoanalysis gave into the lives of children and by a certain deficiency in psycho-analytic theory which I will describe. At that time, in the 1920s, everything had the Oedipus complex at its core. The analysis of the psycho-neuroses led the analyst over and over again to the anxieties belonging to the instinctual life at the 4-5-year period in the child's relationship to the two parents. Earlier difficulties that came to light were treated in analyses as regressions to pregenital fixation points, but the dynamics came from conflict at the full-blown genital Oedipus complex of the toddler or late toddler age, that is just before the passing of the Oedipus complex and the onset of the latency period. Now, innumerable case histories showed me that the children who became disturbed, whether psycho-neurotic, psychotic, psycho-somatic or antisocial, showed difficulties in their emotional development in infancy, even as babies. Paranoid hypersensitive children could even have started to be in that pattern in the first weeks or even days of life. Something was wrong somewhere. When I came to treat children by psycho-analysis I was able to confirm the origin of psycho-neurosis in the Oedipus complex, and yet I knew that troubles started earlier. . . . Babies could become emotionally ill.[30]

Recognizing the frustration Winnicott was meeting with in his attempt to make sense of his observations in light of traditional Freudian theory, James Strachey (with whom Winnicott was in analysis at the time) directed him to the work of Melanie Klein. Winnicott writes of this "important moment" in his life:

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[30] Winnicott, "A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution" in *Maturational Processes*, 172.

> So I went to hear and then to see Melanie Klein, and I found an analyst who had a great deal to say about the anxieties that belong to infancy, and I settled down to working with the benefit of her help. . . . This was difficult for me, because overnight I had changed from being a pioneer into being a student with a pioneer teacher.[31]

Among the most powerful of Klein's influences upon Winnicott would be her postulation of the notion of an "inner" subjective world which could be contrasted with the "outer" objective world.[32] This was in part the result of her vast elaboration of the notion of "fantasy" that for Freud had represented the hallucinatory fulfillment of a wish that is not satisfied by external reality. Where Freud had seen the "psychic energy" represented by the drive for satisfaction as being directed *either* toward an external object *or* to an internal fantasy, Klein advanced the related notion of "phantasy" as the imaginative elaboration of all instinctual experience.[33] While Freud had seen instinctual drives as consisting of a *source,* an *aim,* and only secondarily, an *object,* for Klein phylogenetic phantasies[34] insured that all drives were object relational, even though the object might be an internal one. Klein argued that all experience--even experience of the so-called "objective" world--would be colored and enriched by unconscious phantasies, while unconscious phantasies, in their turn, would be impacted by actual experience of

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[31]Winnicott, "A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution" in *Maturational Processes,* 173.

[32]Winnicott, "A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution" in *Maturational Processes,* 174.

[33]Hughes, *Reshaping the Psycho-Analytic Domain,* 44-50.

[34]Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory,* 131-33.

the real world.[35] Thus were established the conditions for a richly elaborated and fluid inner reality.

Winnicott learned that Klein's use of small toys as a means by which children in analysis could "project" the contents of their "inner world" into the play situation allowed her an extraordinary insight into their inner psychic reality with its "infantile conflicts and anxieties and primitive defenses."[36] She theorized that the "objects" which the child initially found in the external world were not whole persons, but "part objects" such as the mother's breast which the child imagined himself greedily devouring or destroying in frustrated or instinctual aggression. Such objects would be split into "good" or "bad" depending on the interplay of environmental factors and phantasied elaborations. Through the processes of introjection and projection, "good" and "bad" objects could be placed in the external world or appropriated as part of the self.[37] Thus, the infant might feel his own instinctual aggression as an attack from "outside" persecutory objects or, through introjection of the "good breast", find comfort and stability within. Klein termed the particular constellation of anxieties and defenses characteristic of this stage of development as the "paranoid/schizoid position," *paranoid* because the infant feels his own projected aggression as an attack upon himself by outside forces and *schizoid* because the splitting inherent in the mechanism of projection implies an ego-split as well as an unintegrated object.[38]

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[35]Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psycho-Analytic Theory,* 134.

[36]Winnicott, "A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,* 174-75.

[37]Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psycho-Analytic Theory,* 131-36.

[38]Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory,* 128.

Klein considered it to be a major developmental achievement (occurring at about six months) when the infant moves from relating to part-objects to the ability to relate to a whole person. The configuration of anxieties and defenses inherent in this type of object relating she terms the "depressive position." With the recognition of the mother as a whole human being, the infant is able to relate to both "good" and "bad" in a single object, and his experience of the external world becomes more congruent with reality. In ordinary situations this means there will be a lessening of persecutory anxiety because, according to Klein, much of the hostility the child has previously experienced has come to him by way of his own split-off projections. Identification with the object (mother) now recognized as primarily good provides the basis for stabilization and integration of the child's own ego. The anxiety in this position will be produced by fear of loss or destruction of the good object (with resulting destruction of ego integration) and guilt over real or phantasied predatory attacks on the object which the infant has previously carried out through love or hate (i.e., through the expression of libidinal or aggressive instinctual impulses). These anxieties will give rise to the infant's need for *reparation,* (restoration of an object damaged or destroyed in phantasy). Winnicott considered the formulation of the depressive position to be one of Melanie Klein's most important contributions to psychoanalysis,[39] though, in typical Winnicott fashion, he immediately began to reformulate it as "the capacity for concern."

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[39]Winnicott, "A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,* 176.

In addition to her innovative theoretical work,[40] Klein pioneered a number of techniques, most notably play therapy and the analysis of the counter-transference. Klein used small toys which could readily be manipulated by the child to symbolically express anxiety, phantasies, or actual experiences that he might be unable to process through language. Phyllis Grosskurth describes these toys as "nonmechanical, varying only in color and size" and adds that "the human figure should represent no particular profession." Eventually each child analysand would have his or her own drawer containing "wooden men and women in two sizes, cars, wheelbarrows, swings, trains, airplanes, animals, trees, bricks, houses, fences, paper, scissors, a knife, pencils, chalks or paints, balls and marbles, modeling clay, and string."[41] As the child played, sometimes including the analyst in the play, assigning her now one role, now another, there evolved a "continual and shifting assignment of self-other configurations" which formed the basis of Klein's contribution to the analytic technique which emphasized transference and countertransference.[42] Klein offered interpretations of the play or transference/countertransference phenomena and found confirmation of her interpretations in the lessening of the child's anxiety.[43] Projective techniques and extensive use of the transference and countertransference would become hallmarks of Winnicott's technique as well.

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[40]Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory,* 121.

[41]Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work,* 101.

[42]Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*, 121.

[43]Hughes, *Reshaping the Psycho-Analytic Domain,* 73.

"Thus," says Winnicott, summing up the contributions to his own thought made by his pioneer teacher, "a very rich analytic world opened up for me, and the material of my cases confirmed the theories and did so repeatedly. In the end I came to take it all for granted."[44]

Winnicott's "many tentative and frightened papers" trying to point out the problems with understanding infant psychology in terms of Freudian theory and technique finally "boiled up", as he puts it, in a lengthy paper in 1936 which he titled, "Appetite and Emotional Disorder."[45] His formulations in this paper represent a melding of Kleinian influences and his own observations of eating disorders among babies and children; disorders that he linked to the "general agreement" that disturbances of appetite are a common part of psychiatric illness.[46] Winnicott's observation of infant feeding problems confirmed what could be extrapolated from Klein's analysis of children as young as two years, nine months (just as Freud had extrapolated the psycho-sexual stages from the perversions and illnesses of adult patients); and Klein's theory helped Winnicott to organize his observations on feeding disorders, establishing a line of development starting with "the recognition of oral instinct", progressing "through oral fantasy", and resulting in "a more sophisticated linking up of this theme of oral fantasy with the 'inner world.'"

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[44]Winnicott, "A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,* 174-75.

[45]Winnicott, "A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution" in *Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment,* 172.

[46]Winnicott, "Appetite and Emotional Disorder" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 34, note 2, "Although I was all the time influenced by Melanie Klein, in this particular field I was simply following the lead given me by careful history-taking in innumerable cases."

As Winnicott puts it, in its earliest incarnation the oral instinct is felt simply as desire and its satisfaction, *"'I want to suck, eat, bite. I enjoy sucking, eating, biting. I feel satisfied after sucking eating, biting.'"* This instinct, developed in fantasy, becomes, *"'When hungry I think of food, when I eat I think of taking food in. I think of what I like to keep inside, and I think of what I want to be rid of and I think of getting rid of it.'"* The third phase, the creation of an "inner world", results from "a tremendous elaboration of the two parts of the fantasy . . . namely ideas of what happens inside oneself and, along with this, ideas of what is the state of the inside of the source of supply, namely the mother's body. *'I also think of what happens at the source of supply. When very hungry I think of robbing and even of destroying the source of supply and I then feel bad about what I have inside me and I think of means of getting it out of me, as quickly as possible and as completely as possible.'"*[47] Claiming a continuity from the "anorexia nervosa of adolescence, the inhibitions of feeding of childhood, the appetite disorders in childhood that are related to certain critical times, and the feeding inhibitions of infancy, even of earliest infancy"[48], Winnicott argues in this paper that "the psychology of the small child and of the infant is not so simple as it would at first seem to be, and that a quite complex mental structure may be allowed even to the newborn infant."[49]

It was in terms of this interplay between *inner* (with its physical correlate in eating) and *outer* (with its physical correlates in the various excretory functions) that

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[47]Winnicott, "Appetite and Emotional Disorder" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* p. 34 (italics mine).

[48]Winnicott, "Appetite and Emotional Disorder" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 33.

[49]Winnicott, "Appetite and Emotional Disorder" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 34.

Winnicott saw the psychic mechanisms of introjection and projection evolving and becoming the basis for the creation of the internal objects and mental structures that would eventually allow the baby to constitute a "self" that could be contrasted with what is "not-self." Klein's theory of an inner psychic world elaborated through phantasy provided a way out of the impasse created by over reliance on the explanatory power of the Oedipus complex and made sense of phenomena Freud had not explored.

In his 1941 paper "The Observation of Infants in a Set Situation", Winnicott describes a particular set up in his clinic that he used to explore the state of relationship between the child's inner and outer worlds. This simple set up includes a table, two chairs, and a tongue depressor (which Winnicott sometimes refers to as a "spatula.")

> . . . I ask the mother to sit opposite me with the angle of the table coming between me and her. She sits down with the baby on her knee. As a routine, I place a right-angled shining tongue-depressor at the edge of the table and I invite the mother to place the child in such a way that, if the child should wish to handle the spatula, it is possible. Ordinarily, the mother will understand what I am about, and it is easy for me gradually to describe to her that there is to be a period of time in which she and I will contribute as little as possible to the situation, so that what happens can fairly be put down to the child's account.[50]

A child between about five and thirteen months will normally go through a series of three "stages" in his relation to the tongue-depressor, and Winnicott found any deviation from the expected stages to be significant. In the first stage the child will be attracted to the tongue-depressor and reach out for it, only to hesitate and draw back, watching carefully for any reaction from the doctor or his mother. He may turn away, but will gradually

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[50]Winnicott, "The Observation of Infants in a Set Situation" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 52-53.

resume interest in the object. During this "period of hesitation" he will hold his body still, and it is only with the initiation of the second stage that he will "become brave enough to let his feelings develop" and accept "the reality of desire." His mouth will become "soft and flabby" and he will "salivate copiously." Eventually he will reach for the object and place it in his mouth. "Instead of expectancy and stillness there now develops self-confidence, and there is free bodily movement, the latter related to manipulation of the spatula." In the third stage, the baby "first of all drops the spatula as if by mistake." If it is returned, the spatula will again be dropped, "but this time less by mistake." Soon the dropping itself will become the primary feature of the play, and the child will eventually wish to join the spatula on the floor.[51]

This "set situation" was for Winnicott not only a research and diagnostic tool; he found that allowing the child to complete the "process" spontaneously and at his own pace had value in itself, and so the set situation became a kind of therapy as well. The child's ability to accept and act on desire, to "take in" aspects of reality and to get rid of what he no longer wants represented for Winnicott a major psychological achievement. A number of variations in response to the set situation gave a glimpse into the child's inner world. The child might show no interest in the spatula at all, or he might take a long time to be brave enough to display his interest. He might be unable to play freely with the spatula even if he dared to grasp it, and feel compelled to rid himself of it at once. One child would display generous and uninhibited responses, attempting to "feed" the doctor, mother, and any other observers present. Another might crouch on the floor,

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[51]Winnicott, "The Observation of Infants in a Set Situation" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 53-54.

"throwing away the spatula, screwing himself up in his own peculiar fashion and smiling in a way that indicates a desperate attempt to deny misery and a sense of rejection."[52]

During the next decades, Winnicott would continue his exploration of the world that Klein had helped to open up for him. In the process, he would transform Klein's formulations, just as she had transformed Freud's. While Klein had superimposed her own developmental "positions" onto the Freudian psychosexual stages, Winnicott sought to understand the psychic development that had to occur prior to what either Klein or Freud had theorized. This would take him to the earliest relationship between mother and infant, a state of total dependence characterized by such complete adaptation on the part of the "environment-mother" to her infant's needs that it is felt by the infant as total independence.[53]

Freud's theory of human psychology is based on the idea of innate "drives" (translated by Strachey as "instincts") that provide pressure toward action. According to Freud,

> . . . an 'instinct' is provisionally to be understood as the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation . . .. The concept of instinct is thus one of those lying on the frontier between the mental and the physical. . .. [They] are to be regarded as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work. What distinguishes the instincts from one another and endows them with specific qualities is their relation to their somatic sources and to their aims. The source of an instinct is a process of exitation occurring in an organ and the

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[52]Winnicott, "Appetite and Emotional Disorder" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 47.

[53]Winnicott, "Paediatrics and Psychiatry" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 163.

> immediate aim of the instinct lies in the removal of this organic stimulus."[54]

Laplanche and Pontalis further describe Freud's conception of instinct or drive (*Trieb* in German) as follows:

> *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* was the work which introduced the term '*Trieb*', and along with it the distinction (which Freud never ceased using thenceforward) between source, object and aim. The Freudian conception of instinct emerges in the course of the description of human sexuality. Basing himself notably upon the study of the perversions and of the modes of infantile sexuality, Freud contests the so-called popular view that assigns to the sexual instinct a specific aim and object and localizes it in the excitation and operation of the genital apparatus. He shows how, on the contrary, the object is variable, contingent, and only chosen in its definitive form in consequence of the vicissitudes of the subject's history. He shows too how aims are many and fragmented (see 'Component Instinct'), and closely dependent on somatic sources which are themselves manifold, and capable of acquiring and retaining a predominant role for the subject (erotogenic zones): the component instincts only become subordinate to the genital zone and integrated into the achievement of coitus at the end of a complex evolution which biological maturation alone does not guarantee.[55]

Freud believed that it is in the integration of the drives with the cultural demands imposed by civilized behavior that the human personality is constituted. This structural event is accomplished through the resolution of the Oedipus complex in which for the first time drive behavior and object-relating behavior is integrated.

