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Scope

The journal of ***Language and Psychoanalysis*** is a fully peer reviewed online journal that publishes twice a year. It is the only interdisciplinary journal with a strong focus on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of language and psychoanalysis. The journal is also inclusive and not narrowly confined to the Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

We welcome a wide range of original contributions that further the understanding of the interaction between Linguistic Analysis and Theory & Psychoanalytic Theories and Techniques. Any relevant manuscripts with an emphasis on language and psychoanalysis will be considered, including papers on methodology, theory, philosophy, child development, psychopathology, psychotherapy, embodied cognition, cognitive science, applied dynamical system theory, consciousness studies, cross-cultural research, and case studies. The journal also publishes short research reports, book reviews, interviews, obituaries, and readers' comments.

Peer Review Policy

All manuscripts will be peer reviewed by the editors, a member of the editorial advisory board, or another qualified person appointed by the editors.

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Manuscript:

- Authors need to confirm with a cover letter that the manuscript has not been published previously and is not being submitted currently to another journal.
- Manuscripts are only published in the English language.

Word limit:

- Submissions for main articles should be approximately 3,000-10,000 words in length and include an abstract of about 200 words and up to seven keywords.
- Short research reports, book reviews, and readers' comments should be approximately 500-2,500 words in length.
- Interviews and obituaries should not exceed 4,000 words in length.

Style:

- Manuscripts should be double-spaced, in Times 12-point font, and in .doc, .docx, or .rtf format.
- Manuscripts should follow the style conventions as outlined by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th edition.

Content

Therapists Have a Lot to Add to the Field of Research, but Many Don't Make it There: A Narrative Thematic Inquiry into Counsellors' and Psychotherapists' Embodied Engagement with Research

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Abstract

Research frequently addresses a gap between practice and research in the field of psychotherapy. Castonguay et al (2010) suggest that the practice of many full-time psychotherapists is rarely or nonsubstantially influenced by research. Boisvert and Faust (2005) ask 'why do psychotherapists not rely on the research to consistently inform their practice?' and suggest that concerns 'have echoed through the decades' about psychotherapists' failings to integrate of research and practice. This study focuses on therapists' (counsellors and psychotherapists) reasoning about their engagement with 'research' as described in dissertations and in personal, anonymously presented documents, research journals and interviews included. The study focuses on the stages which generally are referred to as 'data analysis', which in this study refers research stages where interpretation typically is required with synthesising and analysing in mind. Turning our attention to the therapists' 'narrative knowing' about research during these stages where generating own new knowledge is put to the forefront, have highlighted a complex relationship involving epistemological discrepancies, real or imagined, between practice and research. It also highlighted gender issues, culture and commonly held constructs about what constitutes a 'counsellor', which we believe influence therapists' presence in research. We decided to include the citation *"Therapists have a lot to add to the field of research, but many don't make it there"* in the title to illustrate some of the complexity. The study is based on a Professional Doctorate programme, which engages with psychologists, counsellors and psychotherapists in practice-based research. In addition to drawing from dissertations already in the public domain students and graduates from the doctoral programme were invited to contribute their own embodied experiences from 'doing' a data analysis. The paper suggests a hybrid for narrative analysis, discussing the options to (re-)present narratives guided by a combined interest into the unique, personal whilst also looking for 'themes' within and across these narratives.

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Introduction

Research frequently addresses a gap between practice and research in the field of psychotherapy. Castonguay et al (2010) suggest that the practice of many full-time psychotherapists is rarely or nonsubstantially influenced by research. Boisvert and Faust (2006) ask 'why do psychotherapists not rely on the research to consistently inform their practice?' and assert that 'concerns, questions, and, sometimes, criticisms have echoed through the decades' about psychotherapists' failing to integrate of research and practice This study explores ways in which therapists refer to their embodied engagement with 'research' We have approached therapists' narratives about their research with a particular interest in their way of referring to 'doing data-analysis'. The overlaps and differences between therapeutic practice and research is something which has intrigued us, the authors, in both own research and when supervising research students (Bager-Charleson 2017a, 2017b; Du Plock 2016). It is also an area which we have found particularly neglected, in the discussion about research supported practice as well as in literature about research subjectivity and reflexivity.

We are interested in what Polkinghorne (1991) refers to as 'narrative truths' about research, drawing on students' and graduates' written and verbal accounts, as told in officially available documents (doctors' dissertations) and in personal contributions (research journals and interviews). The study is based on a London based Professional Doctorate programme where psychologists, counsellors and psychotherapists engage in practice-based research. In addition to drawing from dissertations already in the public domain through dissertation, we invited students from the doctoral programme to contribute with their written or verbal accounts to the following questions: How would you describe your embodied responses and emotional entanglement during your research? What did you feel during your data-analysis – and how might that have impacted on your research?

Literature Review

In this study, we have explored literature and research specifically contributing to an understanding of research subjectivity with the researchers' use of self in mind. Finlay (2016) and Etherington (2004) have contributed with theory about embodied research with a special focus on links between therapeutic practice and research. Finlay (2006) describes a theory about a Reflexive Bodily Analysis that involves 'bodily empathy', 'embodied self-awareness' and 'embodied intersubjectivity' during all stages of the research, including the data analysis stages. Her data analysis is an 'attuned inquiry' (Finlay, 2016) characterised by stages of 'empathic dwelling' where she uses 'bodily experience as a way of tuning into … participants so as to achieve both a kinaesthetic and emotional sensing of the other' (p. 23). Boden, Gibson, Owen and Benson (2016) also offer an overview of literature in the field of feelings in research, suggesting that "Without the emotional dimension of a personal story, understanding becomes difficult, spoken words become separated from what the listener understands […] to understand human experience, we must understand emotional experience …" (p. 178).

A common theme for all reflexive approaches is that 'situatedness' (Haraway, 1988) or 'subjectivity' is an asset rather than hindrance, when drawn from in systematic

ways that are possible for others to trace or validate (Banister et al., 1994; Freeman, 2017). Finlay and Gough's (2003, p. 6) approach research subjectivity in terms of at least 'five reflexive variants', ranging from introspection focusing on the researchers' biography to social critique guided by a focus on the researchers' engagement with power balance in mind. Finlay and Gough's (2003) introspective, intersubjective and collaborative, socio-politically informed 'variants' to reflexivity, are interlinked. The 'collaborative' reflexivity challenges traditional epistemological hierarchies typically dominated by white heterosexual middleclass men since the Enlightenment. Smith (1999) argues for instance for a 'decolonization of research'. Ellington (2017) builds on feminism and post-structuralism to develop theory about 'embodiment in qualitative research'. She writes: *"Research begins with the body. Although some researchers remain unconscious of it (or deny it) embodiment is an integral aspect of all research… I am a body-self making sense with, of, and through other embodied people and our social worlds"* (p. 196). Different collaborative narrative methods have developed to highlight the 'dialogical nature of knowledge' and how 'meanings depend on who is speaking' (Arvay, 2003, p. 165). The challenge of oppressive discourses is reflected in developments within Narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990) suggesting that 'as human beings in language we are, in fact, all subjugated by invisible social 'controls'' (p. viii). By including collaborative creative writing in research, Jeffrey, Powell, Waitere & Wright (2012) describe finding means to 'engage with, and blend, research that was planned, yet spontaneous, ordered while creative, passionate and grounded in reason' (p. 93). The autoethnographic researcher Spry (2001) has offered a strong critique of a historic dualist approach in the process of knowledge acquisition where, *'we still sever the body from academic scholarship'* (p. 724). Spry adopts a feminist outlook with an emphasis on 'enfleshment' and asserts that the *'the living body/subjective self of the researcher ... as a salient part of the research process' to study the world from the perspective of the interacting individuals"* (p. 711).

Typically for what Finlay refers to as a form of reflexivity based on 'on intersubjective reflection' is that the self-in-relation to others becomes 'both focus and object of focus' (Finlay & Gough 2003, p. 6). The focus on self-in-relation to other is not dissimilar from, for example, the autoethnographic, heuristic or narrative approach, but is positions concepts like transference, countertransference and unconscious processes to the forefront. This resonates with what psychosocial research which, as Clarke and Hodgett's (2009) suggest, can 'be seen as cluster of methodologies [which] 'considers the unconscious communications, dynamics and defences that exist in the research environment' (p. 2). The psychosocial research brings projection, transference and countertransference to the forefront. It addresses how 'unconscious intersubjective dynamics' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 93) affect how 'we are influenced by our emotional responses' in research. Holloway and Jefferson's (2000) conclude that "ps*ychosocial research adopts a theoretical starting point [to] construe both researcher and researched as anxious defended subjects, whose mental boundaries and porous where unconscious material is concerned"* (p. 43).

Data Analysis and Embodied Understanding

The focus on emotions is not unusual within stages of research which revolves around interviewing, it is however less mentioned in the context of data analysis. Denzin (1984/2009), Orange (1996, 2009), Spry (2001), Josselson (2011, 2013, 2016), Willig

(2012), and Rennie and Fergus (2006) offer different perspectives to explore researchers' relational, emotional or embodied response during research, including during the data analysis stages. Within the framework of Grounded Analysis, Rennie and Fergus (2006) refer to 'embodied categorization' as 'an approach to interpretation in which subjectivity is drawn on productively' (p. 496). Van Manen (1990), Todres (2007), Anderson and Broud (2011), Gendlin (1997, 2009) and McGinley (2015) contribute with further theory about how to incorporate emotional and embodied into research. McGinley (2015) defines 'embodied understanding' as an understanding which includes the knower's 'moods, affect, and atmosphere' (p. 88) as sources of knowledge. Gendlin (1997) writes about the significance of 'staying with' the 'body-feel' as part of generating new knowledge. Tordes (2007) emphasises paying attention to a 'felt sense' as part of the analysis and writes about 'participatory experience' with an interest in how emotions are being evoked in the researcher.

Methodology

Narrative research highlights typically how people rely on linguistic devices to give reality a unity whilst communicating our sense of meaning to others. The ways we organise events in our 'stories' reflect different kind of narrative 'knowing' triggering questions not just about the experiences as such but also about 'why was the story told that way?' (Riessman, 2000, p. 8). For a more indepth account of our approach to the broad field of 'narrative research' please see Bager-Charleson 2004.

This study focuses on counsellors' and psychotherapists' modes of narrative knowing in context of research. Embodied and emotional responses are, for instance, significant sources of knowledge in psychotherapeutic practice, putting concepts like countertransference, congruence etc. (depending on modality) to the forefront. What happens to this source of knowledge in research? How might therapists negotiate epistemic overlaps and differences between practice and research?

Our study is guided by Narrative Thematic Inquiry, as a hybrid of Narrative analysis with its flexible, yet systematic approach to explore peoples' accounts of events and experiences. Riessman (1993, 2000, 2008) proposes a typology of the four main types of narrative analysis, namely thematic, structural, dialogic and visual. Our approach to Narrative Analysis is guided by Riessman's (1993, 2000) 'thematic approach' merged with Braun and Clarke's (2006) interests in 'looking for everything and anything' which suggests shared themes. The thematic narrative analysis moves, as Chase (2005) suggests 'away from traditional theme-orientated methods in qualitative research' (p. 662) Comparing different narratives with an interest in themes both within and across the narratives, challenges some traditional approaches within narrative research. Riessman (1993) warns that 'when many narratives are grouped into a similar thematic category, that everyone in the group means the same thing by what they say [neglecting] ambiguities' (p. 3). This is true, and our compromise to combine breadth with depth involves sacrifices in the field of 'deviant responses that don't fit into a typology, the unspoken' (p. 3). To us, the 'themes' helps to push our interpretation along and facilitates as kind of structure to our own story which makes it easier to communicate. Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguishes between 'manifest', semantic themes and 'latent' themes which moves 'beyond' what is said. We are interested in both. During our readings we have considered broad themes, inspired

firstly by Bamberg's (199-47) three levels of narrative positioning, namely with regards to how:

1. the narrator positions her/himself in relation to others, when telling his/her story about the stage of research which revolved around data analysis.
2. the narrator positions her/himself in relation to an audience, as s/he tells.
3. the narrator talks about her/himself. Bamberg (in Chase, 2005) refers to this point as; 'how the narrators position themselves to themselves' (p. 663).

This involved to us considering what the therapists, for instance, describe as 'good', 'bad' and what Gergen (1998) suggests in terms of narratives' 'valued end points'. Did data-analysis bring different therapists closer or further away from the what the therapists intended to achieve through their analysis stage of their research? There are at least 'three types' (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 15) of changes which the story teller, or 'protagonist' undergoes vis-a-vis a goal or valued end point. There is for instance a 'stability narrative' where progress remains relatively unchanged about the goal. A 'progressive narrative' conveys, in contrast, a sense of advancement toward the goal, whilst a regressive narrative highlight how the protagonist ends up removed from the goal.

Participants

Choosing different narratives offered for us an opportunity to 'hear' therapists from different contexts. Our primary data consisted of dissertations available in the Institute library and of personal contribution narrated either verbally (interviews) or in writing (research journals, free writing vignettes, poems and other forms of creative writings). All therapists had an Integrative background, with two including CBT and three drawing from Psychoanalytic theory in their integrative models. All therapists had, further, contributed in the field of qualitative research, with two engaging in mixed-method studies. We chose 50 dissertations 'randomly' from the shelf, starting from A and working ourselves down alphabetically with a focus on the section referred to as 'data analysis' in each dissertation.

All dissertations were, as mentioned based on qualitative research, including phenomenology, autoethnography, grounded theory, narrative inquiry and mixed-methods. In addition to the dissertations, an email was distributed via the academic coordinator across all 18 cohorts, including graduates with an invitation to contribute with verbal or written narratives about 'what it feels like to do research during the data analysis stages'. The invitation included a section about narrative inquiry and its interpretive, hermeneutic nature. This was expanded upon and explained further in the project descriptions and consent forms, later forwarded to those who volunteered with further information. Seven researchers offered to discuss their experiences in interviews. Out of these, all were women, aged 40–56 and working as integrative therapists. Twenty researchers contributed with written narratives, which predominantly consisted of brief extracts from research journals. One was male, 'Alan', who will be referred to later. Participant identities have been concealed to protect their anonymity. The final material for the study includes: a) psychotherapists' Doctoral dissertations (50) already available online and in the library, b) psychotherapists' who by open invitation (across all 18 cohorts) contributed with

research journals, personal notes, poems, creative or other forms of for the project produced writings (20) about embodied responses and emotional experiences during the data-analysis phase; and c) psychotherapists' who by open invitation (as above) chose the option to contribute with their account through interviews (7).

Ethical Considerations

The study gained ethical clearance through the university ethical board. Research in the field of embodied response is likely to be emotive for participants. This research project reflects the principles set out by the Metanoia Institute'sEthical Framework for Research, with its emphasis on on-going respect for the participants. All the authors teach on the programme, and it was important to stress that any contribution to the study would be entirely voluntary and that names and identities would be concealed in the write up.

Both the validity and the ethical requirements of the study rely ultimately on 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' (Josselson, 2016; Finlay, 2016). This was referred to in the project information, consent form and in the interview where the concept 'narrative turn' was addressed with references to the narratives being a relational, embodied co-constructed version of the participants' experiences. The interviews involved a particularly relational approach. Each participant was contacted by Author 1, the interviewer, a few weeks after the meeting with some suggested interpreted key points and themes, together with an invitation to add, delete, or expand specific material**.** The interviews were analysed utilising several identifiable stages. These were as follows:

1. Immediately after an interview Author 1 recounted the interview from memory in verbatim, from start to finish in an experience-near (Hollway, 2006) and as close to word-by-word account which memory allowed for. This included embodied, emotional responses as customary in therapeutic write-ups.
2. Two weeks later Author 1 listened to the taped interview and compared each tape to the verbatim account and created 'key areas' or overriding 'themes' which she shared with the participants, with an invite to add or change.
3. The interviews were then transcribed approximately 6-8 weeks after the interviews, and analysed inspired by what Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest in their six-stage approach to thematic analysis in terms of initially looking for anything and everything which 'stood out' (codes) and then exploring 'clusters' (themes) within and across the transcripts.
4. The 'thematic' inspired transcript readings were then compared with the initial 'experience-near' readings (Hollway, 2006; Bondi & Fewell, 2015) based on the verbatim account combined with the listening of the recorded interview.
5. The set of readings were forwarded to Author 3 as a second reader, who responded to the suggested themes, elaborating, changing and suggesting new angles. This would trigger a continued discussion around the themes, lasting approximately 4-6 weeks.
6. A weaving of the two readings for an as broad and deep account as possible of each therapists' narrative knowing about research.