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[54]Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" in SE VII, 168. (It is also important to note that Freud invokes the Constancy Principle–the tendency of the psyche to divest itself of excess "excitation" by either returning the sum of excitation to zero or to as low as level as possible. The many problems associated with the definition and role of the Constancy Principle, a principle that Freud never abandoned) are laid out in detail in Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, 341-347.)

[55]Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis,* 215.

Klein insisted that *all* drives are inherently object relational. At no point is a drive simply the expression of organic tension; instead drives are expressions of love and hate directed at first toward the mother who will be initially related to as a part-object or phylogenetic object. Klein retained the use of Freud's psychosexual stages (oral, anal, phallic, genital) but treated them, not as the source of the drives (which she conceived of in psychological terms), but as the varying modes through which drives are expressed.[56]

Winnicott understood Freud's theory to be essentially a three-body psychology that explores the relationship among the child and two parents, and Klein's theory as a two-body psychology that explores the relationship between mother and child. The question that he posed for himself was, *"What then precedes the first object relationship?"*[57] The logical answer would seem to be a one-body relationship (in which is implied "an external world to which the relationship is of a negative kind.")[58] This would, in fact, be the state of affairs that Freud had posited in his metaphor of "an original libidinal cathexis of the ego . . . [which] persists and is related to the object-cathexes much as the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out."[59] But, for Winnicott, this is a false step, for he finds it clear that:

> . . . before object relationships the state of affairs is this: that the unit is not the individual, the unit is an environment-individual set-up. The centre of gravity of the being does not start off in the individual. It is in the total set-up. By

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[56]Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanlytic Theory,* 136-44.

[57]Winnicott, "Anxiety Associated with Insecurity" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 99 (italics mine).

[58]Winnicott, "Anxiety Associated with Insecurity" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 99.

[59]Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction" in SE XIV, 75-76.

> good-enough child care, technique, holding, and general management the shell becomes gradually taken over and the kernel (which has looked all the time like a human baby to us) can begin to be an individual.[60]

Expressed more directly, this brings us back to Winnicott's startling claim: *"There is no such thing as a baby."*

Instead, for Winnicott, there is the "nursing couple" that includes the baby and the caretaker who makes the baby's survival possible. In thus recognizing the reality of the situation at the very beginning, Winnicott follows the lead of the ego psychologists who emphasized the actual external situation in which the child finds himself rather than the child's instinctual drives and phantasies.[61] This formulation changes the whole nature of the problem of how the infant comes to establish a relationship to the external world. Freud's problem had been to try to explain how a solipsistic isolate can be brought into relation with its objects. Winnicott would have to explain how the infant achieves autonomy from a world in which it is essentially embedded.

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[60]Winnicott, "Anxiety Associated with Insecurity" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 99.

[61]See, for example, Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* 63-64. "The prognosis for the solution of the psychic conflicts is most favorable when the motive for the defense against instinct has been that of superego anxiety. . . . But, even when the defense in infantile neurosis has been motivated by objective anxiety, analytic therapy has a good prospect of success. The simplest method–and that least in accordance with the principles of analysis–is for the analyst, when once he has reversed the defensive process in the child's own mind, to try so to influence reality, i.e., those responsible for the child's upbringing, that objective anxiety is reduced, with the result that the ego adopts a less severe attitude toward the instincts and has not to make such great efforts to ward them off."

In "Primitive Emotional Development",[62] Winnicott lays out his under-standing of the basic human emotional development that precedes Klein's paranoid-schizoid position and Freud's Oedipus complex. Specifically, he examines the period of time *before* the infant is capable of object relationships and during which, unless things are managed very carefully, even instinctual needs will be experienced as interruptions in the "continuity of being." He sees this period of development as ending at about six months, but concedes that the actual timing is not critical and that some children may go through it much earlier or much later. (In the clinical set up with the spatula, the end of the period will normally be marked by the infant's ability to rid himself of the spatula when he is ready to be finished with it.)[63]

Using a strategy similar to Freud's in "Three Essays on a Theory of Sexuality", Winnicott deduces from the psycho-pathology of psychosis failures in one or more of three very early developmental processes. He names these processes *integration, personalization,* and *realization*[64] and relates them, respectively, to the infant's dawning ability to see itself as a unit, inhabiting its own body, and capable of relating to a reality that it perceives as external to itself. Personality disintegration and dissociative states are common in psychosis and occur frequently as normal defense mechanisms. From this,

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[62]The paper, presented before the British Psycho-Analytical Society in 1945, is the result of more than two decades of work with infants and children and of extensive war-time analyses of psychotic adults. It lays out most of the important ideas that Winnicott would elaborate throughout the rest of his career.

[63]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 147.

[64]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 149.

Winnicott posits a primary unintegration which serves as the basis (or regression point) for such disintegrated states:

> I think that an infant cannot be said to be aware at the start that while feeling this and that in his cot or enjoying the skin stimulations of bathing, he is the same as himself screaming for immediate satisfaction, possessed by an urge to get at and destroy something unless satisfied by milk.[65]
>
> . . . There are long stretches of time in a normal infant's life in which a baby does not mind whether he is many bits or one whole being, or whether he lives in his mother's face or in his own body, provided that from time to time he comes together and feels something.[66]

Regressions to such early unintegrated states are also commonly seen in the transference. By way of illustration, Winnicott describes the patient who comes for treatment and is content merely to relate all of the activities of his weekend, without feeling the need to do any actual analytic work. While this behavior would be seen as resistance in an ordinary analysis, Winnicott considers a different point of view. "Sometimes," he argues, "we need to interpret this as the patient's need to be known in all his bits and pieces by one person, the analyst."[67] Winnicott also points to other, more common forms of dissociation used as defense mechanisms, including fugue states and somnambulism and dissociations between the states of waking and sleeping, and also such "normal" dissociations as urban living and war and peace.

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[65]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 150.

[66]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 150.

[67]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 150.

Similarly, Winnicott argues, *personalization*--the achievement of localizing one's self in one's own body--cannot be taken for granted. He describes the psychotic woman patient who "discovered that most of the time she lived in her head . . . and could only see out of her eyes as out of windows, and so was not aware of what her feet were doing", and another who believed she "lived in a box 20 yards up, only connected with her body by a slender thread."[68] In childhood, another patient could not distinguish between herself and her own twin and was surprised not to feel movement when she saw her sister picked up.[69] Imaginary playmates, according to Winnicott, can also be seen as instances of depersonalization. "Study of the future of these imaginary companions (in analysis) shows that they are sometimes other selves of a highly primitive type."[70]

Winnicott sees integration and personalization as coming about through two "sets of experience." First, there is the "technique of infant care whereby an infant is kept warm, handled and bathed and rocked and named" and, second, "the acute instinctual experiences which tend to gather the personality together from within."[71] It is important to note that, for Winnicott, the first set of experiences makes possible the second. The provision, by the mother, of what Winnicott will later explore more fully and name the "facilitating environment" is necessary to the infant's ability to experience instinctual

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[68]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 149.

[69]Winnicott,"Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 149.

[70]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 151.

[71]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 150.

urges as unifying rather than disintegrative forces. It is only under cover of ego experience that instinctual urges can be felt as coming from the self rather than as disruptions from the outside, and it is the mother's ego which takes on this function until the infant has developed the ego strength to perform it for himself.[72]

Once integration and personalization can be experienced (even if only from time to time and under optimal circumstances), the infant is faced with the task of *realization* or adaptation to reality. Again, Winnicott believed that it is the action of the mother that makes possible the creative connection with reality that is the basis of all future objective knowledge.

> I will try to describe in the simplest possible terms this phenomenon as I see it. In terms of baby and mother's breast (I am not claiming that the breast is essential as a vehicle of mother-love) the baby has instinctual urges and predatory ideas. The mother has a breast and the power to produce milk, and the idea that she would like to be attacked by a hungry baby. These two phenomena do not come into relation with each other till the mother and child *live an experience together.* The mother being mature and physically able has to be the one with tolerance and understanding, so that it is she who produces a situation that may with luck result in the first tie the infant makes with an external object, an object that is external to the self from the infant's point of view.
>
> I think of the process as if two lines came from opposite directions, liable to come near each other. If they

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[72]"With good-enough mothering at the beginning the baby is not subjected to instinctual gratifications except in so far as there is ego-participation. In this respect it is not so much a question of giving the baby satisfaction as of letting the baby find and come to terms with the object (breast, bottle, milk, etc.)." Winnicott, "Ego Integration in Child Development" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*, 59-60.

> overlap there is a moment of *illusion*--a bit of experience which the infant can take as *either* his hallucination *or* a thing belonging to external reality.
>
> In other language, the infant comes to the breast when excited, and ready to hallucinate something fit to be attacked. At that moment the actual nipple appears and he is able to feel it was that nipple that he hallucinated. So his ideas are enriched by actual details of sight, feel, smell, and next time this material is used in the hallucination. In this way he starts to build up a capacity to conjure up what is actually available.[73]

The mother, in effect, regulates reality in such a way that it will match up with the infant's needs. Out of this maternal provision comes what Winnicott calls the experience of *illusion*. This experience consists of some aspect of reality being presented just as the infant is ready to hallucinate it (i.e., conjure it up out of need) with the result that it can never be known with certainty (from the infant's point of view) whether he has found or created the object. Every such experience yields sensory richness that the infant is able to bring to future illusory experiences. Winnicott differentiates himself from both Freud and Klein in this area of illusion. It is from illusion that Winnicott traces the development of *fantasy* which he carefully differentiates from *fantasying*. Freud had spoken of hallucinatory wish fulfillment in the face of frustration, and Winnicott relates this type of experience to fantasying. Fantasy, by contrast, is made possible by the *fulfillment of needs at just the right time*, that is, at a time when the infant is psychologically ready to accept a piece of reality as his own creation. In this way, Winnicott follows Klein (as opposed to Freud) in seeing fantasy as the subjective component of all experience, but breaks with Klein in that he sees the origin of internal

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[73]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 152-53.

fantasies in the experience of maternal provision rather than in phylogenetic derivatives. It is through the experience of illusion that the mother introduces the infant to a reality which can have meaning for him. In the ideal case, in which the infant and mother "live an experience together" over and over again, the infant's fantasy world becomes "vastly enriched with the world's riches."[74] This is why we can say that, for Winnicott, the infant's task is not to escape from solipsistic isolation, but to create an individual self out of the embeddedness of an self-environment matrix. Eventually, the infant will come to differentiate external reality from his internal world, but at the beginning, with a good enough mother, this distinction does not need to be made.

For Winnicott, these three processes--integration, personalization, and realization--form the bedrock of the developing self. Satisfactory development at this stage is what allows an individual to feel real as he or she encounters the external world. While Freud had worked with patients who suffered from repressed desire, Winnicott's more severely ill patients suffered from *a lack of ability to experience desire* brought about by their inability to feel real or to relate to objects in the world as being real. As Winnicott would put it in a later paper,

> Only if the early environment is good enough, does it make sense for us to discuss the early psychology of the human infant, since, *unless the environment has been good enough, the human being has not become differentiated, and has not come up as a subject for discussion in terms of normal psychology.*[75]

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[74]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 153.

[75]Winnicott, "Agression in Relation to Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 214 (Italics Winnicott's).

In other words, Winnicott would find that *being,* rather than *desiring,*[76] is the critical issue for the psychotic and borderline patients whom Freud had correctly diagnosed as beyond the reach of his theory and technique. Winnicott would spend the rest of his career tracing their illnesses (loss of reality contact and of reality sense, disintegration, and depersonalization) to deprivations in this area of primitive experience, and he would develop new techniques for dealing with patients for whom an ordinary "classical" analysis with its reliance on the transference, free association, and interpretation could never reach the psychotic core. In the process, he would vastly expand the scope and explanatory power of psychoanalysis.

Regressions to earlier states can be made in moments of health as well as in illness. Winnicott gives us a hint as to how these regressions figure in the creation of a new understanding of the role of art in the constitution of the human personality. He argues that "much sanity . . . has a symptomatic quality, being charged with fear or denial of madness, fear or denial of the innate capacity of every human being to become

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[76]See Winnicott, "Ego Integration in Child Development" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment.* "In the body of an anencephalic infant functional events, including instinctual localizations, may be taking place, events that would be called experiences of id-function if there were a brain. It could be said that if there had been a normal brain there would have been an organization of these functions, and to this organization could have been given the label ego. But with no electronic apparatus there can be no experience, and therefore no ego.

But id-functioning is normally not lost; it is collected together in all its aspects and becomes ego-experience. There is thus no sense in making use of the word 'id' for phenomena that are not covered and catalogued and experienced and eventually interpreted by ego-functioning.

In the very early stages of the development of a human child, therefore, ego functioning needs to be taken as a concept that is inseparable from that of the existence of the infant as a person. What instinctual life there may be apart from ego-functioning can be ignored, because the infant is not yet an entity having experiences" (56).

unintegrated, depersonalized, and to feel that the world is unreal."[77] In a footnote in this seminal paper, Winnicott makes a further point: *"Through artistic expression we can hope to keep in touch with our primitive selves whence the most intense feelings and even fearfully acute sensations derive, and we are poor indeed if we are only sane."*[78] In the next chapter, I will look at the kind of aesthetic theory that can be derived from Winnicott's pioneering work.

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[77]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 150.

[78]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 150 (Italics mine).

CHAPTER 4

TOWARD A WINNICOTTIAN THEORY OF AESTHETICS

According to Freud, reality is encountered when the infant first discovers that the hallucinated memory of an experience of satisfaction does not give real satisfaction. It is thus through pain and frustration that the infant makes his or her gradual entry into a hostile world. Submission to the reality principle is essentially an inhibitory function of the ego, and growing up is a long process of renouncing infantile pleasures. In adult life the individual painfully inhabits an outer world of enforced frustration while hiding, more or less successfully, an inner world of phantasy and instinct. If the wishes represented in fantasy are to be satisfied, they must be satisfied surreptitiously, while the inhibiting ego is otherwise distracted. Works of art, no less than dreams and symptoms, are vehicles for the fulfilment of such disguised and unacknowledged wishes.