Narrative research puts, as suggested, 'trustworthiness' to the forefront throughout the process. Our analysis is in essence our story about other peoples' stories, and its validity rely on the readers' opportunities to follow our stages of the rendering process. We had, for instance, expected significant differences between the way research was referred to in public documents (dissertations) compared to in contributions to be presented anonymously; told or written (depending on the choice of the participants) in personal accounts. We will, however, suggest that in our approach to both sets of narratives, the therapists appeared to share a trajectory with themes which involved challenges, coping and illumination. We found it helpful to think of Gergen's (1998) idea of narrative forms. For instance, the "happily-ever-after" story reflects how a follows a steady progressive change, with the protagonist moving towards a valued end point in the narrative. The 'heroic drama' on the other hand, combines regressive and progressive trajectories in ways which often imbues a sense of tragedy followed by heroism in the reader, which resonate with our reading of both the dissertations and the personal narratives. There were elements of tragedy in most accounts, with the protagonists first seeming to move further and further away from their goal of generating knowledge, as their story progressed.

In our finding section we will start by highlighting areas which stood out to us in 'Alan's' story from one of the contributions in personal writing, with attention to 'Alan's' unique told experiences. We will also refer to 'Moira's' story about research, as told in an interview. We will then expand on what we have interpreted as shared themes among most therapists in both dissertations and interviews. All participants' identities are concealed.

Results

To communicate what stood out to us both within and across the different stories in terms of plot lines or trajectories, we have gathered some main narrative linkages or overarching themes.

Space does not allow us to give full reference to all the accounts. Narrative 'knowing' reflects the way narrators create 'themes, plots, drama' and 'make sense of themselves, social situations, and history' (Riessman, 2002, p. 702). We have chosen two 'stories' to illustrate variations of the same 'theme', namely that data analysis, is described as 'challenging to the core of ones' identity' as one therapists suggested. 'Alan's story' (presented below) illustrates how generating new knowledge becomes more difficult and overwhelming than expected – but also more rewarding. 'Alan's story' illustrates transformational learning which moves from crippling uncertainty to life changing learning about life and clinical practice.

This narrative 'rhythm' from catastrophe to success reflects a trajectory which we interpreted in most accounts, in both dissertations and interviews (e.g., told personal accounts). It gives voice to a regressive-progressive 'plotline', wher tragedy and heroic drama become part of a profound transformative learning experience. Associated with this trajectory some principal narrative strands which we interpreted were that:

- the activity was all consuming.
- the activity triggered a need to find coping strategies.

- the process of data analysis promoted illumination on both a personal and professional level.

Alan's Story

Gergen (1998) highlights how tragedy and heroic dramas usually raises feelings within the reader; there is a tendency for the reader to think in terms of actions to prevent catastrophe. This was certainly the case when we read the personal account, told in writing, by 'Alan' (not his real name). We have underlined some of what we interpreted as particularly significant components in his narrative knowing about research and data analysis.

Alan is 45 years old, and works as a lead therapist in the NHS. "*I am writing this, and sending it immediately without any editing because I think that will help me tell it as it is …"* started the text. 'Alan', achieved his doctorate degree five years ago, in the field of therapy for clients from the LGBT community.

"… As I read [for my study] I struggled to find a good, simple system for recording memorable quotes, significant thoughts. I read and read and read…but how could I ever retrieve, synthesise, analyse this mass of thinking? How would I even remember certain key points as they disappeared under the constant input I was subjecting myself to? […] Inevitably, I began to feel overwhelmed by the material coming in, by its sheer volume, and also by the existential challenge much of what I was reading presented to my own understanding of who I am and how I had come to think of myself in the way I did. About 15 months into the [programme] I began to have heart palpitations. These were extremely alarming and at some points I began to wonder if I was actually having a heart attack. Sometimes at night, I would wake up, aware that my heart had skipped several beats, and with a sense of struggling for breath. Often, after having one of these experiences, I would sit up in bed and feel panic. The sensation of my heart skipping a beat, or suddenly racing, was very scary. And it was also shaming – something I didn't talk to with anyone in case they would think I was being ridiculous, or that I should give the research up if simply reading books was giving me such high levels of stress. Apart from palpitations the other main embodied experience I encountered during my research was, on the morning when I finally decided I had to stop reading and start 'creating', an incredible tightness across my chest and a heavy 'band like' feeling across my forehead. I was sat in my study, with hundreds of quotes/cards strewn across the floor, and a deep sense of foreboding. At that point I literally had no idea of how I was going to shape the literature I had read (subject-related and method/methodology-related) into a coherent, elegant, 'whole'. I remember groaning out loud at the prospect – as though I was involved in heavy physical labour". ('Alan', written personal narrative about research, our markings)

This torturous experience continued until, what Alan describes as a turning point, as he began to develop a way of coping with the earlier overwhelming amount of information:

"Picking up each card and realizing that somehow I needed to understand how what was written on it related to everything else written on all the other cards felt like – and indeed was – a mammoth task. Nonetheless, looking back, I do think that there

was something incredibly powerful about almost wrestling with the information in actually engaging something within myself which needed to be laid to rest before something new could emerge. Additionally, having physical 'bits' of information, as opposed to just bites of data on a computer, engaged me in a whole-person way that I don't think using some piece of qualitative data analysis software could ever have done. I felt more confident, I was developing a mind-map against which to cross-reference each additional story I heard I had begun to interrogate those stories from a social constructionist angle, seeing them as not just the personal creation of an individual but as emerging from within a particular social and historical setting". Alan's coping involved self-searching, there as *"something within myself which needed to be laid to rest before something new could emerge"*, as Alan put it. The coping also involved connecting with a theoretical map, where he *"had begun to interrogate those stories from a social constructionist angle"*. We read this as a progressive twist in the narrative, where Alan moves towards the valued endpoint of new knowledge, possibly on a deeper level than expected:

"The palpitations did, however, continue right up until I made my final presentation. Then, amazingly and much to my relief, they stopped and have never returned. For me, they attest to the reality that undertaking research into areas which are deeply meaningful and important to us as people, not just as academics, lays us open to challenge and struggle at very deep levels. To my mind, they represent an existential struggle with fundamental concepts or building-blocks of what it means to be human; a far-from-easy letting go of aspect of life which have felt like certainties and an opening up to anxiety and learning to live with it without the need to simply resolve it. Fundamentally, my embodied experience – the pain and the fear – have left me much more aware of how easily we/I seek solid ground to live on, when actually there may be no such solidity. Learning to live with uncertainty and possibility is potentially liberating, but also deeply challenging. From that perspective, my journey continues, but what I learnt from my research (and strangely, it's much more about the literature review than it is about my participants' stories) continues to guide me and enlighten me". ('Alan', written personal narrative about research, our markings)

Summary, Alan

Alan described an embodied process of data analysis as generating high levels of stress. Alan described how "sometimes at night, I would wake up, aware that my heart had skipped several beats, and with a sense of struggling for breath … I would sit up in bed and feel panic". He 'was sat in my study, with hundreds of quotes/cards strewn across the floor, and a deep sense of foreboding [with] literally had no idea of how I was going to shape to a coherent, elegant, "whole". "He also talked about 'shame' over that 'simply reading books was giving me such high levels of stress".

The turning point was linked to Alan developing a sense of 'map' which involved looking both inwardly and outwardly. Alan said that his 'embodied experience – the pain and the fear – have left me much more aware of how easily we/I seek solid ground to live on, when actually there may be no such solidity'. In the following section, we will revisit some of the suggested themes and trajectories which we have interpreted as spanning across all consuming, triggering coping and leading to illuminating outcomes on different levels.

Gender and socio-cultural obstacles

Turning our attention to the therapists' 'narrative knowing' highlighted a complex relationship involving gender, culture and commonly held constructs about what constitutes a 'counsellor', which we believe influences therapists' presence in research. We decided to include the citation "*Therapists have a lot to add to the field of research, but many don't make it there*" in the title to illustrate and emphasise this complexity. The expression comes from 'Moira' (not her real name).

Moira's Story

'Moira' is 47 years old, and works as a counsellor in a charity for clients who have been sexually abused. Moira spoke in the interview about a 'a sense of glass ceiling' due to stereotypes about counsellors and researchers. *"I think I underestimated the data analysis...The end-result was very nicely polished and well presented, but I don't think it really captured what went on and how that journey to the data analysis from the interviews, how it really played itself out, and how difficult it became… It's hard to get away from that, you're desperately trying to find themes and codes and things but actually this is somebody's life".* (Moira, interview, our marking).

Alarmingly, sexism and racism are coming to the surface. Moira had always enjoyed reading and writing, but says that she kept her doctorate research secret from many of her colleagues. "It can almost be a race to the bottom to work near all those who we help" rather than "writing articles and stuff", says Moira:

'There's a glass ceiling... I still feel there's a, you know, research is sort of about showing how clever you are, wanting to show off and all my whizzy little ideas. It's in my DNA to help those who are marginalized and in a way my own kind of experiences of barriers, of racism, of hitting a ceiling that I can only as a woman, who identifies as being black that I would only go so far, and that, and the whole world of research and being with all these well-spoken, articulate, bright people… My dad tells everybody that I'm a social worker, because he simply doesn't understand [laughs] what the hell I do... he tells everybody that help the poor and, in a way... and that's still what I am... it can almost be a race to the bottom to work near all those who we help... not writing articles and stuff!" (Moira, interview)

Another therapist, Rita 42 years old working as a private practitioner and who also shared her story in an interview, resonated with this: *"For me there were these particular archetypes of being a woman in my family; nurturing, giving, sacrificial".* (Rita, interview)

Overarching Strands in the Narrative Trajectories about 'Doing Data Analysis'

1. All Consuming

Most therapists described, from all three strands, the process of data analysis as an intense and deeply challenging one. Some overarching themes were:

- Becoming ill
- Loosing sense of Self

- Feeling like a fraud
- Disembodied

Several therapists described becoming unwell during their data-analysis work with unexplained pain, hypertension, palpitations, chest pains, panic attacks and difficulty sleeping being some of the self-disclosed symptoms recorded. Associated with somatic disturbances was a feeling expressed by many therapists of 'excessive immersion' whilst attempting to analyse their data. One therapist stated that "*I really did eat, sleep and breathe the research"*. Many therapists described losing a sense of self. One therapist described *"I became stuck at the structural level of data analysis. I had played in the words so much I lost sight of the body"*. Another therapist said *"My immersion in their stories [made it] difficult to 'let go'. I was overwhelmed by mixed emotions. I found myself laughing at some and crying at others"*. Feeling lost and its impact on knowledge acquisition was tellingly captured by one therapist who reflected that, *"[it was] the task itself that was all consuming, rather than the meaning behind it"*.

The all-consuming nature of data analysis seemed disorientating different levels. One therapist said: *"It's been horrific, I've agonised so much, feeling like a fraud, so stupid … I've been feeling desperate, all the time thinking that I am doing this right with themes and codes and tables"*. Another therapist expressed feeling unprepared for the lack of self-care in research, suggesting that *"the literature on qualitative research emphasises the importance of protecting the research participants. There is not much on protecting the researcher"*.

Several described data analysis as a stage which disconnected them from the human focus of their work. "*I found analysing the data completely consuming [with] moments when I had no clarity at all",* as one therapist put it. The pressure and challenge of looking for themes within their data and being surrounded by endless paper notes created for some a conflicting sense of detachment. One therapist said *"I had completely lost the body as a route to knowledge. I did not really notice until I had started to reach for the deeper structural level, the unconscious processes"*.

The lack of relational focus was referred to by the therapists. One therapist exercised useful reflection on this situation in stating that, *"it's hard to get away from that, you're desperately trying to find themes and codes and things but, actually, this is somebody's life"*. Another therapist referred to an overwhelming sense of pain and feeling when trying to analysis her transcript, which she was unprepared for experiencing in research. She stated that it was, *"a hundred times more intense than with clients. This was on another level; I would say…nothing had prepared me for that"*. For this therapist the emotional impact of her data analysis process was truly visceral. She chose these words: *"There would be different sentences in each transcript, it was like a sword going through me, right there where my heart is, where my soul is, and then the tears would come and sometimes it's quite unexpected"*.

Another therapist echoed with that 'the impact of the written word' could be *"very disorientating"*. Again, moving from a clinical training which focuses on emotional content, the therapists describes a lack of means to express their findings. The same therapist says: "*To read verbal words on the written page as you read particularly when they're very personal… so rife with emotional content and splitting, and you*

know, polarities and mess and shame, and, you know… What do you do with that? How do you find an expression?"

2. The need for coping strategies

It was clear from all sources that the process of data analysis had a profound and unsettling impact on many therapists. The feelings of being lost, isolated, and emotionally vulnerable prompted some to seek a supportive coping strategy. A number of discrete coping strategies were identified; these included,

- Reconnecting with therapy practice
- Research journal
- Supervision
- Personal therapy
- Embracing discomfort
- Developing 'other mediums' to help to go 'where words wouldn't go'

In being confronted by the uncertainty some therapists looked for epistemological and theoretical frameworks from their therapeutic training and practice. One therapist, who described feeling 'disembodied' during the data analysis stage, refers to having regained a sense of 'embodied self' by considering the responses in the context of theory about unconscious processes.

Also, as illustrated with 'Moira's' story, therapists referred to stereotypes among colleagues about researchers as selfish, detached and removed, whilst counsellors could be 'caught in a race to the bottom to help the disadvantaged', resonating old archetypes of women as 'nurturing, giving, sacrificial'. Research became, in this sense, a hidden, guilty hobby which -as in 'Alan's case, exaggerated a sense of loneliness and 'lost-ness'. For several therapists, therefor, supervision was described as a crucial coping/support strategy, especially with an opportunity to explore the emotional aspects of their research work. One therapist captured its value with these words, *"The research tapped into my fears around failing, and supervision helped me to understand and contain those feelings".* A fear and vulnerability around failure was articulated by a substantial number of therapists. As another frequently mentioned coping/support strategy was personal therapy. In distinguishing it from the value of supervision one therapist stated that, *"I certainly had not expected this experience when I embarked on the research and was taken completely by surprise, so I now realised that not only did I need supervision in dealing with writing a doctorate, working with challenging material, but also I needed personal therapy to separate out my issues from those of the victims".*

One of the biggest challenges for many therapists in their data analysis work and their research in general was being confronted with uncertainty and unknowing; it seemed to create a disturbing sense of unease where clinical training left many unprepared. The emphasis on self-awareness from clinical training did not easily find its home in research. As in the case of 'Alan' earlier, a pressure to produce coherent, tidy knowledge was experienced as contrasting, sometimes conflicting with the complex model for 'knowing' in therapy – especially during the data-analysis. However, for many therapists this challenge signalled an opportunity to actually lean into their discomfort and attach some meaning to it as they typically would in their clinical practice. This notion was powerfully expressed in the following statement from a therapist: *"To be uncomfortable with research can be essential, it can protect us from*

going too far, as Josselson (1996) writes when she suggests that our 'anxiety, dread and shame' are there to honour our participants and to remind us that our research is both about and by real people".