And yet, in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* there is a moment of grace when this strict dichotomy does not seem to apply. Freud relates a serendipitous event.

> Let us recall, then, that from the first the nervous system had two functions: the reception of stimuli *from outside* and the discharge of excitations of *endogenous* origin. It was from this latter obligation, indeed, that, owing to the exigencies of life, a compulsion came about towards further biological development. We might then conjecture that it might actually be our systems ϕ and ψ each of which had assumed one of these primary obligations. The system ϕ would be the group of neurones which the external stimuli reach, the system ψ would contain the neurones which receive endogenous excitations. In that case, we should not have *invented* the two [classes], ϕ and ψ, we should have *found* them already in existence.[1]

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[1]Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* SE I, 303, note ('Erfunden' and 'vorgefunden').

In a similar vein, Freud explains that true scientific activity begins with describing and then classifying phenomena. However, he notes, even such descriptions require "certain abstract ideas" that have been "derived from somewhere or other but certainly not from the new observations alone." These ideas which are purposefully left vague, gradually take on meaning through "repeated references to the material of observation from which they appear to have been derived, but upon which, in fact, they have been imposed."[2]

Now, what Freud is here describing at a phenomenological level does not actually fit into a theory of reality such as he professes to espouse. These descriptions are of a reality that is neither inner nor outer, but in some third space that represents a blend of the two. If we have need of such a third space to describe the development of scientific theories, it seems no less certain that we need it to describe cultural activities and works of art as well. In *Playing and Reality,* Winnicott discusses just such a need:

> It is generally acknowledged that a statement of human nature in terms of interpersonal relationships is not good enough even when the imaginative elaboration of function and the whole of fantasy both conscious and unconscious, including the repressed unconscious, are allowed for. There is another way of describing persons that comes out of the researches of the past two decades. Of every individual who has reached to the stage of being a unit with a limiting membrane and an outside and an inside, it can be said that there is an *inner reality* to that individual, an inner world that can be rich or poor and can be at peace or in a state of war. This helps, but is it enough?
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> My claim is that if there is a need for this double statement, there is also need for a triple one: the third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim

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[2]Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" in SE XIV, 117.

> is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate but related.[3]

Winnicott not only argues for the theoretical need for such a space, he locates its place of origin in the development of an infant in the care of a good enough mother. By meeting the baby's readiness to hallucinate an object out of need with the actual object needed, the mother provides an experience of *illusion,* such that it can never be certain (from the baby's point of view) whether he has found or created the object. Winnicott traces the development of this third area of experiencing (which he calls *potential space*) from the infant's initial experience of illusion, through transitional objects, to play, and on to the area of cultural experience in general. In this chapter, I will examine some of Winnicott's key ideas in terms of their application to a theory of aesthetics.

To approach this at the most general level, Winnicott is an "object-relations" theorist. An object-relations theory examines the interplay between a subject and its objects. Freud had already used the term "object" in his definition of the instincts: every instinct has a source, an aim, and an object. At a primitive level, such objects may be "part objects" (e.g., the breast) or a part of the infant's own body (e.g., the thumb). As we have seen, the aim of the oral instinct is the incorporation of the object, and that of the anal instinct to expel, withhold, or contain its object. In Chapter 3, we saw how Winnicott traces the development of the idea of an "inner" and "outer" world through the psychic elaboration of these somatic functions. Freud also pointed out that the internalization of the "lost object" during mourning is an instance of a modification of the psyche by identification with its object. Implicit in Freud's theory of the formation of the

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[3]Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" in *Playing and Reality,* 2.

superego out of the dissolution of that special set of relationships known as the Oedipus complex is the idea that mental structures themselves may be created from internalized object relationships:

> *The broad general outcome of the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipus complex may, therefore, be taken to be the forming of a precipitate in the ego, consisting of these two identifications [with the two parents] in some way united with each other. This modification of the ego retains its special position; it confronts the other contents of the ego as an ego ideal or super-ego.*[4]

Therefore, in the relationship of the subject to its objects, we have a way to discuss in psychoanalytic terms the ways in which the individual is changed and enriched, *in part created,* through his or her interaction with the world.

An important aspect of the relation of the subject to its objects can be found in the idea of fantasy. As we have seen, Freud's notion of phantasy is derived from "scenes" that represent unconscious wishes and are contrasted to reality. They come into play when the reality-testing function of the ego is incapacitated or suspended, and the psychic system becomes subject to hallucinatory wish fulfilment. Melanie Klein greatly expanded Freud's notion of phantasy by theorizing that unconscious phantasies accompany all experience and do not merely come into play at times of frustration. Even so, for Klein phantasies were not necessarily derivatives of actual experiences, but were most often unconscious aspects of the person's phylogenetic inheritance. Winnicott brought the idea of fantasy closer to reality, basing the capacity for fantasy in the experience of illusion. In illusion, fantasy is not contrasted with reality. Instead a matching reality is presented to the infant just as he is ready to hallucinate it. As

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[4]Freud, "The Ego and the Id" in SE XIX, 34 (Italics Freud's).

Winnicott explains, in the ideal case, in which the infant and mother "live an experience together" over and over again, the infant's fantasy world becomes "vastly enriched with the world's riches."[5] Thus, for Winnicott, fantasy is the way that reality is appropriated and used by the individual subjectivity.

Christopher Bollas, a psychoanalyst who has explored many of Winnicott's insights, writes eloquently of the way the self is "articulated" through the objects of its experience. Describing "intense evocative moments" that seem "to elicit within us not so much a memory as an inner psychic constellation laden with images, feelings, and bodily acuities,"[6] Bollas claims that this use of objects to contain and then articulate the self is not an unusual occurrence but an everyday event.

> . . . [W]ithout giving it much thought at all we consecrate the world with our own subjectivity, investing people, places, things, and events with a kind of idiomatic significance. As we inhabit this world of ours, we amble about in a field of pregnant objects that contribute to the dense psychic textures that constitute self experience. Very often we select and use objects in ways unconsciously intended to bring up such imprints; indeed, we do this many times each day, sort of thinking ourselves out, by evoking constellations of inner experience.[7]

Bollas compares this creative experiencing of self constellations through the use of objects that have been specially endowed with psychic meaning to the process of the

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[5]Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis,* 153.

[6]Christopher Bollas, *Being A Character: Psychoanalysis and Self Experience* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 3.

[7]Bollas, *Being A Character,* 3.

dream work, and he suggests that "the human subject *becomes the dream work of his own life."*[8] According to Bollas,

> When I enter the world of dreams I am deconstructed, as I am transformed from the one who holds the internal world in my mind to the one who is experientially inside the dramaturgy of the other. Gathered and processed by the dream space and dream events, I live in a space where I seem to have been held before: inside the magical and erotic embrace of a forming intelligence that bears me.[9]

This feeling of being held within the "magical and erotic embrace of a forming intelligence that bears me," Bollas relates to the self experience of the infant who is held in the unconsciousness of the mother during the state of primary maternal preoccupation. In this state, ordered thought may safely give way to intense experience. Similarly, moving from wakefulness to sleep and dream, our "complex reflecting" selves give way to our "simple, experiencing" selves. Once again we return, this time through the dream, to the disintegration of the self that was the natural state of affairs at the beginning of our lives.

> Freud tells us that the course of dream experience–the people, places, and events represented–renders the sleeper's unconscious wishes and memories in dramatic form, yet the self inside the dream, unbeknownst to himself (as the simple self), is alive in a theater of his represented parts.[10]

According to Bollas, these two states of consciousness, the simple experiencing self and the complex reflecting self, "enable the person to process life according to

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[8]Bollas, *Being A Character,* 3.

[9]Bollas, *Being A Character*, 4.

[10]Bollas, *Being A Character,* 4-5.

different yet interdependent modes of engagement: one immersive, the other reflective."[11] These modes operate during wakefulness no less than in dreams. Our days offer possibilities for successions of self experiences, in which our being potentials are articulated into reality. Some of these self experiences may be planned, remembered and organized. Others will be intensely experienced, but not thought, giving texture and substance to the mystery that is our self.

Winnicott's description of the child's use of "transitional objects" will help to simplify and make concrete the above considerations. In the beginning, the child need not differentiate between what is real and what he has hallucinated, for his mother will so manage affairs that the two will coincide in an illusion. Each illusory experience not only adds to the richness of the infant's fantasy, it also shapes his fantasies so that they will more or less coincide with what is actually available. The child develops confidence in his ability to act in the world. Now, this place between mother and child, Winnicott names "potential space," and eventually the child will come to use potential space to "play" with "the precariousness of the interplay of personal psychic reality and the experience of control of actual objects.[12] As Winnicott explains it, this potential space is not inner psychic reality, nor yet is it external reality. It is transitional between the two.

> Into this play area the child gathers objects or phenomena from external reality and uses these in the service of some sample derived from inner or personal reality. Without hallucinating the child puts out a sample of dream potential and lives with this sample in a chosen setting of fragments from external reality.[13]

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[11]Bollas, *Being a Character*, 4-5.

[12]Winnicott, *Playing and Reality,* 47.

[13]Winnicott, *Playing and Reality,* 51.

We recognize in this description the child's teddy bear or favorite blanket, some object that gains special significance for the child because of its connection with aspects of his or her inner psychic reality. Winnicott tells us that the child assumes certain rights over the object which are respected; nevertheless, because the object is real, it places limits on the child's feeling of omnipotence. It must survive the child's love, hate, and aggression. "It comes from without from our point of view, but not so from the point of view of the baby. Neither does it come from within; it is not a hallucination." Over time, it will not be repressed or forgotten, but it will gradually pass into "limbo."

> It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread out over the whole intermediate territory between 'inner psychic reality' and 'the external world as perceived by two persons in common', that is to say, over the whole cultural field.[14]

This experience of transitional objects in potential space leaves the adult with the capacity to use objects to contain or articulate the self in intense encounters with reality. These objects of self experience are more than just a mnemic symbols for internal states. As an object in the real world, each has its own structure and possibilities. We choose to listen to a certain piece of music, go to a movie, play pick-up football, read a novel, or go for a walk. Each of these activities will lend its own characteristics to the self experience it evokes. Bollas suggests that it is useful to look at the evocative quality of objects in at least six ways: sensationally, structurally, conceptually, symbolically, mnemically, and projectively.[15]

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[14]Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 5.

[15]Bollas, *Being a Character,* 34.

Daniel N. Stern, in *The Interpersonal World of the Infant,* reports on studies that demonstrate the ability of infants to relate experiences cross modally in terms of shape, intensity, and temporal properties such as duration, beat, and rhythm. Furthermore, infants respond to *vitality affects:* a form of cross-modal experiencing that is particular to human interaction. Vitality affects can be characterized as "dynamic shifts or patterned changes," elusive qualities captured by "dynamic, kinetic terms, such as 'surging,' 'fading away,' 'fleeting,' 'explosive,' 'crescendo,' 'decrescendo,' 'bursting,' 'drawn out,' etc." [16]

If we think of the infant and the mother in a state of primary preoccupation as functioning almost as a single unit, we would expect that their interactions would be based on such cross-modal cues. If so, the infant has already developed aesthetic capacities that will facilitate interaction with artworks of many forms, including music, dance, and abstract art, as well as representational art and literature.

It becomes clear that what is developing here is a way to look at aesthetic experiences in terms of their potential for psychic elaboration and structuring. In our interaction with a work of art, we do not merely evade the onerous constraints of reality, nor do we necessarily play off conscious and unconscious aspects of our personality in order to gain the release of psychic tension (though that may be a component of the experience). *We use art to elaborate the processes and contents of our psyches and to complicate our relationship with reality.*

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[16]Daniel N. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985), 47-61. Stern suggests that these "amodal representations could consist of a temporal pattern of changes in density of neural firing."

The work of art is constructed (in the artist's "play") in such a way that it offers very dense articulation potentials, "sensationally, structurally, conceptually, symbolically, mnemically, and projectively." It is "framed" (as we discussed in Chapter Two) in a way that invites states of unintegration.[17] That is, the structure of the work of art provides a "holding" situation similar to the holding environment provided by the mother for her infant or by the psychoanalyst for his or her patient. Response to a work of art will be highly individual as members of the audience relax into the "dreaming" state that involves the suspension of the complex, reflective self. The simple experiencing self, in a state of unintegration, will "merge" with the artwork, not so much "suspending" reality as recognizing that there are areas of experience in which reality is created. *The work of art offers alternative realities as opposed to alternatives to reality.* Thus, art may be a highly constructive activity, but it invites destructive responses as well for it *undermines the given.*

This merging of the unintegrated self and the artwork is facilitated by the same "aesthetic" considerations that regulate the interactions between the mother and infant: shape, intensity, duration, beat, and rhythm, as well as the "dynamic shifts or patterned changes" of the vitality aspects discussed by Stern.

In first-phase psychoanalysis, we saw that a theory of aesthetics that assimilates art to fantasy cannot be ontologically significant. In the second phase of psychoanalysis (ego psychology), art is still comprehended in terms of the pleasure principle, though a more sophisticated definition of pleasure considerably strengthens the theory. It is only

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[17]As opposed to "disintegration." See Chapter Three.

in third-phase psychoanalysis, however, that the truly creative potential of art is theorized in an interplay of self and world in which both are created and transformed.

In the next section, I will explore Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in an attempt to demonstrate this Winnicottian perspective.

CHAPTER 5

POTENTIAL SPACE AND SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET*

"You would pluck out the heart of my mystery," Hamlet bitterly accuses Guildenstern[1] and, indeed, we as readers and audience stand under the same indictment. For *Hamlet* is a mystery. It is said of Ophelia in her mad rambling,

> Her speech is nothing,
> Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
> The hearers to collection; they yawn at it,
> And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts,
> Which as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
> Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
> Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.[2]

We might say the same of the play itself, for if its words conceal an unrevealed mystery, they compel a fascinated search for meaning in their conveyance of an overwhelming grief. The work has inspired almost as many interpretations as it has interpreters, with T.S. Eliot's criticism standing as a perpetual challenge: "Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is *in excess* of the facts as they appear."[3]

Hamlet is plagued by a series of questions which have no answers or too many answers. Why does Hamlet delay so long in carrying out the Ghost's commands? What provokes his violent attacks on the woman he supposedly loves? How are we to explain his savagery toward her father? Gertrude's desertion of her husband for a man described

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[1]William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974), III.ii.36-7. All quotes from the play will be from this edition.

[2]*Hamlet*, V.v.7-13.

[3]T.S. Eliot as quoted by J. Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet* (New York, 1939), Appendix D, 305.

as his inferior in every way remains a mystery. The Ghost's injunction regarding the Queen--"Leave her to heaven"[4]--in the face of his bloodthirsty spirit of vengeance toward her partner in sin is as confusing to the critic as it is bewildering to his son. The undeniable power of the play demands an explanation in the face of a plot which raises more questions than it answers. How is it possible that we identify so closely with characters whose motivation remains so obscure?[5]

Most of the criticism of this play has focused on the question of Hamlet's madness or on his inability to carry through the action demanded by the Ghost. Charles Knight quotes Goethe's analysis that "Shakespeare meant . . . to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it,"[6] and he cites Coleridge on Hamlet's fine intellect which is "deranged" or "unfixed" as a result "of the supernatural visitation."[7] Knight's own belief--"That [Shakespeare] meant the character to be mysterious, though not inexplicable, there can be no doubt"[8]--leads him to conclude that it is precisely the capacity of Hamlet's thought, his ability "to grapple with the most familiar and yet the deepest thoughts of human nature"[9] which not only prevents his acting with the unthinking forthrightness of Fortinbras, but at the same time produces the richness and complexity that allows each reader to see himself in Hamlet.

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[4]*Hamlet*, I.v.86.

[5]See Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" in SE XXII, 95. "Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me."

[6]Charles Knight, *Studies of Shakespeare* (London, 1849), 324.

[7]Charles Knight, *Studies of Shakespeare*, 324.

[8]Charles Knight, *Studies of Shakespeare*, 324.

[9]Charles Knight, *Studies of Shakespeare*, 327.

Dover Wilson argues that there is no doubt " . . . that Shakespeare meant us to imagine Hamlet suffering from some kind of mental disorder throughout the play,"[10] yet he insists on reading the play as drama true to its own historical context and points to the usurpation of the throne and Gertrude's incest as providing the basis for the tragedy of "a great and noble spirit subjected to a moral shock so overwhelming that it shatters all zest for life and all belief in it."[11] For Wilson, it is not an essential weakness that leads Hamlet to falter under his burden, but the sheer weight of the burden itself. "So great is Hamlet's moral stature, so tough is his nerve, that the back does *not* break. But he is crippled, and the arm which should perform the Ghost's command is paralyzed."[12]

As we have seen, Ernest Jones' classic psychoanalytic interpretation, *Hamlet and Oedipus*, emphasizes the psychic conflict inherent in Hamlet's unconscious wishes. He links Hamlet's inability to carry out the Ghost's command to the Oedipal situation in which it is the repressed wish of the son to kill the father and possess the mother. Given this reading, Hamlet fails to act because he is caught between two equally unacceptable alternatives:

> It is his moral duty, to which his father exhorts him, to put an end to the incestuous activities of his mother (by killing Claudius), but his unconscious does not want to put an end to them (he being identified with Claudius in the situation), and so he cannot. His lashings of self-reproach and remorse are ultimately because of this very failure, i.e. the refusal of his guilty wishes to undo the sin. By refusing to abandon his own incestuous wishes he perpetuates the sin and so

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[10]J. Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet,* 217.

[11]J. Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, 26-50.

[12]J. Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, 50.

> must endure the stings of torturing conscience. And yet killing his mother's husband would be the equivalent to committing the original sin himself, which would if anything be even more guilty. So of the two impossible alternatives he adopts the passive solution of letting the incest continue vicariously, but at the same time provoking destruction at the King's hand.[13]

Norman N. Holland accepts Jones' logic as "unimpeachable," but points out the failing inherent in all of these interpretations:

> The psychoanalytic reading . . . makes the same mistake as all literalistic readings of Hamlet's character, beginning with Goethe's. They lift Hamlet out of the play and treat him as a living person . . .. And it is not fair to look only at those parts of the play which deal with the quite appealing nature of Hamlet. We have to look at the play as a whole.[14]

In other words, it is not an individual mind, but rather a *text* which requires explanation. Once we have broadened our perspective to include the text as a whole, Holland argues, we discover the play is about "fragmentation, splitting, decomposition." The tragedy, for him, is an exploration of the split between words and action; god-like reason and physical, animal reality; and the play of ritual and ceremony as opposed to the inescapable fact of our mortal selves.[15]

A more recent psychoanalytic interpretation by David Leverenz explores themes suggested by the interpersonal school of psychoanalysis and its emphasis on the

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[13]Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1976), 90-91.

[14]Norman N. Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964),159.

[15]Norman N. Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination*, 178.

development of identity in relation to others. Like Holland, Leverenz attempts to read "the whole text"; however, he argues that the play is about the inability of Hamlet to achieve a unified identity in the face of the "mixed and contradictory expectations" of the father figures within the play--expectations which reflect their own divided image of dutiful reason and bestial lust.[16] According to Leverenz, Hamlet's "self-preoccupation is paradoxically grounded not so much in himself as in the extraordinary and unremitting array of 'mixed signals' that separate role from self, reason from feeling, duty from love."[17] The play thus becomes a critique of the "patriarchal order, which has cracked all the mirrors for self-confirmation."[18]

How then are we to understand this complicated text that both demands and refuses interpretation? The very diversity of the readings accorded it within the critical tradition forces a recognition of the constructive nature of the interpretive process. We enter the world of the play, not merely to find meaning but to create it through the imaginative re-creation of Shakespeare's vision. These considerations remind us not only of Hamlet's contempt for Guildenstern, who "would pluck out the heart of my mystery,"[19] but also of his love for Horatio who "has been as one in suff'ring all that

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[16]David Leverenz, "The Woman in Hamlet: An Interpersonal View" in *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays,* eds. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppelia Kahn (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 110.

[17]David Leverenz, "The Woman in Hamlet: An Interpersonal View" in *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays,* 111.

[18]David Leverenz, "The Woman in Hamlet: An Interpersonal View" in *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays,* 125-26.

[19]*Hamlet,* III.ii.36-7.

suffers nothing."[20] We plumb the depths of the play at the risk of drowning, and the revelation of its mystery is always a self-disclosure. In short, the art of interpretation takes place within the realm of what Winnicott has named "potential space."

Harold Searles, writing of the schizophrenic individual's experience of his world, tells of his own initial "overwhelming panic at the unorganized vastness and complexity of the subject."[21] He attributes this "anxiety, confusion and despair" to an empathic understanding of "the panic that chronically grips the schizophrenic individual who is so greatly at a loss for reliable organizing principles to render meaningful and manageable the chaotic perceptions that assail him."[22]

I feel the same anxiety and confusion as I attempt a psychoanalytic reading of *Hamlet.* Within this play, the dead constitute a living presence, persons are seen as plants or birds or animals, and external reality is so inextricably mixed with disordered thought that it demands constant testing. As a critic, I read with the "empathy" and "free floating attention" described by Hans Loewald in his discussion of the psychoanalytic process[23]

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[20]Hamlet.III.ii.66.

[21]Harold F. Searles, "The Schizophrenic Individual's Experience of His World" in *Countertransference and Related Subjects,* (New York: International Universities Press, 1979), 6.

[22]Harold F.Searles, "The Schizophrenic Individual's Experience of His World" in *Countertransferance and Related Subjects,* 6.

[23]Hans W. Loewald, "Psychoanalytic Theory and the Psychoanalytic Process" in *Papers on Psychoanalysis,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 284-85. Loewald writes on page 284, "For the theoretical grasp of that aspect of analytic work which involves empathy, the notion of the loosening or suspension of the subject-object split is essential, as it is for the understanding of true identification. The subject-object split can be suspended because it did not always exist in psychic development, because psychic development takes its beginning in a psychic matrix which comprises, stated from the viewpoint of an outside observer--a nonpsychoanalytic observer–mother and infant. Stated from a reconstructive, psychoanalytic viewpoint, this matrix is a psychic field

and through this reading I discover a "fantasy creation woven from memories and imaginative elaborations of present actuality."[24] If this fantasy is the result of my own conspiracy with the text, it nevertheless is based on what I see the play attempting to reveal, "only fleetingly, defensively, haltingly, in inhibited [and] distorted fashion."[25]

The schizophrenic of Searles' experience inhabits a world in which he has "no reliable way of knowing whether what he is perceiving is part of an inner, fantasy world or part of an outer, real world; whether it is something that exists in present, past or future time; whether it is alive or dead, human or non-human."[26] Factors in the early environment which Searles delineates as schizophrenogenic include most prominently the inability of parent and child to differentiate from a symbiotic matrix into separate-but-related individuals. Through processes of projection, introjection, and identification, the child remains enmeshed in parental attitudes, modes of perception, and emotional affects which are vague, ambiguous, contradictory or unpredictable. This leads to ego fragmentation, or failure of ego integration, within the child. Since his parental models may be massively denying or otherwise unable to cope meaningfully with major parts of

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from which the infantile psyche gradually becomes differentiated as a relatively autonomous focus of psychic activity, by processes of internalization and externalization taking place within the total original field."

[24]Hans W. Loewald, "Psychoanalytic Theory and the Psychoanalytic Process" in *Papers on Psychoanalysis,* 354.

[25]Hans W. Loewald, "Psychoanalytic Theory and the Psychoanalytic Process" in *Papers on Psychoanalysis,* 354.

[26]Harold F.Searles, "The Schizophrenic Individual's Experience of His World" in *Countertransferance and Related Subjects*, 6-7.

their environment, the child develops "built-in impediments to perceiving his own world realistically and in detail."[27]

Moreover, the child's family role will be deeply conflicted. Family members may make him the spokesman for dissociated parts of their own personalities, but then react to him as crazy when he functions as an individual who is aware of these split-off aspects of reality. Alternatively, the child may identify in an automatic and primitive way with rigid, punitive or contradictory super-ego functions of the parent in an unconscious attempt to defend against parental hostility or his own ambivalent feelings toward the parents.

> In these [schizophrenogenic] families there is so little of trustful leisurely sharing of one another's thinking as to leave little time and emotional security for the weighing of perceptions before meanings must be imposed upon them. Instead, a perception must be reacted to, by both parent and child, as confirming one or another emotional prejudice, one or another rigid superego standard, derived from parental indoctrination. The child is lead to feel that not to *know*--to exist in a state of uncertainty and of searching for a meaning--means to be crazy, to be something beyond the human pale. He comes to feel, essentially, that the only alternative to oneness with the parent is total isolation, craziness. All too often, he finds himself in a position where he must choose between his parent and his own perceptual equipment.[28]

I believe that Searles' delineation of schizophrenogenic conditions within a disturbed family environment describes the "rotten" state of Denmark portrayed in

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[27]Harold F. Searles, "The Schizophrenic Individual's Experience of His World" in *Countertransference and Related Subjects,* 1979, 7-10.

[28]Harold F. Searles, "The Schizophrenic Individual's Experience of His World" in *Countertransference and Related Subjects*, 11.

Shakespeare's play. We need only call to mind Hamlet's plea for truth in the face of the duplicity of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to understand that this is a world where nothing is as it seems:

> . . . but let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserv'd love, and by what more dear a better proposer can charge you withal, be even and direct with me . . ..[29]

We, as readers, must arm ourselves with a "hermeneutics of suspicion"[30] for we are drawn into the same kind of confusion that Hamlet experiences; and our own struggle to understand this baffling and disjointed play parallels Hamlet's search for truth in a world where he may ironically tell Guildenstern that to play upon a recorder is "as easy as lying."[31]

Joseph Barnett's insight in "Hamlet and the Family Ideology" makes a similar point. He describes the "family ideology" as a "system of cognition that determines what the child may and must not know," and he suggests that

> [i]t creates acceptable perspectives and modes of interpreting reality, and erects a supporting mythology which sustains these interpretations . . .. Restrictions of specific mental operations and affects, idiosyncratic definitions of experience, aid in excluding the likelihood of freedom of thought within the family, at least in those

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[29]*Hamlet,* II.ii.283-86.

[30]Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 32-36.

[31]*Hamlet,* III.ii.357.

areas that threaten the homeostasis of the family or
the parents' marriage.[32]

Like the child who is born into a pre-existing family situation with all of its secrets and complexities, we enter this play "in the middle" and we immediately come into possession of information that we don't know how to deal with. Two sentinels meet and amid some confusion exchange places on the watch. "For this relief much thanks," says Francisco. "'Tis bitter cold,/And I am sick at heart."[33] There is no explanation for this alarming remark, but we are immediately put "on guard" ourselves--we, too, must "watch" if we are to put this world into correct perspective. In fact, the 175 lines of the first scene contain no less than 25 references to watching, or seeing, or appearing:

Hor. What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?

Bar. I have seen nothing.

Mar. Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us;
Therefore I have entreated him along,
With us to watch the minutes of this night,
That if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

Hor. Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.[34]

And, when the Ghost does appear:

Mar. Peace, break thee off! Look where it comes again.

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[32]Joseph Barnett, "*Hamlet* and the Family Ideology" in *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis,* 3 (1975), 409.

[33]*Hamlet,* I.i.8-9.

[34]*Hamlet,* I.i.21-29.

Bar. In the same figure like the King that's dead.[35]

Bar. . . . What think you on't?

Hor. Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.[36]

Furthermore, the arrival of the Ghost sparks prolonged discussion, both in Scene 1 and Scene 2 regarding its appearance. In Scene I:

Mar. Is it not like the King?

Hor. As thou art to thyself.
Such was the very armour he had on
When he the ambitious Norway combated.
So frowned he once . . .[37]

And, in Scene 2, following Hamlet's heartsick confession, "My father--methinks I see my father . . .. In my mind's eye, Horatio",[38] Horatio counters with the report of what seems to be more than fantasy, "My lord, I think I saw him yesternight."[39] Urged to further description, he provides details:

Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch
In the dead waste and middle of the night,
Been thus encount'red: a figure like your father,
Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,
Appears before them . . ..[40]

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[35]*Hamlet,* I.i.39-40.

[36]*Hamlet,* I.i.55-58.

[37]*Hamlet,* I.i.59-62.

[38]*Hamlet,* I.ii.184-86.

[39]*Hamlet,* I.ii.189.

[40]*Hamlet,* I.ii.196-201.

And I with them the third night kept the watch,
Where, as they had delivered, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes. I knew your father,
These hands are not more like.[41]

Ham. Arm'd, say you?

Hor. Arm'd, my lord.

Ham. From top to toe?

Hor. My lord, from head to foot.

Ham. Then saw you not his face.

Hor. O yes, my lord, he wore his beaver up.

Ham. What, looked he frowningly?

Hor. A countenance more
In sorrow than in anger.

Ham. Pale, or red.