Some therapists who felt that words couldn't fully capture the responses and meaning from research participants found alternative mediums with which to process their engagement with data. One therapist described her approach with these words, *"You could find words, of course you could, but somehow they felt inadequate, a blunt instrument. I found other mediums actually allowed for actually going to places you wouldn't go to... I used music, drawing and cooking".*

Another therapist-researcher described looking for and finding new means of analysing her collected interviews with evocative images and her own embodied responses as part of the process, in the form of 'memory theatre': *"I used postcard images to represent each theme and placed them in informal mandalas on the floor, to represent the 'rooms' of the memory theatre, noticing a trepidation and also an eagerness".*

3. Personal and professional Illumination

Rather reassuringly several therapists reflected on their experience of data analysis as something that facilitated both personal and professional change; usually this was after they had established effective coping/support strategies. Some overarching themes were:

- Improving practice
- Developing new strategies
- Finding new knowledge
- Experimenting with ideas
- Understanding self and others in new ways

The earlier mentioned 'Alan' captured movingly the impact of research activity on the self and its potential lasting legacy in terms of 'learning to live with uncertainty'. There is something of an existential awakening in these words; research and its challenges and uncertainty have revealed and promoted a more authentic engagement with living.

Some therapists reported that their experiences of data analysis and grappling to find meaning had significantly impacted on their way of thinking as practitioners. One therapist who characterised their identity as a '*traditional died-in-the-wool CBT therapist'* summarised the impact of her research experience as follows: *"the difference now is that the therapeutic relationship and the process of therapy itself are much more important to me as a result of my learning from this doctoral research".*

Another therapist referred to a lasting 'research mindedness' – a prevailing enthusiasm for 'finding out' which helps her 'understand the client better'. Another highly relevant piece of reflection was, "*Each encounter with the data illuminated something new".*

It is important to recognise the fact that those therapists who reflected on the personal and professional impact of their data analysis work were those who appeared to have

reappraised their former fear and aversion to research. There were several therapists who felt openly excited by research; it held opportunity not fear.

> *"Everyday I talk about research, I have become really passionate about the process, the exciting process about not knowing anything and then finding out, experiment with ideas and then finding new knowledge… I find absolutely fascinating, brilliant!"*

A Reflective Pause. Tranformative Learning and Personal Development

There has been a parallel process in the study, where we as researchers have felt overwhelmed, paralysed and anxious. Combining different sources of information was interesting but also challenging, not just for methodological reasons but also for the strong different kind of emotions and embodied responses they imbued. Reading dissertations was physically exhausting, whilst engaging with personal contributions, particularly the interviews which had evolved through dialogue and evoked powerful emotions, resulting for elation to dread and sometimes expressed in vivid dreams (Bager-Charleson, 2017a, 2017b), 2019) especially when trying to engage in the agonising process described by 'Alan's' when seeking to reduce something vast into a neat, coherent academically relevant story. We shared the concern which most therapists gave voice to in terms of that *"this is about human beings, actual people*". When doing so, we would be reminded by the emphasis on personal development which had underpinned our clinical training, asking questions like 'where do these strong, newly evoked emotions come from?'. The for therapy typical emphasis on, as Klein et al (2011) describe as a 'skilful use of self' (p. 278) based on 'know-thyself' principles seemed almost be in the way during data-analysis. This is conceptualised differently depending on therapeutic modalities, ranging from the psychoanalytic focus on unconscious, counter-transference processes to humanistic emphasis on embodied processes as for instance expressed with concepts like congruence (Adams 2014, Bager-Charleson 2012, 2017b, du Plock 2016, 2018, McBeath 2018). There is across all modalities a commonly held 'narrative knowing' guided by the value of 'know-thyself'. This involves ongoing attention to the developmental process of learning where emotions, thoughts and behaviour both inside and outside their work become significant aspect of knowledge (Neuhaus, 2011). Although reflexivity provides a platform for narrative knowing to make sense of embodiment and situatedness, we resonate with Finlay and Gough's (2003) assertion about that reflexivity may be increasingly accepted, but the question remains "how to do it?" (p. 5).

Conclusion

Psychotherapy provides a kind of space "*in which we hope that new meanings can be made and new stories told, stories that may make life more liveable through an enrichment of meaning",* as Bondi (2013, p. 4) puts it. Our interpretations suggest that therapists adhere to this complexity, and maintain an emphasis on attending to emotional and embodied responses between 'actual people' (Holloway, 2009) when doing research. '*Arranging results into neat boxes'* as one therapists described her data analysis, reflects a reductionism which contrasts therapists' narrative knowing.

Our study showed clearly that therapist-researchers could and did experience significant and challenging responses during their research – both physical and emotional.

> *"I was sat in my study, with hundreds of quotes/cards strewn across the floor, and felt an incredible tightness across my chest and a heavy 'band like' feeling across my forehead".*

The sense of 'lostness' in the narrative suggest that many feel unprepared and lonely, indicating an absence of research training during their earlier clinical training. This prevents early forms of integrative thinking around research and practice to take form, and reinforces stereotypes about research and researcher as being cut off, separated from an empathic, embodied and emotionally attuned practice. The narratives suggest that many practitioners are uninformed about both the process and potential impact of doing research. But is also indicates a lack of space for therapists to negotiate their epistemological positioning and potential need for bridging between practice and research. Why might unconscious, emotional and embodied process be taught as paramount in one section of the therapists' learning, but potentially be left unaddressed in another? In our study many therapists expressed considerable bewilderment both about the actual process of data analysis but, but they also expressed shock at the emotional challenges that research can deliver.

Also, linking to the topic of archetypes surrounding counsellors and psychotherapists, another therapist talked about a 'female dominated' work place characterised by a 'race to the bottom to stay on the ground' to 'help the marginalised'. The same therapist described keeping quiet at work about her attempts to 'trying to be' a researcher: *"There's a glass ceiling... I still feel there's a, you know, research is sort of about showing how clever you are, wanting to show off and all my whizzy little ideas"*.

Our study suggests, in conclusion, that therapist-researchers describe significant and challenging responses during their research – both physical and emotional. If research is to become more integrated within the profession of psychotherapy there may be a duty of care to equip practitioners with knowledge that may serve to make them less unprepared and less vulnerable in this endeavour.

Limitations of the Study

The focus for this study has been on personal, unique aspects within public concerns and debates about therapy research. This study only scrapes on surface of some of the challenges and adventures in research in the field of psychotherapy. We hope it will invite to discussions about the epistemic overlaps and differences between practice and research with both research practitioners' and their clients' interests and growth in mind.

Our professional doctoral programme provided a good setting for the study to gain insights into how accredited therapists think and feel about undertaking research. It is likely that our role as tutors on the programme will have impacted the response we gained from our cohort of candidates and graduates. Would someone less interested in

emotional and embodied self-awareness feel free to volunteer their views to the story? Although drawing from the dissertations gave us a relatively broad pool of data to draw from, it is possible that the verbal and written accounts provided us with a one-sided image. Focusing on the data-analysis stages also somewhat obscured experiences surrounding a more general sense of research identity. Problems linked to gender, race and potentially unhelpful 'stereotypes' in counselling and research would be particularly interesting to explore further.

It is, finally, likely that the seniority of the participants had an impact on the study. Would more recently graduated therapist reason differently about research? We would like to broaden our research to more recently graduated therapists to learn if research may already be a more integrated part of their training. It would be interesting to compare with a survey based, maybe mixed-method study targeting both newly recruited and senior, accredited therapists across different training programmes both within and outside the UK.

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The Spanish Tragedy Redux

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Abstract

A hybrid of family history and literary criticism combining academic analysis and research with memoir, this essay argues that an object-relations concept of transmission of turbulence illuminates the phantom structure of Thomas Kyd's Elizabethan metatheatrical play *The Spanish Tragedy* and my response to it. Objectification of violence drives Hieronimo and informs this essay. In 1972, interpreting the arbor imagery and the rhetoric of reversal and self-cancellation in the play, I wrote, "Kyd is his father attacking himself in the womb he is in". After researching my suppressed family history, this peculiar sentence suggested to me unconscious knowledge of a run of murders in my family line, going back to the 1760 Long Cane Massacre of Irish settlers by Cherokee Indians in what is now South Carolina; continuing in the 1799 murder of Major William Love near what is now Harpe's Head, Kentucky; the suicide of my maternal grandfather in Philadelphia in 1931; and culminating in a Mafia-style execution of my father near Cleveland, Ohio in 1943.

Introduction

Researching family history can bring surprises, not all of them welcome. Having grown up away from my family and knowing very little about my antecedents, I decided to research these once the internet had made its contribution in the form of ancestry.com. This site brought me into contact with cousins I had not known I had, several of whom were also working on the ancestry.com site and had documented numerous folks. Among these new-found cousins, three were particularly helpful to me: Margaret Sims, a genealogist; Rhea Hunter, a family archivist; and Robert Stuart, a forensic investigator for the United States Veterans' Administration. Thanks to Robert Stuart, I discovered the story of the final moments of my maternal grandfather Orville Cecil, whose name I had not heard until 2010.

Before reaching the age of 65, I did not know my mother's maiden name. When I learned that my mother had been born Mary Norma Cecil, I wondered about her dad, whose identity I discovered by looking up the record of her parents' marriage bond. The name Orville Cecil presented me with a mystery. Solving this mystery taught me more than my mother evidently thought I should know.

I grew up thinking my mother a baffling mystery; I now recognize her as a traumatized person with an unconscious errand that created a conduit for public expression of a history she probably never knew. I suspect I was analogizing and

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voicing this unconscious history in my interpretive response to Kyd's play *The Spanish Tragedy*, which I first read in graduate school in the late 1960s.

My grandfather Orville Cecil Sr. shot his son, his wife, and himself when his daughter, my mother, was present on the scene, a week shy of her sixth birthday. My grandmother, hit in the left leg, and my uncle Robert Cecil, age 7, sitting on her lap and hit in the foot with the same bullet, survived. My grandfather-to-be, a 1913 U.S. Marine-Sharpshooter medalist (invalided out before World War I), went into an adjoining bedroom and fired a bullet through his brain.

Orville had married into a family with a 5-to-7-generation-distant history of being murder victims. See Figure 1, Catherine Montgomery->Esther Calhoun Love->Lucile Creason Cecil.

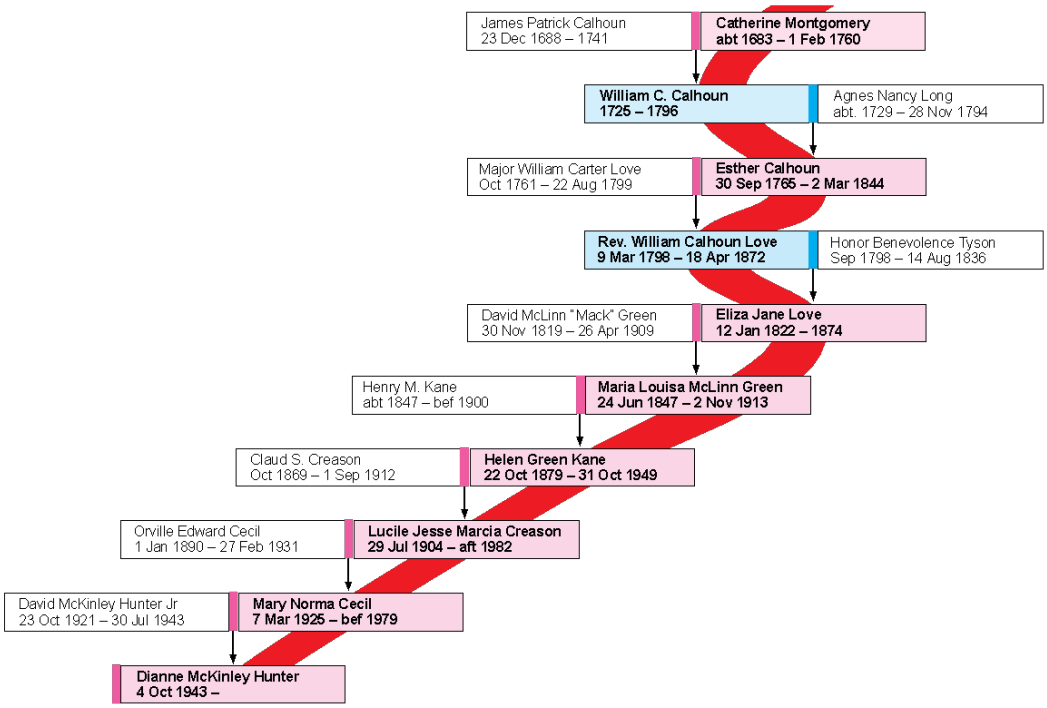

Figure 1

Genealogical chart by Margaret Sims showing the bloodline of Catherine Montgomery Calhoun in relation to Orville Cecil and Dianne Hunter.

Orville's self-inflicted murder, in the context of my maternal bloodline, seems to bear out George Henry Lewes's remark that murder can run in families, for, at the time of my birth, my widowed mother was an heir of sorts not only to her father's suicide but to a family massacre by Cherokee Indians and to the murder of an eighteenth-century victim of legendary killers who are memorialized by a place marker in Kentucky called "Harpes Head", named for the site of vigilante decapitation of one of the murderers.

Mary Norma Cecil's 6xgreat grandmother Catherine Montgomery Calhoun (1684-1760), an Irish immigrant, was murdered with 22 members of her family at Long Cane, now Abbeville, South Carolina (Fischer, p. 646). Catherine's granddaughter Esther Calhoun Love (1765-1844) has carved into her tombstone, "My Husband Wm Love was Killed by the Harps", see Figure 2.

Figure 2

Tombstone of Esther Calhoun Love.

William Love (1761-1799), my 5xgreat grandfather, was murdered by America's first serial killers, the "Harpe Brothers" (who were actually Harpe cousins).

Esther's tombstone phrase "my Husband was Killed" is also true of the Loves' 4xgreat granddaughter, Norma Cecil Hunter, my mother, who became a bride, a widow, and a single mother as a teenager in 1942-43. Though I grew up knowing my father had died, my story was that he died during World War II, in France. I don't know how much of her family background my mother knew, if any; but she must have known her husband was killed when she was seven months pregnant. She never mentioned it to me.

Rhea, my Hunter family archivist, put me in touch with another cousin who was new to me as of 2012, a daughter of William Hunter, who reputedly sent his brother, David, my father, to a fatal appointment that was intended for William himself. Though I doubt the veracity of this family legend, I find the idea of a displaced object

of violence in it significant to my argument about transmission of trauma. My father's death certificate states that he was shot in the face. The daughter of my uncle William told me that shooting in the face is a technique of the Mafia to keep its murder victims from being identified. William's daughter has the impression that my dad and hers were associates of the Cleveland Mafia, and that her dad had sent his younger brother, my dad, on an errand he could not perform himself, having absconded to California while owing a favor to associates in Cleveland. William, the absconding brother, therefore asked David to go in his place, inadvertently sending my dad to his death.

Unknown to me, aspects of this family history appear to have shaped my work as a psychoanalytic literary interpreter. When I wrote my Ph.D. dissertation in 1972, I read the violence and distancing in Thomas Kyd's Elizabethan metatheatrical dream play *The Spanish Tragedy* as rooted in the unconscious fantasy "*Kyd is his father attacking himself in the womb he is in*". I came up with this interpretation after studying the rhetorical patterns of reversal and self-cancellation in the play and its arbor imagery, which I took to signify the family tree.

The Spanish Tragedy raises images of the murder of two hapless warriors, Andrea and Horatio; plus a judicial murder by hanging; the suicide of Horatio's mother, Isabella, as she destroys the tree in her arbor where her son was hanged after being stabbed to death; the killing of two Iberian royal princes in a play within the play; suicide by the Spanish princess Bel-imperia in the play within the play; and the grieving father-playwright-judge Hieronimo's climactic suicide at the end of his play within the play, which has been presented in "sundry languages". When his audience fails to comprehend his actions, Hieronimo bites out his tongue. Commanded to write an explanation, he asks for a knife to sharpen his pen and then uses the knife to stab a member of his audience, his expressive frustration having given way to literal theatrical aggression.

In the overall *Spanish Tragedy*, the ghost Revenge stages a play for the murdered Andrea, who, now in the underworld, does not know that he was set up to be killed in war, a variation of the Biblical tale in II Samuel of King David having Uriah, the Hittite sent into the fiercest part of a battle and then abandoned so that David can marry Uriah's widow, Bathsheba. In Kyd's play, Andrea, in the role of the unwitting Uriah, is shown in a dream events that are happening on earth, where Andrea's friend Horatio takes over Andrea's former role as lover to the Spanish princess Bel-imperia. For her brother Lorenzo, both Horatio and Andrea are inconvenient obstacles to a dynastic plan to marry his sister to Balthazar, the Prince of Portugal. The two royal princes conspire to murder Horatio in the midst of a lovers' tryst. This they accomplish at night in the arbor of Horatio's father Hieronimo, who is the court playwright as well as a judge. Unable to approach the King to seek justice for his murdered son, Hieronimo, after much soliloquizing of grief and rage, instead stages a play in collusion with the twice-bereft Bel-imperia in which they kill Lorenzo and Balthazar before an audience of assembled Portuguese and Spanish royalty.

Figure 3 diagrams the way I see the complex metatheatrical dimensions of *The Spanish Tragedy*:

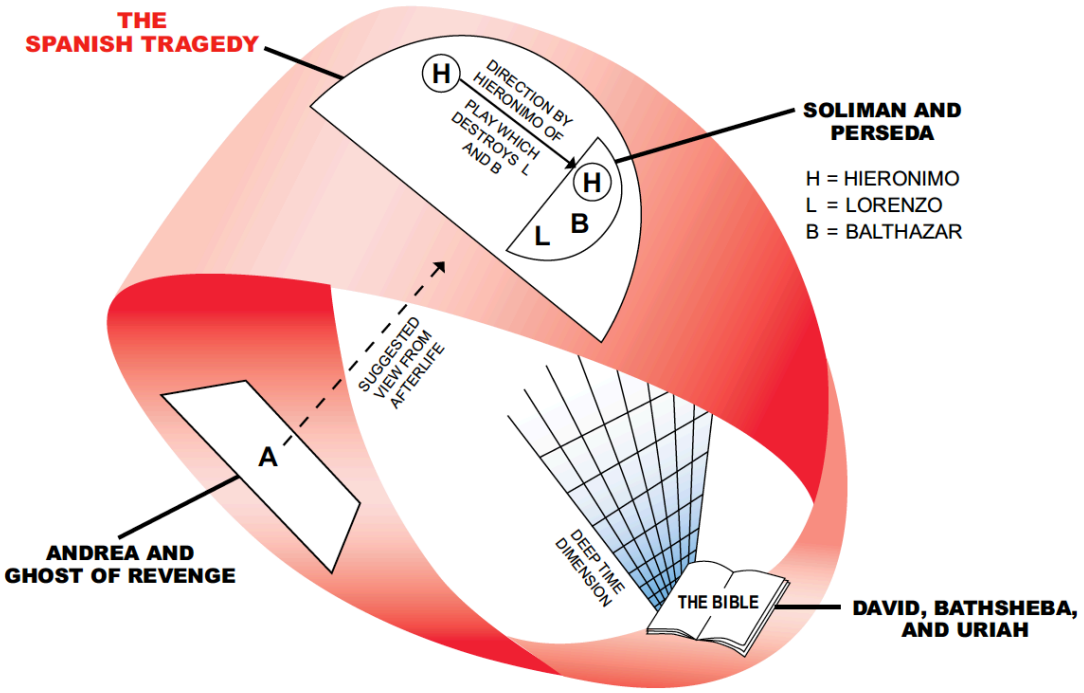

Figure 3

Mobius strip by Margaret Sims, showing metatheatrical dimensions of *The Spanish Tragedy*.

A key scene of the play shows Horatio's murder, committed in Hieronimo's garden, where his wife, Isabella, in frustration and rage, subsequently commits suicide upon destroying the family arbor where their son was hanged after being stabbed to death by Lorenzo and Balthazar. She declares, "And as I curse this tree from further fruit,/ So shall my womb be cursèd for his sake;/ And with this weapon will I wound the breast,/ The hapless breast, that gave Horatio suck". She stabs herself (IV.ii).

Isabella's suicide acts out in extremity the rhetorical pattern of reversal and self-cancellation informing Kyd's overall play, wherein the spectral personification Revenge tells the ghost of Andrea, "[E]re we go from hence,/ I'll turn their friendship into fell despite,/ Their love to mortal hate, their day to night,/ Their hope into despair, their peace to war,/ Their joys to pain, their bliss to misery" (I.v.5-10). Having been balanced as warring powers, afterwards "Spain is Portugal/ And Portugal is Spain" (I.v.17-18). Contemplating Lorenzo's scheme to murder Horatio, Balthazar says, "[I]t makes me glad and sad:/ Glad that I know the hinderer of my love;/ Sad, that I fear she hates me whom I love" (II.ii.111-113). During the arbor scene preceding his murder, when stabbing and hanging are to prove "fruits of love", Horatio meditates "On dangers past, and pleasures to ensue". In an aside, the spying Balthazar comments, "On pleasures past, and dangers to ensue". Bel-imperia asks Horatio, "What dangers and what pleasures dost thou mean?" He replies, "Dangers of war, and pleasures of our love", to which the spying Lorenzo chimes an aside, "Dangers of death, but pleasures none at all" (II.ii.25-31). In the play's most famous soliloquy, Hieronimo

laments, “Oh eyes, no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears;/ Oh life, no life, but lively form of death;/ O world, no world” (III.ii.1-3). Displaying his son’s corpse, Hieronimo says, “Here lay my hope, here my hope hath end:/ Here lay my heart, and here my heart was slain:/ Here lay my treasure, here my treasure lost:/ Here lay my bliss, and here my bliss bereft:/ But hope, heart, treasure/ joy, and bliss,/ All fled, failed, died, yea, decayed with this” (IV.iv.90-95), summing up his reversals of fortune.

When I originally responded to *The Spanish Tragedy*, I did not know that my father was murdered when I was two months from being born, but now I suspect that I was informed of this trauma without being aware of the transmission of knowledge. I regard this transmission as intergenerational because my mother’s father killed himself when she was a small child, and she, I assume, must have experienced her husband’s violent death as recurrence of the scene of gunshots she had experienced 12 years earlier. In addition, my paternal grandparents lived through the trauma of a murdered son who was heir to the legacy of Dr. William Forrester, stabbed to death by a patient in 1723; and my maternal grandmother lived through the death of her son-in-law in a way that must have recalled the trauma of being shot with her son and witnessing her husband’s suicide in 1931. See Figure 4 for the William Forrester->David Hunter blood line.

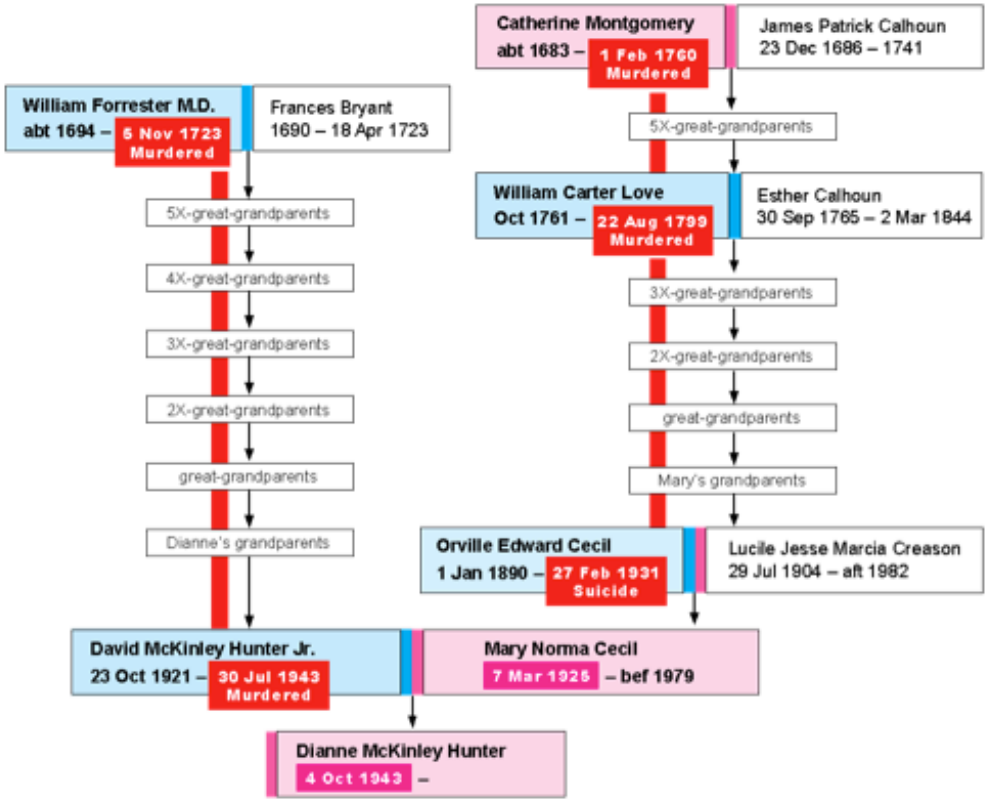

Figure 4

Genealogical chart by Margaret Sims, showing the double line of murders in the family history of Dianne Hunter.

In sorting out this family history, I propose that a history of destructive aggression seeking objectification illuminates Hieronimo's fate and the metatheatrical structure of Kyd's revenge play, and that an object-relations explanation of transmission of family turbulence illuminates my response to these. In graduate school, I fixed on Kyd's play for a year of close reading, and regarded it as integral not only to my identity as an academic but to my psychic core, which at the time, I assumed revolved around primal scene fantasy. Now that I know that my father was murdered, and murdered two months before my birth, it is less the sexuality of this play than its complexity and its murders that interest me. The primal scene fantasy at the heart of the play I now see as the focus for traumatic transmission of a violent legacy reaching into deep time.

The emphasis on historical events that contemporary trauma studies bring to psychoanalysis as a field of work suggests the return of the real as a key theme in our cultural moment. After many films simulating the destruction of America, 9.11 actually happened. The memoir boom expresses a literary shift toward the real. In Kyd's play there is an otherworldly audience watching a play in which one of the players is a playwright who stages a play in which the barrier between playing and reality collapses. The actors die as part of the performance; the playwright kills a member of the audience and then himself.

In *Hamlet* it is curious that the protagonist and the traveling players happen to know a play, *The Murder of Gonzago*, that fits so exactly the poisonous circumstances of the king's hidden assassination. It is similarly suggestive of chronic recurrence and transmission of secret motives that Hieronimo's plot duplicates the Biblical story of the hapless Hittite. The plot of his play encrypts the story of Uriah, transposed to Turkey, where a knight of Rhodes was betrothed, and wedded to Perseda, "an Italian Dame, /Whose beauty ravished all that her beheld,/Especially the soul of Soliman" (IV.i.111-113). Bel-imperia acts as an avatar it seems of Perseda. Proserpine in the underworld gives his "doom" to Andrea and sends him back to earth accompanied by a phantom who stages a replay of his death in the form of Horatio's. This phantom personifying Revenge has knowledge beyond the temporal. The "soul" of Soliman implies transcendence of the temporal.

Repetition and Witnessing

Kyd wrote his play during the upsurge of English patriotism that accompanied the threat and defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. He has his playwright stage at the beginning of *The Spanish Tragedy* a celebration of three medieval English knights who defeated Saracen rulers in Spain and Portugal. The Ottoman Empire successfully expelled Knights of Rhodes from their stronghold in 1522, and in 1529, lay siege to Vienna. The failed Ottoman Siege against the Knights of Malta in 1565, one of the most famous events of the 16th century, demonstrated a new period of Spanish dominance of the Mediterranean. In the form of Hieronimo's historical allusions, the heritage of recurring, age-old Mediterranean-based wars echoes from the beginning to the end of Kyd's play.

Hieronimo has each of his players speak a different "unknown language"—Greek, Latin, Italian, and French. At the climax of his multilingual play, Hieronimo stages and relives his traumatic discovery of his murdered son, speaking in the past and

present tense: “He shrieks: I heard, and yet, methinks, *I hear*” (IV.iv.107, my italics).

The analysis of *The Spanish Tragedy* David Willbern published in 1971 focuses on the psychology of revenge in this scene, on the way Hieronimo’s vengeance repeats a crime in attempting to rectify it. Hieronimo has re-hanged his son as a prop for theatrical display. The avenger here identifies with the original aggressor insofar as Hieronimo is now inflicting on his royal audience the sight of murdered children, both his and theirs. Hieronimo can be seen to be attempting to master the traumatic loss of his son by repeating it with his role transformed from passive to active. He is doing this with witnesses.

> Hieronimo “[Shows his dead son.]
> See here my show, look on *this spectacle*:
> . . . slaughtered *as you see*.
> And grieved I (think you) at *this spectacle*?
> *Speak, Portuguese, whose loss resembles mine*” (IV.iv.88-89, 112-115, my italics).

Figure 5, a woodcut showing the Arbor scene of Hieronimo’s discovery of his son’s body, depicts Hieronimo with a weapon similar to the sword held by one of the murderers. Hieronimo says, “[W]hat *murd’rous spectacle* is this? ...And in my bower, *to lay the guilt on me*” (II.v.9-11, my italics), psychologically aligning his trauma and ultimate role as avenger with the idea of duplicating the scene for which he seeks revenge. In staging his revenge, Hieronimo repeats the action of hanging Horatio and then tries to hang himself. This dramatizes how Hieronimo is both a subject and an object of destructive aggression.

Figure 5

1615 Woodcut showing the Arbor crime scene Hieronimo revenges in his final play within the play.

In dramatizing the stopping of time in the confrontation with death and horror, and in deploying sundry foreign languages to express horror's incomprehensibility, Kyd stages psychic marks of trauma that have been theorized by the psychoanalysts Francoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière, among others.

In addition, Hieronimo's infliction of visual shock—"slaughtered *as you see*"—not only repeats his own experience of finding his son murdered, it shows the trauma victim's need for a witness.

The Spanish Tragedy was the most iteratively performed drama of its day, suggesting on multiple levels how the survival of a baffling, violent event sets up the future of its representation: the trauma of finding his son hanging in the family arbor motivates Hieronimo's play, which is part of a multidimensional drama encrypting the secret assassination of his son's precursor Andrea, a version of the Biblical Uriah, the Hittite, who belonged to a culture that has all but disappeared from history. Hieronimo's allusions in his madness to Babel, Babylon, and the Crusades accumulate a deep history of violence concatenating in his revenge. Early in *The Spanish Tragedy* the villain Lorenzo declares, "Where words prevail not, violence prevails," a remark that ironically anticipates Hieronimo's trajectory as a seeker of justice. Reversing this remark anticipates the way a history of violence may seek objectification in words.

Theatrical suicide following theatrical aggression against the audience I now regard as a dramatic paradigm for comprehending the final acts of my maternal grandfather, who killed himself with his wounded family as his witnesses. Evidence of this trauma's intergenerational transmission is encrypted in a bizarre detail in one of the newspaper accounts of the death of my dad, who was found as a corpse in a ditch with his naturally-brown hair dyed red. My uncle Robert Cecil inherited his red hair from the man who shot him in the foot. When my maternal grandparents lost their first child Orville Cecil Jr. to pneumonia in 1923, my grandmother, who had been raised as a granddaughter of a prominent Baptist minister, converted to Catholicism because a priest her husband surprised her by bringing in to perform the last rites told her that if she ever wanted to see her baby again, she would have to become a Catholic herself. Six months pregnant at the time, my grandmother Lucile undertook catechism and prayed to God for another red-haired son. She believed God had answered her prayers when her next child, Robert, was born. So, I wonder, did my maternal grandmother convey to her daughter a red-hair fetish that contributed to the color of my dead dad's hair?