Hor. Nay, very pale.

Ham. And fix'd his eyes upon you?[42]

Ham. . . . His beard was grisl'd, no?

Hor. It was, as I have seen it in his life,
A sable silver'd.

Ham. I will watch to-night.[43]

This extraordinary insistence on the visual is paralleled by an undermining of the reliability of speech. Horatio's ears are "assailed" by the story of the Ghost related by

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[41]*Hamlet,* I.ii.209-12.

[42]*Hamlet,* I.ii.226-233.

[43]*Hamlet,* I.ii.239-242.

Marcellus and Bernardo.[44] When Marcellus asks the reason for this "same strict and most observant watch," Horatio can only report rumors ("at least the whisper goes so").[45] These early references to the unreliability of what is spoken emerge as a major theme in a play which depicts a world in which communication is hopelessly corrupted, and in which even seeing is believing only for those who are able to "see unseen."[46]

But this is to get ahead of our story, for we must examine what this *caveat* regarding the reliability of what we are told means to the reader. I would like to suggest that we must read the text in terms of defense mechanisms such as those that disguise the meaning of dreams or distort the communication of the schizophrenic: displacement, projection, introjection, and isolation.[47]

Norman N. Holland in "Defense, Displacement and the Ego's Algebra" has defined all of these defenses in terms of the single operation of displacement, and his exposition has the advantage of allowing us to understand both texts and characters in terms of the same mechanisms. Classically, Freud defined displacement as "the diversion of a train of thought, the displacement of the psychical emphasis on to a topic other than the opening one."[48] Holland's characterization of all of the defense mechanisms in terms of just four kinds of displacement includes displacements in *direction*, displacements in

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[44]*Hamlet,* I.i.31.

[45]*Hamlet,* I.i.71.

[46]*Hamlet,* III.i.32.

[47]Harold F. Searles, *Collected Papers on Schizophrenia,* 382-98.

[48]Sigmund Freud, quoted by Norman N. Holland, "Defense, Displacement, and the Ego's Algebra" in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* (1973) 54, 248.

time, displacements in *number*, and displacements based on *similarity*.[49] Displacements of direction encompass all of the various internalizations and projections in which there is movement from a position perceived as "inner" to one perceived as "outer" or *vice versa*; displacements in time characterize regressions or prematurely adaptive behaviors such as the "flight into health" or maturity; displacements in number include defenses as various as denial, splitting, and condensation; while displacements based on similarity involve a shift from the original to something similar, different (a "more disguised representation"), or opposite.[50] This fourth kind of displacement is the most complicated and includes verbal and clang associations, symbolisms, literary allusions, etc., as well as displacements based on similar attitudes, physical similarities, or displacements through body relation.[51]

Just such a system of displacement operates within the text of *Hamlet,* and we can take a second look at the opening scenes of Act I in light of the above considerations. The play opens abruptly in the middle of a watch. The immediate remarks cannot be understood in terms of any existing context. Francisco says somewhat strangely, "Bernardo has my place."[52] Horatio answers the question regarding his own presence with the enigmatic reply that a "piece of him" is there.[53] There is an insistence on the unreliability of what is heard or spoken that parallels an overwhelming emphasis on the

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[49]Holland, "Defense, Displacement, and the Ego's Algebra" in *IJP*, 248-49.

[50]Holland, "Defense, Displacement, and the Ego's Algebra" in *IJP,* 248-49.

[51]Holland, "Defense, Displacement, and the Ego's Algebra" in *IJP,* 249.

[52]*Hamlet,* I.i.17.

[53]*Hamlet,* I.i.19.

importance of what is seen. The Ghost does not speak, but the watchers speculate that his presence has something to do with the recent renewal of the old combat between Norway and Denmark, in the person of dead Norway's son, Fortinbras. The Ghost appears a second time, and again the watchers speculate on the reason for its unease. "If thou has uphoarded in thy life /Extorted treasure in the womb of earth . . ." says Horatio, "Speak of it, stay and speak."[54] However, the Ghost fades, startled like a "guilty thing" by the crowing of a cock, which we are told, wakes the "god of day" and sends "the extravagant and erring spirit to his confine."[55] Marcello relates that the crowing of the cock is associated with the season in which the savior is born. Horatio drily observes, "So have I heard and do in part believe it." [56]

Given the language of displacement, I would suggest that one way we could read this scene is as follows. There is an atmosphere of heart-sickness and alarm in which the influence of the dead king is felt to be alive in Denmark. The first appearance of the Ghost suggests fairly obviously the revival of the external danger of invasion of Denmark by Norway. In this appearance, the Ghost is described as martial, fully armored, frowning.

The second appearance of the Ghost is more problematic, yet the imagery of womb, cock and birth unmistakable suggest an illicit sexual adventure resulting in the birth of a child. The Ghost starts like "a guilty thing" upon the crowing of the cock. Yet, of course, the cock itself is "the guilty thing." And, although the Ghost is the

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[54]*Hamlet,* I.i.137-39.

[55]*Hamlet,* I.i.147-155.

[56]*Hamlet,* I.i.165.

"extravagant and erring spirit" that fades upon the crowing of the cock, Hamlet the King (as we will learn at lines I.ii.140 and III.iv.56) was himself Hyperion, "god of day."

All of the above seems rather tentative and mysterious; however, the situation will become even more complex in the following scenes. Claudius, brother to the dead king, delivers the opening speech of Scene 2, and we learn that Claudius has married his "sometime sister," the widowed Queen Gertrude, and assumed the throne. This is a speech in which Claudius' ruthless power is only thinly veiled by a smooth surface courtesy. Admitting that the situation calls for grief "and our whole kingdom/To be contracted in one brow of woe,"[57] he nevertheless sets forth with the air of one legislating reality to pair the most impossible opposites. " . . . [W]ith a defeated joy,/With an auspicious, and a dropping eye,/With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage"[58]--he blandly narrates how he has "taken to wife" the "imperial jointress" who is his link to the throne. Thanking the court whose "better wisdoms . . . have freely gone with /This affair along,"[59] he turns to the subject of Fortinbras' threatened invasion. We see at once that "young Fortinbras" has made the mistake of underestimating the extent to which this usurper has consolidated his power. Having thought to press his advantage when Denmark was in a "weakened state," Fortinbras has "pestered" the court with his claims to the lands lost by his father. "So much for him", says Claudius dismissively.[60] He will deal instead with Fortinbras' "impotent and bedred" uncle who is currently King of

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[57]*Hamlet,* I.ii.4-5.

[58]*Hamlet,* I.ii.10-13.

[59]*Hamlet,* I.ii.13-15.

[60]*Hamlet,* I.ii.25.

Norway, and who will be told to bring his nephew to heel. Sending Cornelius and Voltemand to convey these messages to Norway, he sharply reminds them of the limits and origin of their power:

> Giving to you no further personal power
> To business with the King, more than the scope
> Of these delated articles allow.[61]

But Claudius's veiled lesson in power is not yet complete, and, having finished with external affairs, he turns to household matters:

> What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
> That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?[62]

Again, the seeming courtesy masks a subtle display of power. Laertes, on the basis of the position and services of his father, will be allowed to return to his studies in France.

Hamlet's bitter asides testify that he has not missed the message beneath the facade, but he, too, can play this double game. Chided by his mother for the melancholy remembrance of his father which "seems so particular" to him, he savagely responds,

> Seems, madam? nay, it is, I know not "seems."[63]

Hamlet's grief and contempt probe the hypocrisy of the court--his uncle's assertions of power beneath their cover of congeniality, and his mother's expedient forgetfulness of her recently dead husband. Claudius, however is not to be deterred; his lesson will be learned. Hamlet's grief is mere "peevish opposition"; it shows "impious stubbornness," "unmanly grief," a "heart unfortified," a "mind impatient," an

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[61]*Hamlet,* I.ii.36-38.

[62]*Hamlet,* I.ii.45-46.

[63]*Hamlet,* I.ii.76.

"understanding, simple and unschooled."[64] Furthermore, as for Hamlet's wish to return to school in Wittenberg, Claudius decrees:

> It is most retrograde to our desire,
> And we beseech you bend you to remain
> Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye . . ..[65]

Gertrude, demonstrating where her loyalty lies, concurs:

> Let not thy mother loser her prayers, Hamlet,
> I pray thee, stay with us.[66]

The claws within the velvet paw have shown themselves, and Hamlet can do no other than comply with a fine, undercutting irony:

> I shall in all my best obey you, madam.[67]

Thus, the subtleties and intrigues of the court where language bears only the most distorted connection to the reality it describes are added to the mystery of the Ghost's appearance and its unyielding silence.

By the second half of Scene 2, Hamlet is almost suicidal with despair, the world to him is no more than a rank, unweeded garden, and he cannot rid himself of the thought of the "incestuous sheets" to which his mother has fled upon the death of her husband. The contrast between the king that was and the usurper who has displaced him on the throne and in his mother's bed fills Hamlet with disgust:

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[64]*Hamlet,* I.ii.92-97.

[65]*Hamlet,* I.ii.114-116.

[66]*Hamlet,* I.ii.118-119.

[67]*Hamlet,* I.ii.120.

So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr . . ..[68]

Furthermore, his mind is possessed by the image of his father, and he leaps eagerly to Horatio's story of the Ghost who has walked the guard platform for the past three nights. Arranging to join the watch that night, he urges himself to patience in the meantime, "'Til then sit still my soul."[69] The scene ends with an ominous restatement of the priority of the visual:

Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.[70]

Scene 3 represents an apparent change of subject. We leave Hamlet counseling himself to patience only to encounter Laertes giving his sister Ophelia some last minute advice before he embarks for France. In the light of a text marked by displacement, this very shift away from the central narrative should alert us to the possibility that this scene is crucial to an understanding of the play, and, in fact, I believe that we can read it forward to the scenes that follow it and backward to the scenes that precede it in such a way that it provides a main connection in the buried text that lies disjointed at the manifest level.

We learn in Scene 3, in the conversation between Laertes and Ophelia, that Hamlet has been courting her, and Laertes warns that she must fear the danger of his attentions. The "trifling of his favor" is merely a "fashion and a toy in blood, /A violet in the youth of primy nature,/Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting."[71]

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[68]*Hamlet,* I.ii.139-140.

[69]*Hamlet,* I.ii.255.

[70]*Hamlet,* I.ii.255-256.

[71]*Hamlet,* I.iii.5-9.

As the future king, Hamlet may not "carve for himself"; instead his choice of wife will be circumscribed by the demands of state. Ophelia is warned:

> Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain
> If with too credent ear you list his songs,
> Or your chaste treasure open
> To his unmastered importunity.[72]

Laertes insists that "virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes"[73] and, in a series of astonishing metaphors, tells his sister of the danger she is in. Merely to "unmask her beauty to the moon"[74] is to be too prodigal. Her innocence and youth are no protection, but rather invitations to corruption:

> The canker galls the infants of the spring
> Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd,
> And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
> Contagious blastments are most imminent.[75]

Agreeing to keep this lesson "as watchman to my heart," Ophelia urges her brother,

> Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
> Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
> Whiles, [like] a puff'd and reckless libertine,
> Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads . . ..[76]

Ophelia's father enters the scene, and, after urging Laertes to hurry aboard the ship that is even now waiting for him, Polonius offers his son a "few precepts" which are notable, not only for their length, but also for the fact that among the platitudes he advances are two which we have been given every reason to question. "Give every man

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[72]*Hamlet,* I.iii.29-32.

[73]*Hamlet,* I.iii.38.

[74]*Hamlet,* I.iii.37.

[75]*Hamlet,* I.iii.39-42.

[76]*Hamlet,* I.iii.47.50.

thy ear," says Polonius, and "costly thy habit as thy purse can buy . . . /For the apparel oft proclaims the man."[77] Polonius' advice, however, is not only for his son; upon Laertes' leave-taking, the old man turns to his daughter, seconding the warnings her brother has just delivered

> I must tell you
> You do not understand yourself so clearly
> As it behooves my daughter and your honor.[78]

Ophelia's belief in Hamlet's protestations of love brand her, in Polonius' eyes, a "green girl, /Unsifted in such perilous circumstance." Should Hamlet's "tenders" be taken for "true pay," she is liable to "tender [Polonius] a fool."[79] Hamlet's vows are "springes to catch woodcocks," "blazes . . . giving more light than heat" which must not be taken for fire.[80] Polonius drives his point home:

> In few, Ophelia,
> Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers,
> Not of that dye which their investments show,
> But mere [implorators] of unholy suits,
> Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds,
> The better to beguile.[81]

I read a fascinating series of correspondences between this scene and the scenes in which the Ghost appears. Ophelia is warned by Laertes of the danger should she her "chaste treasure open"; Horatio asks of the Ghost if it walks because it has "extorted treasure in the womb of earth." Laertes warns Ophelia she must not "unmask her beauty

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[77]*Hamlet,* I.iii.67-72.

[78]*Hamlet,* I.iii.95-97.

[79]*Hamlet,* I.iii.99-109.

[80]*Hamlet,* I.iii.115-120.

[81]*Hamlet,* I.iii.126-131.

to the moon"; Hamlet asks the Ghost why it "revisits thus the glimpses of the moon."[82] Ophelia urges her brother not to show her "the steep and thorny way to heaven," while he himself the "primrose path of dalliance treads"; the Ghost complains that he was "[c]ut off even in the blossoms of my sin," while, as for Gertrude, he tells Hamlet, "Leave her to heaven, /And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge /To prick and sting her."[83] The Ghost exits Scene 1 just as "the morn in russet mantle clad /Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill";[84] Ophelia is warned, "And in the morn and liquid dew of youth, /Contagious blastments are most imminent." The Ghost takes his first leave from Hamlet as "[t]he glow worm shows the matin to be near, /And gins to pale his ineffectual fire."[85] Polonius cautions Ophelia, "These blazes, daughter, /Giving more light than heat, extinct in both /Even in their promise as it is a-making, /You must not take for fire."[86] The Ghost protests:

> O Hamlet, what a falling off was there
> From me, whose love was of that dignity
> That it went hand in hand even with the vow
> I made to her in marriage . . ..[87]

Ophelia is told by her father: "Do not believe his vows."[88]

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[82]*Hamlet,* I.v.53.

[83]*Hamlet*, I.v.86-88.

[84]*Hamlet,* I.i.166-67.

[85]*Hamlet,* I.v.89-90.

[86]*Hamlet,* I.iii.117-120.

[87]*Hamlet,* I.v.46-50.

[88]*Hamlet,* I.iii.127.