My mother survived the trauma of two dead redheads. Her silence on this subject drove me to find tools for analyzing complex plots, layers of consciousness, and hidden crimes. Commenting on Abraham and Torok's work on psychic encryption, Esther Rashkin remarks that we recapitulate, in our individual, ontogenetic work of being, the phylogeny of our infinitely regressive family sagas: "Every child's emergence as an individual is distinctive, constituted by repressions of uniquely charged pieces-of-the-mother, each bearing affects specifically related to the singular circumstances and psychic traumas of the mother's life. Moreover, since every mother is also the child of another mother, she must herself be understood as always already carrying the contents of another's unconscious" (Rashkin, p. 18). As Norma Cecil Hunter was carrying the turbulence of Esther Calhoun Love via Lucile Creason Cecil, I assume I became heir to that as well as to her father's suicide and her husband's

murder and its ancestral antecedent.

The unconscious passing down of turbulence in a family's subjectivity can be understood via the object-relations theory the psychoanalyst Maurice Apprey uses to explain transgenerational transmission of destructive aggression. Commenting on Freud's theory that an instinct has a source, an aim, and an object, Apprey sees psychic turbulence as an obscured errand oscillating in a family's history between subjects and objects as it passes along through time. An ancestral source of turbulence recruits revenants hiding a secret in search of expression. Pressure accompanying reactivation, writes Apprey, can be slow and insidious. As the personification of Revenge, a phantom, remarks in *The Spanish Tragedy*, "in unquiet, quietness is feigned" (III.xv). A psyche inheriting turbulence cast undercover, says Apprey, "gathers itself in protest or in recalcitrant resignation and/or chooses the poison if perceived to be mandated for death. Finally, the figure of an object through which or through whom fulfillment can be achieved can in its turn store, suspend, defer or inject the toxin into yet another subject, a suitable figure that can provide an object home for the mediating subject" (2017). Objects recruited by phantoms act as revenants who may become *advenants* who bring the hidden source of turbulence into public space by objectifying it.

Voicing the history of violence informing Kyd's play objectifies psychic turbulence. Apprey's description of subject-object oscillation in the transmission of trauma through time illuminates the dramatic structure of Kyd's revenge tragedy and my personal analogizing in relation to it. William Empson was the first to write about how Kyd's play is cryptically informed by the Biblical story of Uriah's death in battle. Empson observes how Kyd's revenger-playwright assumes the role of Fate. In analyzing how Hieronimo in his madness acts in an inconsistent and roundabout way, Empson observes that this early play gives a more profound treatment of revenge than later ones (Empson, ed. Kaufmann, p. 68). If we see the spectating ghost of Andrea as a phantom harboring an unconscious secret along lines theorized by Abraham and Torok, we may take the falling in and out of sleep by personified Revenge in the play's framing dimension as dramatizing a latent force oscillating over time as it seeks an object for discharging destructive aggression. This allows us to understand Fate, that is, irrational causation, as ancestral haunting.

Considering Maurice Apprey's description of the way subjective turbulence seeks an object home on whom to displace violence transmitted from elsewhere, it is remarkable to me that the Hunter family's story of my dad's death as intended for his brother is apparently untrue. Though my dad was probably not killed in place of his brother, his family understood his death as a displacement. Similarly, the marriages in my family lines undertaken with counterparts carrying a history of being murder victims suggests the kind of recruitment of objects by mediating subjects transmitting turbulence such as Apprey describes in his psychiatric work.

Recapitulating from his perspective my maternal grandfather Orville's final moments, I think of his discharge from the U.S. Marines, deaf in one ear, presumably from gunshot. He was an orphan whose mother, Mary French, was herself orphaned at age four. Orville's older brother, his only sibling, poisoned himself to death in 1918, a month after their mother died in poverty. Within five years of these two deaths, Orville married Lucile and buried their first child. She divorced him in 1926, and became a

Mrs. Driscoll in 1927. The 1930 U.S. Census lists Orville's son and daughter as Driscoll, and Lucile as a single mother. Less than a year later, Orville took revenge, violently joining his singular history to the history of murders in his wife's family line.

One Sunday morning in 2017, I drove to what I thought was the address in Philadelphia where Orville Cecil Sr. breathed his last, but I had reversed the house numbers given by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper account of his death and came to a place that did not look like the building I had found on Google maps. I drove around until I saw an apartment building that looked a bit like what I thought must be the place. When I checked my GPS, I realized this was a different street from the one I was seeking, so I drove back to what I took to be the address I wanted to photograph, and parked across from it. It was a quiet Sunday morning, with no one visible on this street. The address had an old, grayed wood, 7-foot pike-style fence in front and along its corner side, with a sign saying the equivalent of "This property is condemned". I could see piled-up trash and what looked to me like a crack house behind this fence. I went along the corner side and tried to photograph the house over the top of the fence. As I walked back to my car, I saw that a pale, thin man had pulled up on the sidewalk. He was astride a red motor scooter, and appeared to have been trying to open the passenger-side door of my car. He looked to be in his early 20s, and wore a gray hoodie pulled up over his head. I asked him which house was "3929". He rolled glassy eyes and did not reply. As I got into the driver's seat of my car I saw a fat black young man puffing down the street in our direction. He arrived next to the pale man and peered into my windshield from the sidewalk. I waved and said, "Just leaving!" As I drove off, I thought, "What an ending for the story of Orville Cecil Sr.: 'unknown woman from Connecticut found dead on Frankford Avenue in Philadelphia, thought to have been seeking drugs'". No one would have known why I was there.

In sum, this essay presents two lines of argument: 1) an object-relations concept of the transmission of turbulence through Mediterranean and European history illuminates the metatheatrical and phantom structure of *The Spanish Tragedy*; 2) The concept of transgenerational transmission of family trauma illuminates my response to this play.

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The Birth and Death of Subjectivity in the Works of William Shakespeare and William S. Burroughs (William And William)

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"For Piers Shore & Owen Sweet.
In death they shall not be divided".

Abstract

We open with the question of subjectivity as it is presented in Hamlet; the focus then moves to the breakdown of subjectivity as experienced in extreme situations and clinical psychosis. Gabel's idea of continuity *from* psychosis *to* ideology (false consciousness) is used to show that William S. Burroughs is in fact a theorist of global ideological pathology. The concept of reification allows us to combine the voices of Gabel and Burroughs. This is *not* a study of what has been said about Burroughs or Shakespeare, our concern is with the future of the City, not the nature of the finger that points towards it. The cycle of "William & William" refers to the birth and destruction of subjectivity as defined by "conditions such as these".

Figure 1

W. S. Burroughs in London for the "Final Academy" in 1982.

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"I postulate that the function of art and all creative thought is to make us aware of what we know and don't know that we know" (Burroughs, 1979, p. 47).

Introduction

This article attempts to do several things. First we provide a rapid sketch of Shakepeare's contribution to the nature of the subject and underline his influence on Freud. This introduces the greater part of our work which explores what Burroughs tells us about the end of subjectivity. The concept of reification (Gabel) allows a critical use of a significant part of Burroughs' work and the "algebra of need" is seen as the triumph of the ideology of merchandise and the slow death of selfhood. We are not at all concerned with modern studies of Shakespeare and Burroughs simply because our sole task is to establish a critical outline of future man within the perspectives provided by Burroughs (see Figures 1 and 2), Gabel and others. The reader is thus informed that our concern is *not* the nature of the hand that points towards the city, it is rather *the city itself*.

Shakespeare: The Subject as Divided

Freud began to read Shakespeare early in his life (Michaud, 2011, pp. 32-33) and it would be fair to argue that he provides many solid arguments in favour of a divided subject. The nature of divisions, the way characters live and express their conflicts are expressions of subjectivity. Hamlet, Claudius, Polonius and Macbeth are shoulder deep in conflicts of many shades and hues. Despite this, or rather because of it, there is a clearly stated and well defined sense of self, guilt, choice and decision. As subjects born within filial structures they are in touch with themselves and others, they have a sense of truth and transgression, finally they take decisions as relatively free agents. Even if they have intuitions about the game being rigged and the cards stacked against them their decision are theirs and theirs alone, the 'I' that Burroughs refutes overflows in Hamlet and Macbeth… Shakespeare has a clear theory pertaining to the nature of subject. Division does not prevent the protagonists from defying laws, traditions and perhaps even Gods, on the contrary it is the very architecture of the Self.

Shakespeare's Vision of the Self

The hypothesis developed here is two-fold: we shall sketch an overview of subjectivity as expressed in Hamlet and Macbeth[2], in the second part of our study we outline the fall of subjectivity as expressed in the works of William Seward Burroughs. The cycle of the birth and death of subjectivity runs approximately from 1600 to the cold 1950s, we call it "William and William".

Hamlet opens with the essential question "Who's there?" (Nuttal, 1988, pp. 53-69), the play deals with the nature of identity, preconscious and unconscious knowledge, it

[2] The modernity of *Macbeth* is studied by J. Mervant (2008) in his remarkable *Etre ou ne pas être né d'une femme*. Macbeth and his Lady return in the BBC version of House of cards. This time round they are in no way hindered by guilt, such is progress.

asks the question what is a subject? The answers come from many directions; when Hamlet hears that "The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown" (I.v.39-40) He answers "O, my prophetic soul![3]" (I.v.41). By this the reader understands that Hamlet already has knowledge or intuition within him about the nature of King Hamlet's death, this well before the message which was imparted by the 'ghost'. Like a good psychoanalyst or a great artist, the ghost makes conscious knowledge Hamlet is already aware of in his soul. The ghost is not the truth per se – he is rather the agent or catalyst that reveals truth to *he who already knows*. One should add that the words of the weird sisters, coupled with those of Lady M. bring Macbeth's ambitions to the foreground, in this sense he is not the sole initiator of his coup d'état.

Claudius is a thug who is bright enough to seduce the boss's wife and get promotion, Hamlet, the prince of equivocation, runs rings round him on several occasions. This should not blind us to the fact that Claudius has a clear theory about a division within language itself. Act III, scene iii: Hamlet has an opportunity to Kill Claudius who is praying to what might be an empty sky.[4] Hamlet fears that Claudius might go to heaven with a cleansed soul whereas Claudius feels that any appeal to God is inauthentic. In this context of tension and truth Claudius realises that his "words fly up, [his] thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go" (III,iii,97-99). Language is clearly presented in two blocks that may or may not be related, language, Shakespeare argues, exists so that people may lie. The fair and tragic Ophelia also contributes to the question of subjective division, she goes mad for several complex and interwoven reasons. She obeys her father, Polonius, who forbids the relationship with Hamlet for visibly flimsy reasons. Then she is used as a decoy by Polonius, Hamlet sees this as collusion with the enemy. Hamlet's hatred of Gertrude's sexuality fuels his hatred of love and desire. Ophelia pays a high price for the crimes of others. In her madness, close to twilight hysteria, she hits upon a painful truth:

> King. How do you pretty lady?
>
> Ophelia. Well, God dild you![5] they say the owl was a Baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be… God be at your table! (IV,v,45-48).

[3] According to David and Ben Crystal, Shakespeare's use of the word Soul refers to driving force, animating principle, inner conviction, conscience, heart and inner being… (Crystal, 2002, p. 409).

[4] The soul of Claudius is "limed", (III,iii,68) the image stems from birdlime, a sticky substance used to catch birds, the implication is that the King is stuck here on earth. If he clutches to catholic axiology he may hope for hell, if he is limed forever then he simply has nowhere to go.

[5] The idea that God should yield or give anything to Claudius is, within the context, dark black irony of the fiercest kind. Claudius cannot find God at his table because he has divorced words from thoughts for all time.

Ophelia appears to be saying that the subject is aware of identifications in the present, but trauma teaches her that identifications may change or crumble in a state of shock. As her identifications tremble and shake she reveals the secret that binds lovers everywhere:

> Ophelia. …Then up he rose, and donned his clo'es,
>
> And dupped the chamber door,
>
> Let in the maid, that out a maid
>
> Never departed more". (IV,v,50-54)

The Ghost also contributes to the question of subjective division as does Gertrude[6]: "O step between her and her fighting soul" (III,iv,114). The ghost's advice is clearly not a tautology, rather it indicates an implicit recognition of subjectivity as built upon different levels of awareness, different fields of knowledge, experience and feeling. There is a space between 'her' and her fighting soul. In other words, 'her' is in no way equivalent to 'her fighting soul', we are obviously dealing with different instances. The Ghost invites Hamlet to occupy this space between so as to soothe Gertrude.

A True Prince of Equivocation…

Hamlet is in an untenable situation, even before the curtain rises he has lost both his father and his kingdom, the words of the honest ghost push him further, his retreat from the world of appearance allows him to deal with unspeakable truths[7]. He uses equivocation as a form of protective[8] questioning. Hamlet's puns or quibbles show the subject to be divided by and into different levels of awareness, different ways of hearing words, here are a few clear examples.

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[6] The Queen states that Hamlet is "Mad as the sea and wind when both contend"(III,iv,7). In 1908 Karl Abraham explained that in hysteria the libido over invested the object, whereas the libido was absent in psychosis (dementia praecox). Freud argued in 1923-1924 that in psychosis (delusions of persecution, paranoia) the subject was at war with the world whereas in neurosis the struggle is a civil war between self and self, between the wind and sea as Gertrude remarks so clearly. See also Abraham's (1908) The psycho-sexual differences between hysteria and dementia praecox, as well as Freud's *Neurosis and Psychosis* (1923/1934) and *The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis* (1961).

[7] Regicide, fratricide and, according to Hamlet, incest. Hamlet stands almost alone with the truth and moves in a world of lies and spies, this explains in part his recourse to Ganser type answers to questions. This means that he is acutely aware of the semantic sphere of the question and provides unconventional answers that protect him. His answers are crammed full of meanings even if Polonius and others claim not to understand their drift.

[8] He is alone with a secret that would bring the kingdom crashing down or else give cause for him to be murdered ...

Act I, i, 64-65: Claudius makes his first mistake by giving his first attention to Laertes, who is in essence the son of an influence peddler and an obvious hypocrite in sexual terms:

…But now my cousin Hamlet, and my son –

Hamlet. A little more than kin, less than kind.

Claudius makes a second howler by assuming that fatherhood came automatically after a wedding. Hamlet's equivocation spins around the letter 'd'. Claudius is an uncle who claims publicly to be a father – Hamlet warms him off by saying that the connection Claudius lays claim to has no real ground in that the two men do not share the same reality, nature or disposition (Crystal, 2002, p. 251). Hamlet's answer changes the way we hear words and obliges the audience to consider several levels of meaning and different areas of awareness. Claudius continues:

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Hamlet. Not so my lord, I am too much in the sun (I,i,66-7).

The equivocation is almost a dagger drawn, Hamlet, whatever the genetics of the question might show, wants nothing to do in filial terms with the head banger who came between his hopes and his election. This stinging pun mirrors the nature of subjectivity in that it is multi-layered: "Hamlet was known...to be alluding to the now obsolete...expression 'Out of heaven's blessing to the warm sun'...the true interpretation of this expression was 'From an exalted, or honourable, state or occupation to a low or ignoble one'" (Wilson, 1935/1995, p. 33)[9]. The second meaning relates to Claudius as "uncle-father" and Gertrude as "aunt-mother" (II,ii,379-380), Claudius claims too much proximity, Hamlet will have none of it. The last aspect of the bitter pun is related to the undeniably melancholy[10] aspect of Hamlet's nature; the melancholic, according to Dr André du Laurens (1599) is an "enemie to the sun" (Jackson, 1986, p. 87).

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not the best of secret agents, along with Polonius they die because of their blind spots. Although he sees through them Hamlet gives them some truth when he declares: "I am but mad north-north west; when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw" (II,ii,382-383). This shows that Hamlet adjusts to the way he is seen by the Other and, in modern clinical terms, he is telling

[9] All quotes from Hamlet are from the text established by J. Dover Wilson (1936).

[10] There are several Hamlets, the prince of equivocation dominates the first four acts. On his return, after the pirate story, he has changed, indeed he leaves equivocation to the grave digger. Melancholic Hamlet is painted in colours borrowed from Bright (1586), this should not hide the Hamlet who mourns, grieves and suffers. The roots of Freud's differential study, Mourning and melancholia, are exposed here for all to see. For details regarding Bright's influence on Shakespeare see Wilson (1935/1995, pp. 309-320). For a detailed study of Shakespeare's influence on Freud see Michaud (2011).

us that he does not use clang associations[11]; he is not only consciousness but also consciousness of his specific areas of awareness. His division allows his to include a sense of 'self as seen by Other' alongside the "prophetic soul" of knowledge that cannot yet be shared. The nature of this knowledge encourages Hamlet to declare war on convention and appearances: "…I know not 'seems'" (I,ii,76). These four words are as planted seeds...Their significance grows through the play and then through the history of literature.

In Macbeth the divisions are even more violently illustrated: the witches use equivocation to push Macbeth and his kingdom to ruin. Mesmerised, in the truest sense of the word, he sees only the advantages of the witches' words, his wife is divided between a cast iron ambition and an underground sea of guilt that finally overflows in the pre-suicidal fits of sleep-walking. What cannot be said in full daylight manifests itself in nightmares. Repressed feelings may return to the surface Shakespeare suggests. A clearer vision of the self as divided cannot be found. The play illustrates not only the division of the subject but also the way language and suggestion can take hold of a person. Macbeth – along with Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern – dies because he refuses to hear what is really being said. Our hypothesis is that the Shakespearian theory of the subject, defined by division, lasted roughly until the middle of the 20 th century. The fragmentation of subjectivity was accelerated by the lawlessness[12] of the second world war, the triumph of merchandise and its algebra of need. What future historians will call "the truthless age "incarnated by the election of George W. Bush, Macron and Trump may well accelerate the decline of the subject and promote externalised awareness defined mainly by merchandise[13] along with the triumph of forms of jouissance that will no longer be be defined by object relations.

Burroughs towards the 21st century, the end of the I

On January the 26th 1997, some 8 months before his death, William Burroughs made the following entry into his diary:

> I stood in front of the mirror on the landing, in the eerie medium of childhood that withers away and said to the image: 'Three'.
>
> It was my third birthday, and on from there always the feel of something terrible just under the surface… (Burroughs, 2000, p. 69)

On the final page of the chapter 'Astronaut's return' in *Exterminator* we find:

> So many you can't remember
>
> The boy who used to whistle

[11] See Hérouard's (1993), *Ecrits Inspirés et Langue Fondamentale.*

[12] Burroughs suggests that the technology of extermination camps and the the atom bomb foreclosed any idea of 'human law'.

[13] "Western man is externalizing himself in the form of gadgets" (Burroughs, 1961/1968, p. 43).

Car accident or was it the war?

Which war?

The boy's room is quite empty now.

Do you begin to see there is no face in the tarnished mirror?" (Burroughs, 1974, p. 27)[14]

The first quotation reveals Burroughs' intimate grasp of the mirror phase[15] (or stage), the point in early childhood in which an external image is internalised so as to form the basis of identification, of selfhood. There is no sense of excitement or triumph here, rather awareness of self is identified as "something terrible just under the surface", as if the great man were born into anguish and a certain degree of ontological insecurity. The second quotation is very close to what French clinicians call 'the mirror sign'; this entails the breakdown of the mirror image that occurs in clinical psychosis; for example, some male patients hallucinate images of a pretty woman and engage in conversations with the hallucinatory image. The patient uses two different voices and sometimes the 'dialogue' ends with bouts of uncontrollable frenetic masturbation. If one opposes the mirror phase to the mirror sign[16] a tension between being and non-being is revealed, this tension, as we shall explain, is one of the fault lines to be found in many parts of Burroughs unending œuvre.

The mirror sign, along with the concept of ontological insecurity, allows us to define our second question which concerns the generally unstable, or menacing, relationships between people or 'characters' and bodies in significant parts of Burroughs' work. The question of the disembodied self leads us to our final point; we reject the idea that Burroughs work "set out to defy intelligibility" (Bullock & Stallybrass, 1977, p. 55) and argue that his legacy is a more than intelligible guidebook of global psychopathology. In this sense Burroughs is one of a small group in which we also find Joseph Gabel author of *False Consciousness*[17]. What might constitute a meeting place of two thinkers with such clearly contrasting styles and backgrounds? Gabel, who wrote his state thesis under the direction of Eugene Minkowski, uses psychotic thinking as a tool in the analysis of ideological constructs, his genius is to be found in the idea that ordinary people will accept will accept psychotic logic if it is wrapped in acceptable ideological packaging. In the ever-accelerating universe that Burroughs describes ideologies, government systems and falsehoods race by and disintegrate into conflicts and disasters. Gabel shows us the same distorted thought patterns but far more slowly, frame by frame as it were. Burroughs and Gabel share the idea that

[14] Without fear of contradiction one could argue that a theory about psychosis that does not include the mirror sign is simply not adequate to its object. See Postel and Allen (1994, pp. 675-681).

[15] "We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification…the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image…" (Lacan, 1949/2001, p. 2).

[16] At the end of an exchange about flying dreams with Regina Weinreich Burroughs stated that he was himself during a dream and added "The only thing was, I couldn't see myself in the mirror" (Burroughs & Lotringer, 2001, p. 766).

[17] See Gabel (1975), Gabel and Sica (1997).

clinical and ideological problems are, in fact, one and the same, they are both clinicians of mad ideologies.

Ontological Insecurity and Fluctuations of the Self

In 1834 the French alienist François Leuret published the case study of a psychotic patient Catherine X (Leuret, 1834,121-24). The following is a transcript of their exchange that took place in a Paris asylum before 1834:

> FL: "…please tell me your name..."
>
> Catherine X: "The person of I-myself does not have a name…The person of I-myself has lost her name, she gave it away when she entered the Salpêtrière…The person of I-myself is the child of nobody: the origin of the person of I-myself is unknown: she has no memories whatsoever of the past". (Allen, 2015, pp. 232-233)[18]

The Poet John Clare spent the last part of his life at the Northampton general lunatic asylum in the U.K., here he wrote An invite to eternity:

> Say, wilt thou go with me, sweet maid,
>
> Say, maiden wilt thou go with me […]
>
> Where stones will turn to flooding streams
>
> Where planes will rise like oceaned waves […]
>
> Where life will fade like visioned dreams
>
> And mountains darken into caves,
>
> Say maiden wilt thou go with me
>
> Through this sad non-identity… (Clare, 1848/2003, p. 276)[19]

Clare and Catherine both express forms of consciousness that function without subjectivity, many other witnesses clearly favour such an idea.[20] The psychotic psychiatrist François Klein explained that: "There is no argument about the fact that I am not I-myself. I am my mother and my father […] My father is not my father

[18] I have translated the expression 'La personne de moi-même' as 'the person of I-mysel'.

[19] Burroughs stated clearly that to his mind "There is no such thing as an 'I'", (Burroughs & Lotringer, 2001, p. 450).

[20] "The schizophrenic patient answers the question [where are you?]…correctly … Many times, however, he tells us that although he *knows* where he is, he does not *feel* that he is in the space he occupies, he does not feel that he is in his body, and the proposition «I exist» has no particular meaning for him" (Minkowski, 1927, p. 93).

himself: he is my grandmother and my grandfather…" (Klein, as cited in Allen, 2015, p. 218). Klein goes beyond the logical affirmation of non-being and states that "The schizophrenic allows himself to be spoken [by language] as opposed to speaking [in his own name]…" (Klein, 1937/1998, p. 119).

In February 1954 Burroughs wrote a letter to Allen Ginsburg that contained the talking asshole routine that found its way into *Naked Lunch* in Paris in 1959. In this letter Burroughs provides a clear understanding of his particular relationship to language:

> This is my saleable product. Do you dig what happens? It's almost like automatic writing *produced by a hostile, independent entity who is saying in effect 'I will write what I please'*. At the same time when I try to pressure myself into organizing production, to impose form on material, or even to follow a line (like continuation of novel) the effort catapults me into a sort of madness where *only the most extreme material is available to me*. (Burroughs, 1953-1957/1982, pp. 20-21. Italics added)

The "hostile independent entity" is perhaps a clear echo of "something terrible" that Burroughs encountered "just under the surface" when he was three years old[21]. Timothy Murphy in his ground breaking study[22] suggests that the idea of Burroughs (Lee in the film version of Naked Lunch) writing for unknown powers is "Cronenberg's invention rather than Burroughs" (Murphy, 1997, p. 69). This may be true as far as the film goes, what is far more important however is the fact that Burroughs himself felt that he was written (or made to write!) by a "hostile independent entity" called language. In this sense Burroughs is as much a structuralist as Minkowski himself, if not more so …

Ontological insecurity is an expression R. D. Laing uses to describe people whose sense of "autonomous identity" (Laing, 1960/1969, p. 45) is built on unsafe ground: the ontologically insecure person, Laing explains, is prone to three kinds of anguish – engulfment, implosion and petrification. One of the definitions Laing gives for engulfment is particularly relevant to the universe Burroughs describes, i.e., "loss of being by absorption into the other person" (Laing, 1960/1969, p. 46). Implosion is defined as "the full terror of the experience of the world as liable at any moment to crash in and obliterate all identity, as a gas will rush in and obliterate a vacuum" (Laing, 1960/1969, p. 47). Petrification, depersonalisation and reification are found throughout the length and breadth of Burroughs forever imploding universe. Laing defines petrification as a "particular form of terror...i.e. turned to stone…the possibility of turning…into a dead thing…an it without subjectivity…" (Laing, 1960/1969, p. 48).

[21] In 1991, during an interview with Victor Bockris, Burroughs stated that this was his "earliest conscious memory" (Burroughs & Lotringer, 2001, p. 802).
[22] See Murphy (1997).

Our hypothesis is that Burroughs' work defines universal insecurity – worlds in which traditional modes of being are simply no longer available – the unembodied self – the fragment of broken selfhood is all that remains. Here are some examples taken from different parts of Burroughs' written production. In *Port of saints* the reader observes the conflict between the Norms who represent "the American moral disease" in its terminal stage and the "parries" who believe in paranormal experiences. "Then came the came the news that everyone longed to hear: the Parries are back…To a vast chorus of onward Christian soldiers the norms marched on Los Alamos. They did not use the atom bombs because there was nobody left who could use one" (Burroughs, 1980, p. 23). The Norms have a precise thinking system that governs behaviour and perception; they embody "decent church-going morality" (Burroughs, 1980, p. 23). Their discourse is normative, rigid and ever suspicious[23]: "Under the rule of Mike Finn it didn't pay to be good at anything…In consequence the whole structure of Western society collapsed" (Burroughs, 1980, p. 23).

There is no reason not to kill, the super-ego is absent or rejected, the "moral disease" is directed by the logic of the psychopath; the Norms are fuelled by the righteousness of fanaticism on their road to mass slaughter: "Armed with scythes and pitch forks and shot guns they marched, killing every living thing in their path" (Burroughs, 1980, p. 23). Burroughs offers little or no security for mankind; even the Norms who accept the most extreme fanatical ideology are threatened by their very companions:

> As the Norms…led by Mike Finn streamed into the Parry Reservation, a great cry of rage went up: the Parries were gone. Spitting hate at the empty space, they killed all the animals they could find and then began looking at each other […] Several hundred thousand Norms slaughtered each other on the spot. (Burroughs, 1980, p. 22)

Finally the Norms are "ploughed under" as fertilizer and yet nothing changes, conflicts move in cycles that prohibit any sense of conclusion or even a temporary improvement of the human lot: "Camera pans the scattered forces and the broken morale of the militants…teenage alcoholics, underground press closing down, black panthers finished, censorship coming back, pollution, over-population, atomic tests…" (Burroughs, 1980, p. 24). The movement of manic massacres gives way to despair often bordering on melancholia.

Within this landscape of global insecurity all values, all illusions, appear to crumble revealing madness, hatred and an unquenchable need for violent murder within the very core of modern civilised institutions:

> Well an ugly thing broke out that day in the precinct this cop had worked a drunk over and the young cop had a mad look in his eyes and he kept screaming. 'Let me finish the bastard off […]' I've seen that look before and I know what it means:

[23] See also Genil-Perrin (1927, pp. 203-239).

> ‘cop crazy’. When it hits they’ll rush out search, sap, arrest anyone in sight. We try to cover for them. ‘Son, if the cop madness come on you find an old drunken bum just as quick as you can and let yourself go’. (Burroughs, 1972, p. 162)

A specialist of collective delusions, George Heuyer, wrote that: “The feelings of crowds are closed off from doubt and uncertainty…crowds think in terms of images that follow one after the other without the least critical thought” (Heuyer, 1973, p. 37). Crowd behaviour suggests that “We” is not the plural of “I”; the crowd, as Heuyer argues is directed by image and clearly by the drive towards destruction, whereas the “I” functions within language, even if, as Burroughs argues, language is a virus. Heuyer also claims that there is something contagious about crowd behaviour (Heuyer, 1973, p. 37). Burroughs describes something comparable: “…the madness would seize whole precincts for a few minutes during which anyone in the tank is beaten to a bloody pulp…” (Burroughs, 1974, p. 163). Burroughs knows not ‘seems’, this allows him to write ever closer to unspeakable truths. In *Port of Saints* we again find a pattern of arbitrary violence: “Number 1 asks him what the Chief of Police actually does… All sorts of things. He throws people in jail and beats them up. He is also responsible for the whole police force, who are always getting drunk and shooting each other and the citizens” (Burroughs, 1980, p. 24).

The arbitrary universe obliges the reader to abandon any traditional dictionary definition in favour of meanings derived from experience and perception; thus the question ‘what is a policeman?’ relates to ‘people who shoot citizens’ as an answer. In his routines and elsewhere Burroughs demonstrates the severance of the traditional link between the word as acoustic image and the objet the image pertains to. Institutions that, in theory, serve or protect people turn against them in manic fits of totalitarian madness: “Citizens reporting to pay a parking ticket are bustled into the death cell as the berserk machine spits out random laws, warrants and sentences” (Burroughs & Odier, 1980, p. 142). Very often Burroughs describes situations which, by definition, make any subjective response impossible, human beings are reified and finally destroyed, murdered and ‘neutralised’- this last word being, in itself, an indication of reification. Whatever the ordinary citizen does she or he is always wrong, at times the world runs on double bind logic at all levels: “Every citizen of Annexia was required to apply for and carry on his person at all times a whole portfolio of documents […] The Examiner, when he stopped a large group, would only examine and stamp the cards of the few. The others were then subject to arrest because their cards were not properly stamped” (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 40).

The destruction of selfhood works in two basic directions, in one case pathological institutions make life unbearable and simply impossible, in other cases the disembodied self is disconnected from the body and reduced to a ghost like existence. “I am a ghost wanting what every ghost wants – a body” (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 26). Whereas Henri Wallon and Lacan underline the origins of selfhood Burroughs demonstrates, over and over again, the death of the self:

> ‘So he has an affair with this Latah, he wants to dominate someone complete the silly old thing …’ The Latah imitates all his expressions and mannerisms and

> simply sucks all the personna right out of him like a sinister ventriloquist's dummy[24]...'You've taught me everything you are...I need a new amigo'. And poor Bubu can't answer for himself, having no self left'. (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 163)

Complete characters are more than rare; generally speaking the universe, as defined by Burroughs, contains fragments or shreds of subjectivity, sound bites of extreme ideological discourse against a background of conflicts and massacres and despair that bring a fearful manic-depressive rhythm to many scenes. Fragments come into focus then fade, there is no room for any complete vision or totality and finally no hope for any kind of redemption or improvement of modern man.