But we may go further. Let us look at Hamlet's speech which begins Scene 4. While it ostensibly refers to the Danes' custom of drunken revelry, it also introduces the appearance of the Ghost to his son:

> So oft it chances in particular men
> That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
> As in their birth wherein they are not guilty
> (Since nature cannot choose his origin),
> By their o'ergrowth of some complexion
> Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
> Or by some habit, that too much o'er leavens
> The form of plausive manners–that these men,
> Carrying I say, the stamp of one defect,
> Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,
> His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
> As infinite as man may undergo,
> Shall in the general censure take corruption
> From that particular fault; the dram of [ev'l]
> Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
> To his own scandal.[89]

I find the most interesting thing about this speech is its relation to Laertes' lines beginning, "Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes."[90] The gist of Laertes' warning, as we have seen, is that Ophelia's innocence and youth are no protection from corruption ("The canker galls the infants of the spring, /Too oft before their buttons be disclosed"), and that her honor is much more fragile than she has realized. Hamlet's meditation asserts that one may be infinite in virtue, as "pure as grace", and yet undone by "some vicious mole of nature" which brings corruption to the whole. Can we connect these lines to Ophelia in such a way as to explain her particular vulnerability to the "calumnious strokes" which Laertes so fears? To do so would be to find the "vicious mole of nature" which threatens her purity.

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[89]*Hamlet,* I.iv.24-38.

[90]*Hamlet,* I.iii.38.

David Willbern has pointed out the connection between this "mole of nature" and Hamlet's reference at I.v.162 to the Ghost as an "old mole."[91] To join the idea of some innate corruption to Ophelia by way of the "vicious mole of nature" would be to connect her to the dead king. If such a tenuous connection holds, we can begin to fit together the first puzzle pieces of the fantasy that makes sense of this broken world. The "crowing cock" has resulted in the birth of a child[92] who cannot be acknowledged by the king who is her father. She is accepted by Polonius as his own (in return, perhaps, for political advancement). Hamlet's subsequent courtship of her, of course, becomes a cause for alarm--so much alarm that Laertes is moved to his extravagant metaphors, and Polonius forbids her to see Hamlet at all. The extraordinary correspondences between the language of their warning and the language of the scenes in which the Ghost appears lead us to read the *feared repetition of a seduction*. Polonius has *already* been "tendered a fool." And Ophelia is the Rose of May,[93] the cankered infant of spring, the very blossom of the king's sin.

We may read Scenes 4 and 5 to the same conclusion. The Ghost's entrance in Scene 4 is marked by a renewal of emphasis on the visual. Horatio's exclamation, "Look, my Lord, it comes!"[94] is followed shortly by Hamlet's insistent, "Thou com'st in such a questionable shape /That I will speak with thee."[95] Following its resolute silence, the

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[91]David Willbern, Meeting of the Renaissance Studies Group, University of Massachusetts, (Amherst, MA, 1986).

[92]See also Polonious to Ophelia at 1.iii.104. ". . . think yourself a baby . . ."

[93]*Hamlet,* IV.v.58.

[94]*Hamlet,* I.iv.38.

[95]*Hamlet,* I.v.43-44.

Ghost's first words to Hamlet is Scene 5 are "Mark me"[96] (and I would argue that these words are meant to signify more than a command for Hamlet to pay attention to what is about to be said. They are an echo of Barnardo's question in Scene 1: "Looks 'a not like the King? Mark it, Horatio.")[97] Hamlet tells Horatio, "Touching this vision here, /It is an honest Ghost."[98] The witnesses are sworn to "Never make known what you have seen tonight."[99]

Combined with the Ghost's confession of his "foul crimes done in my days of nature,"[100] his thrice-repeated command "Mark me" becomes an insistence that Hamlet see a resemblance, a resemblance that leads to Hamlet's despairing cry at line 93, "And shall I couple hell?" *I think that the point of this insistence upon what the Ghost looks like is that the Ghost looks like Ophelia.*[101]

The above reading has the advantage of making sense of Hamlet's encounter with Ophelia in Act II, Scene 1, the scene which directly follows Hamlet's encounter with the

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[96]*Hamlet,* I.v.2.

[97]*Hamlet,* I.i.48.

[98]*Hamlet,* I.v.37-38.

[99]*Hamlet,* I.v.145.

[100]*Hamlet,* I.v.145.

[101]Compare to *Hamlet,* III.iii.57-64 where Claudius muses:

> In the corrupted currents of this world
> Offense's gilded hand my [shove] by justice,
> And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
> Buys out the law, but 'tis not so above:
> There is no shuffling, there the action lies
> In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd
> Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
> To give in evidence.

Ghost.[102] Ophelia reports to her father that as she sat sewing in her closet, Hamlet appeared before her,

> . . . with his doublet all unbraced,
> No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
> Ungart'red, and down gyved to his ankle,
> And with a look so piteous in purport
> As if he had been loosed out of hell
> To speak of horrors . . ..[103]

But Hamlet does not speak. He had come to *see*, and Ophelia's next words confirm this:

> He took me by the wrist, and held me hard,
> Then goes he to the length of all his arm
> And with his other hand thus o'er his brow
> He falls to such perusal of my face
> As 'a would draw it. Long stay'd he so.
> And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
> He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
> As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
> And end his being.[104]

Hamlet's searching of Ophelia's face, and its thrice-repeated confirmation,[105] removes whatever doubt he has regarding her relationship to the dead king: however, if Ophelia is indeed the daughter of the king, then the appearance of the Ghost constitutes a very complicated message. Hamlet's misgivings regarding his mother's hasty marriage are deepened to horror by the Ghost's account of the murder in the orchard and the queen's

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[102]Although the time lapse is generally thought to have been too great for Hamlet to have gone directly from his encounter with the Ghost to his encounter with Ophelia, this may simply be another instance of the well known problem of the elasticity of time within this play.

[103]*Hamlet,* II.i.75-82.

[104]*Hamlet,* II.i.84-93.

[105]Significantly, the triple repetition "Mark me" is echoed here by Hamlet's three nods of confirmation.

adultery that preceded it.[106] However, Hamlet also learns that he himself is courting incest in his pursuit of Ophelia. Thus, not only has the "Hyperion" whom Hamlet had pictured as his idealized father been revealed as part satyr, his corruption has spread to and contaminated his son. From this scene on, Hamlet will not be able to contemplate the "incestuous sheets" which had filled him with such loathing and disgust before the Ghost's appearance without feeling that same loathing and disgust toward himself and toward Ophelia.[107]

Thus, the Ghost's command to vengeance is also a sentence of guilt, and the confusion of the Ghost's account of the events preceding his death illustrates perfectly the confusion into which Hamlet must be plunged upon hearing it. The Ghost ostensibly appears to tell the story of his murder, but he instead begins with a recitation of the "foul crimes" for which he has been "Doomed for a certain term to walk the night."[108] His condemnation of Claudius

> . . . that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
> With witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts--
> O wicked wit and gifts that have the power
> So to seduce!--won to his shameful lust
> The will of my most seeming virtuous queen[109]

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[106]*Hamlet,* I.v.42. See " . . that incestuous, that adulterate beast . . .."

[107]Such feelings of loathing and disgust will, of course, be intensified if Hamlet and Ophelia have already consummated their relationship. Salvador de Madariaga, *On Hamlet*, Second Edition (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1964) argues that this is so, and points to the rumors that have so alarmed Laertes and Polonius. As far as I can see, there is nothing in the play that would allow us to determine this for certain, but it remains an ominous possibility. I should note that I do not agree with de Madariaga's analysis of Hamlet's character.

[108]*Hamlet,* I.v.10.

[109]*Hamlet,* I.v.41-43.

gives way to a reflection that appears more confession than accusation:

> But virtue, as it never will be moved,
> Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
> So [lust]], though to a radiant angel link'd,
> Will [sate] itself in a celestial bed
> And prey on garbage.[110]

In this passage he surely cannot be referring to himself as the "radiant angel." He is, after all, loosed only temporarily from purgatory to deliver his dread message, as we are reminded in the next line, "But soft, methinks I scent the morning air, /Brief let me be." The radiant angel can only be Gertrude whose "celestial bed" King Hamlet himself left to "prey on garbage."

Similarly, the "O, horrible, O, horrible, most horrible!"[111] which refers to the king's death in an unschriven state points not only to his murder, but also to his sins. Even the injunction,

> Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
> Against thy mother aught, leave her to heaven
> And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
> To prick and sting her[112]

is ambiguous. The "thorns" in Gertrude's bosom could be the pricking of her own conscience or they could be the pain and sorrow attendant on the "blossoms" of the dead king's sin. Given the second alternative, it might well be the Ghost's recognition of his own guilt which moves him to protect the queen whose betrayal of him followed his betrayal of her.

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[110]*Hamlet,* I.v.53-57.

[111]*Hamlet,* I.v.80.

[112]*Hamlet,* I.v.85-88.

For the critic who enters into this fantasy, it is an overwhelming confusion of vengeance, love and guilt which plays itself out through the characters, imagery, and structure of this tragedy. Hamlet, like the child in a schizophrenogenic home, lives in a world in which language is divorced from reality; and those around him treat the truth made manifest by Ophelia's very presence with massive denial. One of the most striking results of this denial is that many of the actions within the play seem groundless because they are undertaken from motives which cannot be acknowledged. A second result is the *excess* noted by T.S. Eliot. Not only Hamlet, but the other characters as well, bring an otherwise unexplained excess of emotion to the action of the play. Hamlet's description of the relationship between his parents, for example, seems almost grotesque in its exaggeration. Hamlet remembers his father as

> . . .so loving to my mother
> That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
> Visit her face too roughly . . .
> Why, she would hang on him
> As if increase of appetite had grown
> By what it fed on . . ..[113]

We see here not the reality of a secure marriage, but rather an idealization which arises from denial and parodies the first flush of love. It is not difficult to imagine why Gertrude moves so easily from mourning to the wedding bed, but when Hamlet confronts her with the monstrous nature of her action in exchanging one brother for another, the family ideology prevents him from considering her real motive:

> Look you now what follows:
> Here is your husband, like a mildewed ear,
> Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
> Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
> And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?

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[113]*Hamlet,* I.ii.139-144.

You cannot call it love, for at your age
The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment, and what judgment
Would step from this to this? Sense sure you have,
Else could you not have motion, but sure that sense
Is apoplex'd, for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserv'd some quantity of choice
To serve in such a difference.[114]

Surely, the wife who finds herself betrayed may cling to the appearance of a happy marriage, but it is not love or even lust but *revenge* that prompts her to demonstrate how easily her husband may be replaced. And, in this case, the proclamation of equivalence between the brothers who are outwardly so different is an indication of the pain and anger she cannot openly admit.

Polonius is in the uneasy position of one who has made himself indispensable by rendering a service that everyone involved would prefer to forget. In his description of Hamlet's love for Ophelia, he insists he has done all in his power to prevent this impossible match. To Claudius' question, "But how has she /Received his love?"[115] Polonius can only repeat insistently, "What do you think of me?"[116] "What might you, or my dear Majesty your Queen here, think . . .?"[117] "What might you think?"[118] The

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[114]*Hamlet,* III.iv.63-76.

[115]*Hamlet,* II.ii.129.

[116]*Hamlet*, II.ii.30.

[117]*Hamlet,* II.ii.134-135.

[118]*Hamlet,* II.ii.139.

queen's refusal to understand his misgivings finally prompts Polonius' to report flatly his charge to his daughter: "Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy star; /This must not be."[119]

While Gertrude refuses to acknowledge their guilty secret, Hamlet by now is insisting that Polonius not forget it. He encounters the old man and after accusing him of being a "fishmonger" (i.e., a pander), suggests that were Polonius honest he would be a man "picked out of ten thousand." But, for Hamlet, this is not a subject for raillery, and his attack soon grows more savage:

> For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog,
> being a good kissing carrion--Have you a daughter?[120]
>
> Let her not walk I' th' sun. Conception is a
> blessing, but as your daughter may conceive, friend,
> look to't.[121]

We are reminded of the dead king--Hyperion, God of Day--and the "dead dog" can only be Ophelia's mother. From this disgusting union, Hamlet envisions "maggots" and we recall the "cankered rose" that is Ophelia. But the "sun" is also the "son" and the second two lines therefore constitute a warning that plays ambiguously with Polonius's fears. Ophelia "loosed" may be at risk, not only from Hamlet's sexual advances but also from his revelation of her true parentage.

The scorn and abuse Hamlet heaps upon Polonius throughout the play has posed an interpretive challenge, yet it makes perfect sense if we consider Polonius to be part of a conspiracy whose corrupting influence has reached out to engulf Hamlet himself. The issue of Polonius and his daughter is a recurring theme. "You do not understand yourself

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[119]*Hamlet,* II.ii.141-42.

[120]*Hamlet,* II.ii.181-82.

[121]*Hamlet,* II.ii.184-85.

so clearly /As it behooves my daughter and your honor,"[122] he warns Ophelia as he forbids her relationship with Hamlet. And confronting the king and queen with his suspicion that Hamlet's love for Ophelia is the main cause of his madness, he begins coyly, "I have a daughter--have while she is mine . . .."[123] "Have you a daughter?" Hamlet taunts Polonius as they meet in the lobby. And when Polonius comes to announce the arrival of the actors, Hamlet resumes the game of cat-and-mouse:

> Ham. O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!
>
> Pol. What a treasure had he, my lord?
>
> Ham. Why--
> "One fair daughter, and no more,
> The which he loved passing well."
>
> Pol. [Aside] Still on my daughter.
>
> Ham. Am I not I' th' right, old Jephthah?
>
> Pol. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.
>
> Ham. Nay, that follows not.

In these lines, the daughter as "treasure" echoes the king's "treasure extorted from the womb of earth" and the story of Jephthah is that of a daughter sacrificed to the welfare of the state. Again, in the loaded bantering before the dumb show, Polonius admits that he himself acted once while at the university: "I did enact Julius Caesar. I was kill'd I' th' Capitol; Brutus kill'd me." Hamlet's punning reply expresses the grossest contempt: "It

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[122]*Hamlet,* I,iii.96-97.

[123]*Hamlet,* II.ii.106.

was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there."[124] Polonius is the "calf", sexually immature, contrasted to the potency of Bull Jove,[125] the god in his manifestation of ravager of Europa. And, significantly, we will be told of King Hamlet, "See what a grace was seated on this brow: /Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself . . .."[126]

This interpretation also helps to make sense of Hamlet's changed relationship to Ophelia, the girl he has courted "in honorable fashion" offering "almost all the holy vows of heaven."[127] From the moment of the encounter with his father's Ghost, Hamlet is torn by contradictions which defy integration. His father's accusations against Gertrude and Claudius, his confession of his own sins, his charge to his son--

> Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
> A couch for luxury and damned incest [128]

--followed by his injunction "Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive/Against thy mother aught"[129] leave Hamlet in a state of bewilderment and apprehension that he, too, has been warned against incest, a fear that will be echoed in the gossip about the child actors. When Rosencrantz tells Hamlet about the group of child actors that have taken

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[124]*Hamlet,* III.ii.98-106.