If we consider extreme situations there are clear parallels between the bureaucratic dehumanisation that Burroughs describes and the logic of reification found in concentration camps. Niederland lists the following characteristics of concentration camp life:

1. …life endangering situation…total helplessness.
2. Chronic starvation – from 1400 later 600 calories.
3. Physical maltreatment with fear of total annihilation.
4. Total degradation to the point of dehumanisation[25].
5. Recurrent terror episodes.
6. Total family loss.
7. Abrogation of causality.

[24] In 1945 Ealing studios released a horror film, made up of several different dream narratives, entitled *Dead of night*; it included a long sequence called 'The ventriloquist's dummy' in which the ventriloquist (Michael Redgrave) is possessed by his dummy who finally betrays him…The film also includes a dream sequence concerning a racing driver who has a bad accident; in hospital he dreams of an undertaker who says "room for one more inside sir"whilst driving a hearse, this is clearly an invitation to death. Miles Malleson repeats the phrase a second time in the same film sequence but this time as a London bus conductor. The bus crashes with passengers mangled to death, the wounded racing driver refuses the invitation twice. Burroughs uses the invitation in the post-script to the introduction of *Naked Lunch* with capitals as follows "Room for One More Inside, Sir" (p. 16). The invitation is repeated page 17 without the additional capitals, and again page 257 as "…Room for one more inside" as if to emphasise the lasting nature of the death drive that invites the Junky into the cold. Burroughs may well have seen the film in London or elsewhere.

[25] Whilst using a sleeping pill called Soneryl Burroughs dreamt that he'd "been in a prison camp for years suffering from malnutrition…"(Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 86)

8. Assaults on and impairment of identity with changes of self-image; self-estrangement.

9. Prolonged "living dead" existence with no way out and growing feeling that one's 'non-existence is entirely possible' (Erolson) leading into…stupor [and] death (Krystal, 1968, p. 64).

Many passages of *Naked Lunch* deal with racism and anti-Semitism in the USA, the analysis of various ideologies allow Burroughs to combine different aspects of totalitarian control systems. The oft repeated references to "the ovens" might indicate that genocide, as a historical possibility, has been absorbed into what Timothy Murphy[26] calls an "amodern" perspective. Burroughs offers a kaleidoscope of totalitarian perspectives which subsumes every shade and hue of dictatorships past, present and future. At the "Meet Café" in the "City Market" alongside black marketeers of WW III we find "bureaucrats of spectral departments, officials of unconstituted police states" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 130). In other words if there is any continuity in what Burroughs calls the "biologic film" it is the continuity of the negation of freedom, the police state leitmotif that works even better when the policeman is internalised by a submissive population. Dr Benway is very clear on this point: "A functioning police state needs no police" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 54). Benway abolishes concentration camps and mass arrest because, to his mind, they are not efficient enough. "On the other hand, prolonged mistreatment…gives rise...to anxiety and a feeling of special guilt. […] The subject must not realize that the mistreatment is a deliberate attack of an anti-human enemy on his personal identity" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, pp. 39-40).

The human subject is wrong and, with a clear nod in the direction of Kafka's *Trial*, it is impossible to know what he is guilty of. In this post-concentration camp perspective the law has "melted" , there is no law[27] of any sort, not even the arbitrary

[26] "...the primary forms of racism analysed in *Naked Lunch* are American anti-Semitism and anti-black racism…" (Murphy, 1997, p. 93). Murphy also mentions "the racists' paranoid control hallucinations…" (Murphy, 1997, p. 92). The late Joseph Gabel often compared racist logic to paranoia, in both cases, he would argue the Other who persecutes is a figment of a fanatical imagination bearing "the stigma of society's disavowal of its of its own determining characteristics" (Murphy, 1997, pp. 92-93). The racism that Burroughs sees as a central ideological element to political life in the USA has amplified in accordance with what Burroughs predicted in *The Electronic Revolution*. "…Trump's win was a triumph of the hideous racism, sexism and xenophobia that has always run through American society" (Taibbi, 2017, p. 285).

[27] After the final solution, Hiroshima, Pinochet, Stalin, Petain, Maggie Blair, and … what Law can be seen to protect the human subject or regulate his exchanges? "*Arbeit macht frei*"– Work bestows freedom (sic)… This slogan was found on a gate to Auschwitz during WW II. Clearly there is little or no real Law after 1945, and there no are such thing as Laws beyond 'the algebra of need' in the worlds Burroughs describes, indeed he is perhaps the first artist to have completely absorbed the totalitarian experience as a defined – and dominant – category of

link between the acoustic image and the concrete object. In this lawless land the non-being of the disembodied self is, for the greater part of the population, the last resort. The idea that non-existence is possible is not only found in concentration camps – it is also established in the cases of Catherine X, Clare and of course Klein. Selfhood is simply not a viable possibility in the lawless universe that Burroughs defines:

> Aracknid is a worthless chauffer, barely able to drive. …He ran down a pregnant woman…with a load of charcoal on her back, and she miscarried a bloody dead baby in the street…the police questioned Aracknid and finally arrested the woman for a violation of the sanitary code'. (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 40)

The law is defined as an arbitrary force that functions without reason: "As one judge said to another: 'Be just and if you can't be just be arbitrary'" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 22). In *The ticket that exploded* the writer goes as step further by suggesting that advanced technology has simply put an end to any laws: "You can look any place…technical brains melted the law" (Burroughs, 1967, p. 172). Without law, and without the super-ego to provide individual law, only the most destructive human drives find expression:

> I saw women thrown down on Fifth Avenue and raped in their mink coats...while street urchins stripped the rings from their fingers. […] I found Colonel Bradshaw bivouacking in the Ritz. I told him bluntly what was going on. His eyes glinted shamelessly as he said: 'Well you have to take a broad general view of things'. And that's what I've been doing. Taking a broad general view of American troops raping and murdering helpless civilians while American officers stand around and yawn. (Burroughs, 1974, p. 115)

On occasions ideological justifications appear for wars and massacres:

> General Greenfield on a white horse speaks from the top of Art hill. …'Over there'… 'Across the Atlantic is a sink of iniquity… A latter day Sodom and Gomorrah. …All over America kids like Johnny are deserting this country and their great American heritage suborned by the false promises of Moscow into a life of drugs and vice. I say to you all that wherever anarchy, vice and foul corruption rears the swollen head of the cobra to strike at everything we hold sacred, the very heart of America is threatened. (Burroughs, 1974, pp. 96-97)

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experience and being. What French analysts call 'le grand Autre' (the big Other) is simply a fairy tale comparable to Father Xmas or the pot of gold that one is supposed to find at the end of the proverbial rainbow.

If we accept the idea that Burroughs wrote one long book[28] we could study the patterns behind events, the causal logic that is established; often, as we see above, ideological fragments are the cause of events - as if historical events were simply accidents or ideological by-products: "…we could have profited from the French experience in Viet-Nam. It showed that this was a war that couldn't be won. I would have opposed the Viet-Nam war even on military grounds. And there was no reason for it. It was completely an ideological conflict" (Burroughs, 1974, p. 533). Joseph Gabel often argued that ideology, like certain forms of psychosis, is impervious to experience.

The Body …

A psychotic patient wrote: "I appear to be an empty bedroom, the tenants change endlessly. What is the point of expelling them? They have the nerve to come back".[29] Another patient stated that: "I no longer have a body, I am a semblance of flesh. I do not live. We are dead before being in the world".[30] The idea of the body as a space that can be occupied and vacated is a feature of Spike Milligan's *The Bedsitting Room*[31]; in this bleak black post-nuclear war comedy Lord Fortnum battles with the idea that he is turning into a cheap room for rent…The play has many other melancholic qualities including despair and the idea of the end of the world, clinical signs that clearly belong to Cotard's syndrome (Enoch & Trethowan, 1979, pp. 116-133). The non-relationship between the body and identity is a constant feature of Burroughs' œuvre:" Bill and Johnny we sorted out the names but they kept changing like one day I would wake up as Bill the next day as Johnny" (Burroughs, 1967, p. 12-13). The body is seen in terms of need as opposed to desire and most often even the temporary occupation of a body is seen as dangerous. Psychiatry, Burroughs argues, works against selfhood by encouraging medical forms of reification. Consider Dr Schafer's paper as presented to the International Conference of technological psychiatry:

> 'Gentlemen, the human nervous system can be reduced to a compact and abbreviated spinal column. The brain, front middle and rear must follow the adenoid, the wisdom tooth, the appendix...I give you my master work: The Complete All American De-anxietized Man …' (Burroughs, 1977, p. 81)

Technology has removed any risk of selfhood, lobotomy[32], as a metaphor for modern man, has "reduced man to the mere essentials" (Burroughs, 1977.). Modern man may

[28] "It's all sort of one book really…" (W. S. Burroughs in Burroughs & Lotringer, 2001, p. 728).
[29] "Je fais l'effet d'une chambre vide, dont les locataires se renouvellent sans cesse. A quoi sert de les expulser? Ils ont l'effronterie de revenir" (Danon-Boileau, 1980, p. 127).
[30] "Je n'ai plus de corps, je suis un semblant de chair. Je ne vis pas. On est mort avant d'être au monde" (Danon-Boileau, 1980, p. 126).
[31] Milligan and Antrobus (1970).
[32] For a clear account of the barbaric nature of psychosurgery see Valenstein

produce and consume, he does not have to think or worry about anything, he is a 'thing' in a 'thing-world' where the only law or discernible pattern is one of need, merchandise and reification of every shade and hue. The "algebra of need" finds its roots in the process of addiction as illustrated in Junky (1953); heroin is the blueprint of a more general control system[33]. Values, in the landscape found in Naked Lunch and beyond, are always mercantile values; orgasm, heroin, parts of the body – most areas of experience are broken down into quantative elements only. Need is the veritable negation of freedom; it is also the guarantee of an everlasting consumption of merchandise so that the ideology of merchandise is itself dependant on the maintenance of absolute need within a captive population. TRAK, in the Soft Machine, combines the ideology of merchandise with absolute need; the relationships between need and merchandise dissolve the very possibility of subjectivity. The road to selfhood is barred by cellular need:

> The perfect product, gentlemen, has precise molecular affinity for its clients […] Our product never leaves the customer. We sell servicing and all Trak products have precise need of trak servicing […] This is not just another habit forming drug this is the habit forming drug [that] takes over all functions… (Burroughs, 1967, p. 36)

Eric Mottram (1969/1977), in the first complete study of Burroughs as a theorist of modernity[34], argued that:

> In the Soft Machine the algebra of need and the invention of the perfect product are fused into Trak Servicings, a total servicing organisation, a brilliant parody of intermeshed business and consumer controls, the ultimate habit-forming drug which finally takes over the consumer-addict and reduces him to the helplessness of a larva […] The funfairs and sideshows…provide the state's parasites with their basic needs. The gods are fakes. The real control is Trak[35] Sex and Dream Utilities, whose aim is total satisfaction and whose actions are protected by the Thing Police… (Mottram, 1969/1977, p. 65)

(1986).

[33] "1- Never give anything away for nothing. 2 – Never give more than you have to give (always catch the buyer hungry and always make him wait). 3 – Always take everything back if you possibly can" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 8).

[34] Mottram (1969/1977).

[35] "…the forces of evil are represented by a Scandinavian tycoon head of Trak Inc., who control the Sex Utilities of most of the world. That is they can disconnect your orgones…". Burroughs, letter to Allen Ginsburg, November, 1957 (Burroughs, 1993, p. 377).

It is no longer possible to entertain jouissance within the framework defined by the Oedipus complex or even conscious or unconscious desire because: "All are dependent on Trak for their lives such as they are" (Burroughs, 1967, p. 36). Trak controls and services sex, dreams and need of the greater part of the population of the world: Burroughs is perhaps the first post-Auschwitz post-Hiroshima writer to theorise a modification in the nature of jouissance. Oedipal jouissance is fading to reveal a change in the very constitution of the object. Truth about the object as established by Sophocles, Shakespeare and Freud gives way, Burroughs argues, to chemistry, biology and electricity along with the irreversible separation of body and identity. The traditional order of jouissance, Burroughs argues, is toxic:

> We intend to march on the police machine everywhere. We intend to destroy all dogmatic verbal systems. The family unit and its cancerous expansion into tribes, countries, nations we will eradicate at its vegetable roots. We don't want to hear any more family talk, mother talk, father talk, priest talk, country talk or party talk. To put it country simple we have heard enough Bullshit. (Burroughs, 1974, pp. 109-110)

The unstable nature of the body was already sketched out in *Junky* (1953):

> When I closed my eyes I saw an oriental face, the lips and nose eaten away by disease. The disease spread, melting the face into an amoeboid mass in which the eyes floated, dull crustacean eyes. Slowly, a new face formed around the eyes. A series of faces, hieroglyphs, distorted and leading to the final place where the human road ends, where the human form can no longer contain the crustacean horror that has grown inside it. (Burroughs, 1953-1977, p. 133)

Such bodies allow no "unquestionable self-validating certainties" (Laing, 1960/1969, p. 39), human identity, such as it is, is perpetually besieged by angst, a sense of danger both without and within. In the above extract the faces are defined as hieroglyphs as if the movement towards crustacean existence was in itself a message to be deciphered. A significant part of Burroughs written work is devoted to a quest for other forms of language, his mistrust of "dogmatic verbal systems" is well known: "The word is now a virus […] The word may once have been a healthy neural cell. It is now a parasitic organism that invades and damages the central nervous system" (Burroughs, 1967, p. 49).

In 1939, notes Oliver Harris, "Burroughs attended a series of lectures at the… Institute of General Semantics given by Korzybski…" (Burroughs, 1993, p. 44). Burroughs was clearly influenced by the idea that our linguistic system is in itself an alienating force; Korzybski[36] had studied psychotic speech patterns and advanced the

[36] For a detailed account of the function of the verb 'to be' in psychosis (Allen, 2015).

idea that in heavy cases of dementia praecox (schizophrenia) the most highly developed forms of identification are to be found.

The idea of the word as a virus runs parallel to the "empty body" (Burroughs, 1967, p. 82) programme of ritualised reification, the body is drained of its vitality by the inhabitants of hanging vine country who run the programme. The inhabitants live: "in translucent jelly and converse in light flashes liquify bones of the world and eating the jelly" (Burroughs, 1967, p. 82). The dissolution of the body reduces communication to the on/off function of a light switch or a torch, we are close to what Freud called 'organ speech' as if parts of the body were expressed directly in reified patterns that short-circuited the representation of things and centred on words (verbal labels/acoustic images) alone.

In strictly clinical terms patients express themselves as follows:

> It tears all my body away. Everything shakes within me from head to foot. It's so funny that we don't know if we still have blood in our veins. At any time it moves into the teeth and curls up. I feel that I'm going to fall into pieces on all sides. My impression is that I feel myself getting thinner. I feel my body going away on all sides. [The area] above my teeth is being torn away; before only my gums were torn away. My nails are hurting me as is the rest of my body. (Danon-Boileau, 1980, p. 51)

As we can see organ speech involves intense word cathexis[37] and shows how the relation to one organ can represent the entire content of a patient's thoughts as *unrecognised* metonymy. An organ or orifice can embody the Other as agent of persecution[38]. Organ speech is not metaphor, on the contrary it is to be read au pied de la lettre, at the very foot of the letter as the French say. In *Naked Lunch* and elsewhere[39] bodily organs are often described as independent entities, the most famous case is one of Dr Benway's inventions:

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[37] See Dalzell (2011, pp. 88-91) and Mary (1999, pp. 17-63).

[38] James Frame (1860) argued that the stomach was often the evil Other that persecuted melancholic patient in his remarkable autobiography *The Philosophy of Insanity*.

[39] Spare ass Annie appeared in 1982 in *Early Routines* published in Santa Barbara by Cadmus editions (pp 13-14) she returned in the cd of the same name in the early 1990s. The drives, oral, anal, genital and scopic never combine in an organised montage – they are either presented as isolated fragments, as in the talking asshole routine or spare ass Annie, or as absolute needs to absorb others in routines such as Willy the disk and Bradley the buyer. Here again we find elements close to Freud's idea of organ speech. One of the elements that forever separates Burroughs' work from mainstream products is the fact that Burroughs never gives in to the idea that the drive should be connected to language, this is what makes the question of organ speech so essential.