[125]See Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Literary & Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary,* revised edition (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1969), 73. Patridge quotes the following lines from *Much Ado About Nothing*: "Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low, /And some strange bull leapt your father's cow, /And got a calf in that same noble feat /Much like to you, for you have just his bleat" (V.iv.48-51).

[126]*Hamlet,* III.iv.56.

[127]*Hamlet,* I.iii.114.

[128]*Hamlet*, I.v.82-83.

[129]*Hamlet,* I. v. 85-86.

London by storm, " . . . an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapp'd for't." [130] Hamlet asks:

> What, are they children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escoted?
> Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing?
> Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves
> to common players (as it is [most like], if their means are
> [no] better), their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim
> against their own succession?[131]

Hamlet's perusal of Ophelia's face in II.i.84-93 has confirmed his own implication in the incest which festers in Denmark, and each subsequent encounter with her only intensifies the mixture of grief and disgust which has corrupted the purity of his former love. His ability to act is paralyzed, not only by the Oedipal prohibitions which Jones has so convincingly demonstrated, but also by the fact that his attempt to free himself from the Oedipal tangle by finding a love of his own is thwarted by the disastrous results of his father's philandering. His love for Ophelia is forbidden by the same prohibition against incest as is his love for his mother. To punish Claudius for the same crime with which he accuses himself would put him in the position of the child actors whose writers do them wrong "to make them exclaim against their own succession."

Hamlet's encounters with Ophelia, which, like his contempt for Polonius, have been so difficult to interpret, can also be understood in the light of the moral and emotional confusion of one who learns he has been courting a sibling. In the meeting where Polonius "looses" his daughter to Hamlet's attentions while he and the king spy from behind the arras,[132] Hamlet's first words are, "But soft you now,/The fair Ophelia.

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[130] *Hamlet,* II.ii.339-41.

[131] *Hamlet* II.ii.345-51

[132] *Hamlet,* II.ii.163-64.

Nymph, in thy orisons/Be all my sins remembered."[133] They echo the king's plea to "Remember me," and give voice to a contradictory desire. Surely, the "sins" he asks her to remember are the moments of love they once shared--moments of ecstasy which have been transformed into sins by the sins of his father and which now, ironically, can be remembered only as confession. When she attempts to return the tokens of love he has given her, he refuses them, saying it was not he who gave them to her, "I never gave you aught."[134] Like the fragmented world of Denmark, Hamlet's self is fragmented as well: the lover he was has been replaced by the brother he is. "I did love you once," he admits, but when she replies, "Indeed my lord, you made me believe so," he is quick to deny their right to intimacy, "You should not have believ'd me, for virtue cannot so [inoculate] our old stock but we shall relish of it. I lov'd you not."[135]

This metaphor is part of an interesting set of images which runs throughout the play connecting the Ghost of the dead king, Ophelia, and Hamlet in a way that hints at their true relationship. In the lines above, Hamlet tells Ophelia "for virtue cannot [inoculate] our old stock but we shall relish of it." This calls to mind the description by the Ghost of the way the poison poured into his ear affected his body, curdling the blood, "like eager droppings into milk,"

> And a most instant tetter bark'd about
> And lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust
> All my smooth body.[136]

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[133]*Hamlet,* III.i.87-89.

[134]*Hamlet*, III.i.95.

[135]*Hamlet,* III.i.114-18.

[136]*Hamlet*, I.v.65-73.

This image of the king's body, tree-like, "bark'd about" with corruption ties neatly to Hamlet's bitter comment to his sister that virtue cannot be grafted on to the old stock of viciousness from which they both spring. And Hamlet, "the rose of the fair state" now "blasted with ecstasy" echoes the description of Ophelia as "The Rose of May," the cankered infant of spring. Claudius speaks to Hamlet of the dead king, "Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death/The memory be green . . ."[137] while Polonious warns Ophelia, "You speak like a green girl."[138] Similarly, Laertes' description of Hamlet as "a violet in the youth of primy nature"[139] will be echoed in his speech over Ophelia's grave:

> Lay her I' th' earth,
> And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
> May violets spring![140]

In a similar way, Ophelia's language of distress after the death of Polonius at Hamlet's hand takes a strange form in which the question of her parentage is a subtle undercurrent. When Gertrude refuses to meet with Ophelia who has been locked away, she is informed that Ophelia,

> . . . speaks much of her father, says she hears
> There's tricks I' th' world, and hems, and beats her heart,
> Spurns enviously at straws, speaks things in doubt
> That carry but half sense.[141]

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[137]*Hamlet,* I.ii.1-2.

[138]*Hamlet*, I.iii.101.

[139]*Hamlet*, I.iii.7

[140]*Hamlet,* V.i.238-40.

[141]*Hamlet*, III.v.3-13.

Horatio warns the queen, "'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew, /Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds."[142] When Ophelia is finally admitted into Gertrude's presence, playing a lute, we begin to suspect that *she* has sounded the heart of Hamlet's mystery in a way that Rosencrantz could not.[143] Her question to the queen goes to the quick of the matter, "How should I your true-love know from another one?"[144] How is one to *make a difference*, (i.e., to differentiate) among the characters who make up the cast of the play given the many roles that each character has assumed in the construction of this false world. Not only Hamlet in his "antic madness," but each of the others plays a double game in which their true selves hide behind a public facade and corruption is inextricably mixed with the visage of piety. The Ghost asks for holy vengeance but comes from hell. Polonius confesses, "We are oft to blame in this--'Tis too much prov'd–that with devotion's visage and pious action we do sugar o'er the devil himself"[145] to which Claudius quietly concurs:

O, 'tis too true.
How smart a lash that speech does give my conscience!

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[142]*Hamlet,* IV.v.14-15.

[143]*Hamlet,* III.ii.349-72. When Guildenstern attempts to pry into the cause of Hamlet's distemper, Hamlet asks him to play upon a recorder. Guildenstern admits he cannot play the instrument, and Hamlet asks angrily:

> Why look you now how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest note to [the top of] my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. "Sblood, do you think I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, [yet} you cannot play upon me.

[144]*Hamlet,* I.ii.v.23-24.

[145]*Hamlet,* III. i.45-48.

> The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
> Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
> Than is my deed to my most painted word.[146]

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come in the guise of friends, but play the part of spies and willing accomplices to murder. When forced by Hamlet to confront her perfidy, Gertrude confesses, "Thou turns [my eyes into my very] soul,/And there I see such black and grained spots/As will [not] leave their tinct."[147] Hamlet himself, in his earlier encounter with Ophelia, has warned:

> I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse
> me of such things that it were better my mother
> had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious,
> with more offenses at my beck than I have thoughts to put
> them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them
> in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth
> and heaven? We are arrant knaves, believe none of us.[148]

In this world of lies and duplicity, there is no common meeting place for individual subjectivities, no way to build a world of shared reality and values which preserves one's own separate identity. The only commonality available is to merge oneself into another's fantasy or the prevailing "family fiction," and by doing so to lose both one's self and one's own contribution to the construction of a shared reality. To *make a difference* where others have refused to do so is simply to put oneself outside the pale of human community, to be "crazy."

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[146]*Hamlet*, III.i.49-52.

[147]*Hamlet,* III.iv. 89-91.

[148]*Hamlet,* III.i.120-29. I would argue that the sins which weigh so heavily on Hamlet's imagination are his fear of repeating a seduction in the manner of his father and incest in the manner of his mother. His entanglement in this perfidious world rings in the line, "Believe none of us." And the arrant knave wandering between heaven and earth serves to connect Hamlet to the split image of his father as both Hyperion and a demon from hell.

Ophelia then sings of Polonius' death and burial, done "hugger-mugger" in a way totally inappropriate to his status at court. But her lament sounds a telling note as she muses "the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be."[149] With these words, we are reminded of Polonius' earlier warning, "You do not understand yourself so clearly as it behooves my daughter and your honor." Not only is the identity of everyone else in question, there is no way in such a false world to establish one's own identity. Ophelia's next lines describing the maid who entered the young man's chamber and lost her maidenhood forever echo the lines in the opening scenes about the crowing cock, the rising sun, and the illegitimate birth which followed:

> "Young men will do 't if they come to't,
> By Cock, they are to blame.
> "Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,
> You promised me to wed.'"[150]
>
> (He answers.)
> "So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun,
> And thou hadst not come to my bed."[151]

Ophelia's growing understanding of who she is leads her inexorably into the madness which is her final undoing. In her next appearance she interrupts a confrontation among Gertrude, Claudius, and her brother Laertes who has just rushed back to Denmark bent on vengeance upon hearing of his father's death. After another lament over a funeral which could be that of King Hamlet or of Polonius, she urges:

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[149]*Hamlet,* IV.v.42-44.

[150]*Hamlet,* IV.v.60-61.

[151]*Hamlet,* IV.v.65-66.

You must sing, "A-down, a-down," and you
call him a-down-a. O how the wheel becomes it! It is
the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.[152]

Laertes' response, "This nothing's more than matter"[153] is precisely true, for the false steward *has* stolen his master's daughter. Ophelia's reference to the wheel resonates with that of Guildenstern who explains the reason that protection must be accorded to kingship:

The cess of majesty
Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw
What's near with it. Or it is a massy wheel
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount
To whose [huge] spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortis'd and adjoin'd, which when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boist'rous [ruin]. [154]

The fall of the great wheel of kingship has indeed brought about general ruin, and the king's unacknowledged daughter is one of the "ten thousand lesser things" that have been destroyed in Denmark.

Ophelia continues in the "language of flowers" to state the truth as she now sees it: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance;/pray you, love, remember. And there's pansies, that's for thoughts."[155] We are reminded of the Ghost's command, "Remember me" and Hamlet's plea, "Nymph, in thy orizons, be all my sins rememb'red." Laertes' response, "A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted"[156] aptly describes

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[152]*Hamlet*, IV.v.171-73.

[153]*Hamlet,* III.iii.174.

[154]*Hamlet,* III.iii.15-22.

[155]*Hamlet,* IV.v.175-77.

[156]*Hamlet,* III.iii.178-79.

the situation. In Denmark, to remember and to think is to be mad. There is no potential space, no place where subjectivities may meet and enrich one another, for every memory and thought are met with forgetfulness and the refusal to face a common reality.

Turning to Claudius, she adds, "There's fennel for you, and columbines"[157] symbolizing respectively flattery and ingratitude; and to Gertrude, she offers, "There's rue for you, and/ here's some for me; we may call it herb of grace/ a' Sundays. You may wear your rue with a difference./There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they wither'd all when my father died."[158]

The rue, symbol of sorrow and repentance, Ophelia divides between herself and Gertrude, to be worn by both, but Gertrude's may wear hers "with a difference." The tangled ruin which is the result of King Hamlet's unfaithfulness has given them different reasons for sorrow and repentance--Ophelia has now lost two fathers and her lover while Gertrude has enforced the family secrets to her own downfall. But, as the editor of the *Riverside Shakespeare* points out, *difference* is also a term from heraldry meaning "a variation in a coat of arms made to distinguish different members of a family."[159] Ophelia thus makes a point of her own unacknowledged relationship with the family of the dead king and offers a daisy--symbol of dissembling--to the queen. The final bitter line, "I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died," reminds us that the young Hamlet is also a casualty in this disaster. He who was once a "violet in

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[157]*Hamlet,* IV.v.180-81.

[158]*Hamlet,* IV.v.181-86.

[159]*The Riverside Shakespeare,* p. 1174, notes to *Hamlet,* IV.v. 180-84.

the youth of primy nature" has withered with their father's death, and is even now on his way to England and execution.

In Act V, Scene 1 Ophelia meets her own death, and it is in keeping with the imagery that has lead us to associate her with the dead king:

> There is a willow grows askaunt the brook,
> That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream,
> Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
> Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
> That liberal shepherds give a grosser name
> But our cull-cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
> There on the pendant boughs her crownet weeds
> Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
> When down her weedy trophies and herself
> Fell in the weeping brook.[160]

In a figurative attempt to patch together a coherent life history, Ophelia has made a "crownet" which she attempts to hang upon a willow. But, like the dead king, "bark'd about" in corruption, the "vicious stock" from which she sprang, the willow lets her fall. She is refused even this symbolic link to the father who should have supported her; instead, while she is trying to hang her crown upon the tree--to act out what cannot be said--an "envious sliver" breaks, dropping her into the river where she slowly drowns, pulled from "her melodious lay to muddy death."[161] Gertrude, relating the incident, describes the flowers in Ophelia's crown in a series of coarsening images which give expression to her unacknowledged understanding of the significance of Ophelia's act. Wild orchids become "long purples" or "dead men's fingers" which "liberal shepherds give a grosser name." In this semantic slide, Gertrude begins with the purple of royalty and ends in a crude sexual joke, obliquely expressing the anger she cannot consciously

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[160]*Hamlet,* V.i.166-175.

[161]*Hamlet,* V.i.182-83.

admit. G. Blakemore Evans tells us that the meaning of King Claudius' enigmatic epitaph, "This grave shall have a living monument"[162] remains in doubt. I would argue that the living monument will be a tree to take the place of a proper headstone which her "maimed rites"[163]--and her questionable origins--will not allow. This would bring the symbolism full circle and introduce a moment of healing into a play which otherwise offers no such anodyne.

The preceding line of reasoning is but one entrance into the potential space created by this play. Shakespeare invites, in fact, *requires* us to become full participants in the creation of its meaning. It is the play's ability to pull us in, to demand that we re-enact Hamlet's search for the solid ground of an honorable path where none seems to exist, that makes this tragedy the great work of literature it is acknowledged to be. Furthermore, if we are to entertain the fantasy of Ophelia's relationship to Hamlet and the dead king--and I believe the play gives such a fantasy overwhelming support--then we must realize that *Hamlet* is about more than the prohibition against incest. More tellingly, it is about the absence of a communal confirmation of one's own perceptions, without which there can be no ground for meaningful action.

Though Hamlet continuously urges himself to vengeance, it is as though he is mouthing an introjected command that he has not truly assimilated as his own. Time after time we, as readers and theater audience, are lead to question the morality and judgement of those who are able to act with unthinking violence. Fortinbras, whose strength in arms leads him to risk twenty thousand lives for a plot of land not large

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[162]*Hamlet,* V.i.297.

[163]*Hamlet,* V.i.219.

enough to bury those who will die taking it, is hardly an example to emulate, despite Hamlet's attempt to convince himself otherwise.[164] Similarly, Laertes, Polonius' son who rushes home to take revenge upon his father's murderer and is ready to kill indiscriminately even before he knows who is responsible and ready to engage in any treachery to accomplish his goal, surely cannot provide the pattern for what Hamlet *should* have done.

Perhaps the most damning expression of the butchery to which revenge can descend lies in the recital of Aeneas' tale to Dido, which Hamlet requests upon the players' arrival. This is a tale told by another young man who has met his father in the underworld, and, significantly, our sympathies (as well as those of Aeneas and Hamlet) are with the aged Priam who falls under Pyrrhus's devastating blows. In the sheer horror embodied in these lines that Hamlet recites from memory, we see the "rub" which makes revenge so alien to his inclination:

> "The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
> Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
> When he lay couched in th' ominous horse,
> Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
> With Heraldy more dismal; head to foot
> Now in total gules, horridly trick'd
> With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons
> Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,
> That lend a tyrannous and a damned light
> To their lord's murder. Roasted in wrath and fire,
> And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
> With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
> Old grandsire Priam seeks."[165]

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[164] *Hamlet*, III.iv.1-66.

[165] *Hamlet*, II.ii.452-64.

The continuation of the speech, taken up by the player only deepens the horror at the death of the old King:

> "Anon he finds him
> Striking too short at Greeks. His antique sword,
> Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
> Repugnant to command. Unequal match'd,
> Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide,
> But, with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
> Th' unnerved father falls. [Then senseless Illium,]
> Seeming to feel his blow, with flaming top
> Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
> Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear; for lo his sword,
> Which was declining on the milky head
> Of reverent Priam, seem'd I' th' air to stick,
> [And,] like a neutral to his will and matter,
> Did nothing.
>
> But as we often see, against some storm,
> A silence in the heavens, the rack standstill,
> As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
> Doth rend the region; so after Pyrrhus' pause,
> A roused vengeance sets him new a-work,
> And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
> On Mars' armor forg'd for proof eterne
> With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
> Now falls on Priam.
>
> Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods,
> In general synod take away her power!
> Break all the spokes and [fellies] from her wheel
> And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven
> As low as to the fiends!"

While these lines make clear Hamlet's confusion--his identification with the "hellish" Pyrrhus, black with blood, and his simultaneous sympathy for the "reverent" grandsire Priam, there is more at stake here than personal emotion. These lines present a powerful reflection on the nature of revenge--its boundlessness which reaches out to include "fathers, mothers, daughters, sons" and eventually whole kingdoms--and its effect on the avenger. The "hellish" Pyrrhus, drenched in blood, is, in the end, little more than a

toy of fortune and a murderer. One of the great questions introduced in this play is the limit of free action and the extent to which we are simply pawns of fortune. The wheel of fortune is a constant counter to the wheel of kingship. In the "play within the play" we hear this puzzle stated explicitly:

> For 'tis a question left us yet to prove
> Whether love lead fortune or else fortune love.[166]

Or, put another way a few lines later, "Our wills and fates do so contrary run/That our devices still are overthrown,/Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own."[167] Even the supposedly "free" actor cannot anticipate the consequences of his or her actions, and so free choice can only act blindly. The consideration introduced here is that revenge destroys its agent while setting in motion disastrous and unforeseen consequences that it cannot control.

I would argue that instead of being a revenge play which demands an answer to the question of why Hamlet hesitates to do the bidding of his father's Ghost, *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's meditation on the futility of revenge, and the play is not over until he has fully explored the topic within the confines of an intense and convoluted matrix. The only way to fix what's wrong in Denmark is to reconnect language with a shared reality in which each person's "truth" becomes part of a commonly recognized whole. Merely adding to the pile of corpses in an attempt to take control of the narrative cannot be the solution to this play's mystery. Such simple killing is no more than Hamlet himself calls

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[166]*Hamlet,* III.ii.202-03.

[167]*Hamlet,* III.ii.210-12.

it, "mere hire and salary," and not the resolution to the great question of the establishment of justice in a corrupt world.[168]

There is a second set of images that guide the meaning of the play. *Hamlet* is alive with references to birds. There is, of course, the crowing of the cock which signals the original catastrophe. Hamlet is recalled from his meeting with the Ghost of his father by Marcellus' bird call which he mockingly returns.[169] Polonius tells Ophelia that Hamlet's holy vows of love are "mere springes to catch woodcocks,"[170] and later reports to the king and queen:

> . . . . . But what might you think,
> When I had seen this hot love on the wing--
> As I perceived it (I must tell you that)
> Before my daughter told me--What might you
> Or my dear Majesty your queen here, think,
> If I had play'd the desk or table-book,
> Or given my heart a [winking,] mute and dumb
> Or look'd upon this love with idle sight,
> What might you think?[171]

Hamlet wryly tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that he will save them from their dilemma of either lying or betraying their mission from the king and queen, "I will tell you why, so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the King

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[168]See Erik H. Erikson, "Youth: Fidelity and Diversity," *Daedalus,* XCI (1962), 5-27, as paraphrased by Norman N. Holland: "He [Hamlet] becomes, for example, the furious avenger his better ethical sense would not tolerate. He endorses a bellicose Fortinbras utterly alien to his own complex, rich self, and the true adolescent, searching for fidelity, dies. The rites of war that are to speak for him are false and inadequate. 'Thus do inner reality and historical actuality conspire to deny tragic man the positive identity for which he seems exquisitely chosen'"(*Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare,* 175).

[169]*Hamlet,* I.v.115-16.

[170]*Hamlet,* I.iii.115.

[171]*Hamlet,* II.ii.134-39.

and Queen moult no feather."[172] He calls the child actors who exclaim against the adult players, "an aery of children, little eyases,"[173] and he warns Guildenstern, "I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a hand-saw."[174]

Later, when talking to the players, Hamlet asks for Aeneas' speech to Dido: "We'll e'en to't like [French] falc'ners–fly at any thing we see;"[175] and, after the gory, ambiguous tale, he berates himself with words which do not adequately reflect the confusion of emotion that assails him:

> But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall
> To make oppression bitter, or ere this
> I should 'a' fatted all the region kites
> With this slave's offal.[176]

Claudius says of Hamlet, "There's something in his soul/O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,/And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose/Will be some danger . . .."[177] Hamlet confirms Claudius' fears with yet another bird image when Claudius asks before the play within the play, "How fares our cousin Hamlet?"[178] The prince's reply contains a subtle threat:

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[172]*Hamlet,* II.ii.293-95.

[173]*Hamlet,* II.ii.339.

[174]*Hamlet,* II.ii.378-79. As the Riverside editor tells us in note 379, both hawk and hand-saw refer to birds if you accept *handsaw* as a play on *hernshaw*, a kind of heron preyed upon by hawks.

[175]*Hamlet,* II.ii.429-30.

[176]*Hamlet,* II.ii.477-80.

[177]*Hamlet,* III.i.164-67.

[178]*Hamlet,* III.ii.93.

> Excellent, I' faith, of the chameleon's dish:
> I eat the air, promise-cramm'd–you cannot feed capons so.[179]

Though the king may treat him as a harmless sexual neuter, fattened to be devoured, Hamlet warns him that he does so at some peril. Later he will urge the players to begin the play within the play with yet another reference to birds:

> Begin,
> murtherer, leave thy damnable faces and begin. Come,
> the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.[180]

Only minutes after the play, Hamlet is calling Claudius a "'very, very'--pajock"[181] and Claudius, too, compares himself to a trapped bird when he prays: "O limed soul, that struggling to be free/Art more engag'd!"[182]

In each case, the bird imagery implies threat, entrapment, manipulation, or the refusal to be threatened, trapped, or manipulated. It is as though there is a "private language" which signals what is never straight-forwardly spoken. This imagery culminates in the scene when Hamlet confronts his mother in her bedroom after the play. "What shall I do she asks?"[183] His sarcastic answer pulls together all of the bird imagery and demonstrates she is more than an innocent victim in this diseased scenario:

> Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
> Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed,
> Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,

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[179]*Hamlet,* III.ii.94-95.

[180]*Hamlet,* III.ii.252-54.

[181]*Hamlet,* III.ii.284. See Evans in note 284, "The natural history of the time attributed many vicious qualities to the peacock."

[182]*Hamlet* III.ii.68-69. See note 68, "limed: caught (as in birdlime, a sticky substance used for catching birds.)"

[183]*Hamlet,* III.iv.180.

> And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
> Make you to ravel all this matter out,
> That I essentially am not in madness,
> But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know,
> For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
> Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
> Such dear concernings hide? Who would do so?
> No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
> Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
> Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,
> To try conclusion in the basket creep,
> And break your own neck down.[184]

This dense passage pulls together a number of themes which help to reinforce Gertrude's role in the behind-the-scenes manipulation of the play's action, and her stranglehold on the family secrets which have so disastrously unraveled. She has destroyed not only the "birds" she attempts to control, but, as the plot plays out, she will indeed, like the "famous ape," "break her own neck down."

Furthermore, the comparison of Gertrude to an ape corresponds to Hamlet's reference to Claudius as an ape who keeps his servile courtiers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in his jaw to be "first mouthed . . . last swallowed."[185] Gertrude is the "imperial jointress" who holds the rotten world of Denmark together.[186] She is tied to the former King Hamlet, the present King Claudius, and the meddlesome advisor Polonius, in a series of animal images which compare them variously to moles, rats, bats, toads, and apes; and she controls the birds who are helpless, trapped, and manipulated. As the

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[184]*Hamlet,* III.iv.181-96.

[185]*Hamlet,* IV.ii.14-19.

[186]When bidding his mother farewell as he is about to embark for England, Hamlet is chided by Claudius for not including his "loving father." Hamlet's response upsets the accepted hierarchy and shows that he knows where ultimate power lies: "My mother: father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh,--so, my mother." *Hamlet,* III.iii.49-53.

enforcer of the family ideology, she is also at the heart of the breakdown of the connection between language and reality--a breakdown vividly portrayed by the young "chough"[187] Osric, who invites Hamlet to the duel with Laertes, in such tortured, convoluted language that the linguistic posturing can barely be deciphered.

If we were to think of the play in terms of Freud's dream theory, it would be in Gertrude that we come to the "navel" of the play, analogous to the place in the dream which Freud describes as follows:

> There is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure; this is because we become aware during the work of interpretation that at that point there is a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unraveled . . .. This is the dream's navel, the spot dream-thoughts to which we are led by interpretation cannot, from the nature of things, have any definite endings; they are bound to branch out in every direction into the intricate network of our world of thought. It is at some point where this meshwork is particularly close that the dream-wish grows up, like a mushroom out of its mycelium.[188]

Freud's language is uncannily apt. In all of this play's images of rotting vegetation (which Holland has so carefully documented), it is fitting that we find a central place where a fungus rises up from the decay. While we can never be sure of Gertrude's precise role in the travesty of a world which Denmark has become, we are constantly aware of her brooding presence as the pivotal point around which the rest of the action revolves. It is her adultery and over-hasty marriage which has set Claudius upon the throne that should have been her son's. We can only speculate that she has taken revenge upon her husband, first by refusing to allow him to acknowledge his daughter, and then by

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[187]*Hamlet*, V.ii.87.

[188]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV, 525

enforcing the family ideology which claimed Ophelia was Polonius' child. That she has betrayed her husband before his death and perhaps manipulated Claudius, that "limed soul struggling to be free" to do the actual murder is not beyond reasonable speculation. She herself acknowledges her guilt in her refusal to see the mad Ophelia:

> To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
> Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss,
> So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
> It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.[189]

And when Hamlet forces her to see the "black and [grained]" spots within her soul in their encounter in her bedroom after the play, accusing her of,

> Such an act
> That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
> Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
> From the fair forehead of an innocent love
> And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows
> As false as dicers' oaths. Oh, such an act
> As from the body of contraction plucks
> The very soul, and sweet religion makes
> A rhapsody of words[190]

he ties her perfidy to the blasted roses that he and Ophelia have become. The final lines of this accusation echo Act I, Scene 3 in which Hamlet's courting of Ophelia with "almost all the holy vows of heaven" has prompted Polonius to warn her:

> Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers,
> Not of that dye which their investments show,
> But mere [implorators] of unholy suits,
> Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds,
> The better to beguile.[191]

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[189]*Hamlet,* IV.v.17-20.

[190]*Hamlet*, III.iv.40-48.

[191]*Hamlet,* I.iii.126-31.

It is not only his father's sins that have tainted Hamlet, but his mother's as well. Gertrude has made a mockery of law and religion in precisely the same way that Polonius warned Ophelia that Hamlet was about to do.

When the Ghost appears to Hamlet in his mother's room, she does not see it, and claims that it is madness which prompts her son's vision. This is an instance of her psychic denial which Hamlet will not let pass:

> Mother, for the love of grace,
> Lay not that flattering unction to thy sin;
> That not your trespass but my madness speaks.
> It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
> While rank corruption, mining all within,
> Infects unseen.[192]

This "rank corruption, mining all within" reminds us of the Ghost, the "worthy pioneer"[193] [miner] undermining the ground beneath Hamlet's feet. It is in Gertrude that the "massy wheel" of kingship and the wheel of strumpet fortune merge in mad destruction. In short, all roads lead to Gertrude, but only as strands in a knot that unravels somewhere else. She is perhaps the only character in the play who is able to exact perfect revenge, and in the end we see the disastrous results of her actions are no less bloody than Pyrrhus's slaughter of Priam.

Although the play is laden with Oedipal overtones and must be analyzed in terms of the defenses it employs, *Hamlet* derives its ultimate power from its examination of what happens when subjectivities do not meet to create a common history, a common set of values, and, ultimately, a common world. With such a bleak theme, one might wonder why it is that *Hamlet* has captivated theater goers for close to four hundred years. I

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[192]*Hamlet,* III.iv.144-49.

[193]*Hamlet,* I.v.162.

believe it is the contradiction between what the play depicts and what it does that holds us all entranced. For *Hamlet* provides for us exactly what it denies to its characters. The seductive rhythm and musicality of its language, its meditation on the great themes of justice and revenge which must concern us all, its examination of what it is to be human and what the limits of freely chosen human action are, invite us into a potential space where we become part of the great dialogue which Shakespeare has set in motion.

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