> Did I ever tell you about the man who taught his asshole to talk? […] This man worked for a carnival…it was like a novelty ventriloquist act. ...He had a number that was a scream... Like, 'Oh I say, are you still down there, old thing?' 'Nah! I had to go relieve myself'. (Burroughs, 1959/1968, pp. 153-154)
>
> A. J. is also an adept of organ speech: ...Boy in Los Angeles fifteen years old. Father decide it is time the boy have his first piece of ass...father go out and say: 'Son here's twenty dollars; I want you to go to a good whore and a piece of ass off her'. 'So they drive to this plush jump joint and the father say, 'All right, son...So ring the bell and when the woman come...tell her you want a piece of ass'. […] Fifteen minutes later the boy comes out:
> 'Well, son, did you get a piece of ass?'
> 'Yeah. This gash comes to the door, and I say I want a piece of ass and lay the double sawski on her. We go up to her trap, and she remove the dry goods. So I switch my blade and cut a big hunk off her ass, she raise a beef like I am reduce to pull off one shoe and beat her brains out. Then I hump her for kicks'. (Burroughs, 1959/1968, pp. 140-141).

Again the word is disconnected from its area of possible meanings[40], the combination of the first and the third person of the singular – 'she remove' – adds to the idea of language as a mechanical reified code; there is no unified libidinal body as one would find in a love story, here we have isolated parts of the body that appear to be radically distanced from any kind of unity or totality. At best, in *The Naked Lunch*, characters dream of a dramatic change that would replace the body with a gigantic all-purpose blob or, in *Exterminator*, reduce humanity to one last person who would no longer be bothered by the potentially antagonistic will of others.

Willy the disk is a junky police informer who hunts addicts down, he represents a concentrated oral drive and aims to "suck the juice right out of every junky he ran down" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 25).

He is a frightening example of the algebra of need and a threat to junkies everywhere; no body is safe. The oral drive that sets Willy in motion is both endless and lawless: "When they move in for the bust, Willy goes all out of control, and his mouth eats a hole right through the door" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 25). The idea of bodily absorption is a central aspect in the story of Bradley the buyer. The logic of organ speech is in part replaced by the transformation of the body into a blob of soft jelly. Although Bradley is not a junky he needs to rub up against junkies to "get fixed" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 33). As he himself is caught up in the algebra of need he

[40] The signifier is divorced from the signified one could argue, the metonymy is not recognised as such.

loses control of whatever selfhood he ever had. His "habit keeps getting heavier […] It gets to a point where no amount of contact will fix him" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 34).

Within the framework of modern administrative logic Bradley is summoned by the district supervisor who has to maintain appearances and protect the reputation of the department. He asks for the buyer's immediate resignation.

> The Buyer throws himself to the ground and crawls over to the D. S. 'No, Boss Man, no...The department is my very lifeline. […] Please Boss Man, I'll wipe your ass, I'll wash out your dirty condoms' […] The D. S. retches into his handkerchief and points to the door with a limp hand. The Buyer stands up...His body begins to dip like a dowser's wand. He flows forward …
>
> 'No! No! screams the D. S.
>
> Schlup...schlup schlup'. An hour later they find the Buyer on the nod in the D. S.'s chair. The D. S. has disappeared without trace. (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 35)

We have tried to show that the body is oft presented as fragments, orifices, bits and pieces... We are light years away from the idea of a unified body with coordinated drives that can be absorbed and symbolised within speech. In other situations we find the idea of a body that absorbs other bodies as is the case for Bradley the Buyer. These very different positions are not presented in conflict with each other, rather they move in parallel like a river and its banks. Changing, exchanging or modifying bodies can entail complete transformations of being, memory and past history; consider the complaints lodged by the male hustler in the chapter titled 'Ordinary men and women' of *The Naked Lunch*.

> Male Hustler: "What a boy hasta put up with in this business. Gawd! The propositions I get you wouldn't believe it...They wanta play Latah, they wanta merge with my protoplasm, they want a replica cutting, they wanta suck my orgones, they wanta take over my past experience and leave old memories that disgust me…
>
> I am fucking this citizen so I think, 'A straight John at last'; but he comes to a climax and turns himself into some kinda awful crab...I told him, 'Jack, I don't hafta stand still for such a routine like this...You can take that business to Walgreen's. Some people got no class to them. Another horrible old character just sits there and telepathizes and creams in his dry goods. So nasty". (Burroughs, 1959/1968, 146-147).

The hustler is, as Burroughs says, an ordinary person; within the algebra of need prostitution is a banal aspect of everyday life, orifices of the body are but merchandise to be bought and sold, the very nature of modern economics devalues and destroys any possible link between selfhood and the lived body. Even those who sell their services to Bradley the buyer accept their lot as if selling their bodies was the only way to survive:

> 'Most distasteful thing I ever stand still for', he says. ' Some way he make himself all soft like a blob of jelly and surround me so nasty […] he come to some kinda awful climax […]'
>
> 'Well it's still an easy score'
>
> […] 'Yes, I guess you can get used to anything. I've got a meet with him again tomorrow'. (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 34)

Bodies and selfhood are dangerously unstable elements, they can be exchanged, modified or fragmented there is no question of any kind of primary identification with the body, no hope for ontological security of any kind.

Towards a Handbook of Global Psychopathology

Our hypothesis regarding the mirror sign, central to any understanding of Burroughs' ideological critique, is based on the hints and clues that he himself left for the reader to find. Consider the following paragraphs from the closing section of *The Naked Lunch*:

> The writer sees himself reading to the mirror as always...He must check now and again to reassure himself that The Crime Of Separate Action has not, is not, cannot occur… Anyone who has ever looked into a mirror knows what this crime is and what it means in terms of lost control when the reflection no longer obeys. (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 249)

If the mirror sign indicates the destruction of selfhood and a possible divorce from the inhabited body then it is not only logical but necessary to read Burroughs as an introduction to global psychopathology. At this point the relationship between Burroughs fragmented universe and Gabel's extensive work on false consciousness becomes very clear. Joseph Gabel – a trained psychiatrist who turned to the sociology of knowledge – uses different forms of psychotic reasoning in order to study the structure of different kinds of totalitarian discourse. In his work he was greatly influenced by Eugene Minkowski – the first thinker in the history of ideas to introduce the notion of structure into psychopathology in the early 1920s. Gabel argues, over and again, that elements comparable to psychotic logic are to be found at the very core of extreme ideologies. Burroughs sometimes argued that the age of Stalin and Hitler was over, this does not mean an end to economic chaos, unemployment, estrangement or corruption. On the contrary Burroughs argues that

the rulers "of this most insecure of all worlds are rulers by accident, inept, frightened pilots at the control of a vast machine they cannot understand, calling in experts to tell them which buttons to push" (Burroughs, 1982, p. 31). Burroughs defines different kinds of false consciousness mainly based on the ideology of merchandise whereas Gabel thought that the fetish value of merchandise would continue in modern life as a reward that ideology might offer. At times Burroughs mentions forms of false consciousness that correspond to Gabel's idea of a blind spot within thought: "'The trouble is the unions'. They would say it spitting blood from radiation sickness. Or in the process of turning into crustaceans" (Burroughs & Ginsburg, 1981, p. 15). Gabel argues with great skill that ideology - what Burroughs calls 'the reality studio'- produces the lived present whereas within the logic of the algebra of need Burroughs shows how ideology and merchandise have merged into one pathological entity. What binds the thinkers is a shared understanding of the place of reification; for Gabel reification is a result either of clinical psychosis or the result of what I call "concentrated ideology", Burroughs identifies reification as a result of the invasion, or even the replacement, of selfhood by the *need for* merchandise.

In many parts of *Naked Lunch* we find latahs and replicas as if Burroughs was hinting at a kind of universal Capgras syndrome[41], copies copying other empty copies. Dr. Lee is unsatisfied with the world as he finds it; at one point, in order to be safe at last, he decides on a radical solution to the self/body question:

> ...he decided to end the whole distasteful thing once and for all by turning everyone into himself […] he called it the 'beautiful disease' […] his boat is moored by the pier...it is a small boat and he can handle it alone...last awning flaps on the pier...last man here now. (Burroughs, 1974, 45)

There are clear indications of individual psychosis of course: in 23 Skidoo Burroughs reinvents a kind of influence syndrome.[42] "Assasins often hear voices telling them to kill...As he struck the assassin was heard to say 'After all God made knives'" (Burroughs & Odier, 1980, p. 83-84). Psychosis spreads in the

> '23 Screwball department'...At the office party Mr Blankslip from accounting mixed his "blackout special" and a little cold voice told him this man must be killed to save the Lamb of God […]

[41] See Enoch et al. (1979, p. 1-14). In this syndrome people feel that other people are clones or copies and that the 'real' people have been removed somehow. It is close to the Frégoli syndrome in which a person feels followed or threatened by someone who changes his face and appearance very quickly and very often. Again we find the unstable relationship between being and body.

[42] A clear case of the influence syndrome was published by J. Haslam in London, 1810, this was republished *as Illustrations of Madness* (1988) edited with an introduction by the late Roy Porter. Earlier descriptions of this psychotic syndrome may exist, I have not come across them.

> Clearly O. I.- Outside Influence – is at work. (Burroughs & Odier, 1980, pp. 85-86)[43]

Beyond individual cases of psychosis occasional manic-depressive swings can be seen, in The Soft Machine we find the manic ability to join in whatever is going on: "By this time there were soldiers everywhere shooting the civilians so we scored for some civil war uniforms and joined one of the warring powers" (Burroughs, 1967, p. 13). Often manic explosions of violence and sexuality are in stark contrast with the expression of black despair and a sense of mass destruction. Indeed, *Cities of the Red Night* closes with:

> I am in a beautiful garden, as I reach out to touch the flowers they wither under my hands. A nightmare feeling of foreboding and desolation comes over me as a great mushroom cloud darkens the earth. A few may get through the gate in time. Like Spain I am bound to the past. (Burroughs, 1981, p. 332)

Melancholic despair is outlined in Exterminator as a collective prelude to the breakdown of civilisation as we know it:

> Unpaid bills unanswered letters each simple task an agony to perform everyday a little worse and the worse it got the less was happening as the structure quietly foundered whole apartment blocks phone in to say they won't be coming in to the office that day and nobody is there to take the calls. The writer flinches from his typewriter the cop turns sick with the sight of his badge. Tools fall from slack hands plows gather dust in ruined barns. (Burroughs, 1974, p. 122)

Within what is perhaps the first ever handbook of global psychopathology merchandise is progressively adulterated: whores might be cut with "sponge rubber" (Burroughs & Ginsburg, 1981, p. 9), the heroin is cut with milk and sugar or strychnine (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 20), famous restaurants serve pure garbage[44]. Burroughs' ferocious critique of merchandise as both the basis and result of modern life[45] at times bring him close to ideas expressed by G. Debord.

> Is this bread, wine, a tomato, an egg, a house, a town? Certainly not, because a series of internal transformations, economically useful in the short term to those who control the means of production, has maintained the names and an important

[43] Auditory hallucinations in psychosis may be a soundtrack version of the gaze of the Other.

[44] The menu *Chez Robert* includes "*Clear camel piss soup with boiled earthworms"* as a first dish (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 172)

[45] "They are rebuilding the City' Lee nodded absently… 'Yes…. Always'" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 261).

> part of the appearance but removed the taste and the content. (Debord, 1992, p. 110)

The subject as defined by Shakespeare has lost ground as a dominant representation of mankind. Along side it we now find the "21st Century Schizoid"[46] man; a fragment of consciousness defined by merchandise within the area attributed to him by the algebra of need. When Orwell first published *1984* and *Animal Farm* he was treated with disdain, he was a failed science fiction writer, at best a critic of Stalinism – and that was the end of him. Today we understand Orwell as a theorist of everyday life in modern countries[47]. He has become a social realist so to speak.

Burroughs knows not 'seems'; his work is not only a preliminary map of the 21st century but also a solid critique of the ideology of merchandise. When The Naked Lunch was first published in Paris in 1959 the idea of anybody playing "chicken with passenger planes" (Burroughs, 1959/1968, p. 63) struck the reader as extreme or impossible. After the attack on the world trade centre on the 11th of September 2001 it became necessary to read Burroughs with a little more attention. He paints a world of amplified conflicts, corruption, intolerance, wars, bankruptcy and abuses of power. Addictions of every shade and hue have all but replaced subjectivity in the uncertain future of polluted mankind. We may, of course, try to blind ourselves and hope that Mr. Burroughs is wrong in his descriptions of schizoid[48] awareness within global ideological madness. Naturally, we'd be very wise not to bet on it.

[46] "Cat's foot, iron claw – Neuro-surgeon's scream for more – At paranoia's poison door – Twenty first century schizoid man", King Crimson, *In the Court of the Crimson King*, see first released in 1969 by Island records.

[47] See Leys (1984).

[48] Helene Deutsch (1965) gives a reasonably clear incomplete description of schizoid being. See also Allen (2017).

Figure 2

W. S. Burroughs a day or two before his public reading in Brixton, 1982, just after the riots.

Author's Biographical Note

David Frank Allen was born in Vienna when the city was divided into four zones. He did his Ph. D. at Paris 7 and began working with psychotic patients in 1985. He also worked as a lecturer in adult psychopathology before turning to full time work as an analyst in Paris. He has published widely in English, French, Greek and so on. Recent publications include a study of irony and black humour in manic-depression (Psychologie Clinique, 2018, n° 1) and a translation of James Frame's *The Philosophy of Insanity* (1860), Paris, EPEL, October 2018. He hopes to produce a UK edition of this work which would include clinical notes on Frame written in the 1850s.

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Experience of Joy and Sadness in Alexithymic Emotional Discourse

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Abstract

Alexithymia is a personality trait characterized by difficulties in identifying and describing emotional feelings. Impairment in the cognitive processing of emotions experienced by individuals with alexithymia translates into a limited capacity to symbolize their emotions. However, despite being one of the core aspects of the construct of alexithymia, emotional elaboration has not been thoroughly investigated. While a few studies have reported quantitative features of alexithymic individuals' discourse, the qualitative properties of alexithymics' emotional discourse and the difference in symbolization between positive and negative emotions remain to be examined. This study aims to explore how individuals with high levels of alexithymia symbolize their subjective emotional experiences, through an investigation of specific features in their discourse pertaining to positive and negative emotions. The sample consisted of 9 individuals with high levels of alexithymia, screened with the TAS-20. The participants were interviewed about a typical experience of joy and sadness. Data were analyzed using an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach. Themes associated with sadness revealed that high-alexithymia individuals tend to avoid contact with sadness and to perceive sadness as a state imposed by external events. Themes associated with joy revealed that this emotion seems easier to share with peers. Moreover, joy appeared to be easier to express and symbolize for high-alexithymia individuals than sadness. This comprehensive description of alexithymic individuals' emotional discourse provides us with a better understanding of the symbolization of emotions according to their valence and allows us to better recognize the ways in which individuals with high levels of alexithymia express their emotions.

Introduction

The term alexithymia was introduced by Sifneos in 1972 to frame clinical cases of psychosomatic patients who experienced significant difficulty in using language to express emotions, a dearth of fantasy life, and a lack of symbolic dreaming (Sifneos, 1994). Today, alexithymia is measured by the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) as a personality trait composed of three main characteristics: (i) a difficulty identifying and distinguishing between feelings and bodily sensations of emotional arousal, (ii) a difficulty describing one's feelings to others and (iii) an externally-oriented style of thinking with pragmatic contents (Bagby, Parker & Taylor, 1994).

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These characteristics represent the manifestations of two main deficits. The first is an impairment in emotional awareness, which causes the emergence of the first two characteristics. The second deficit, termed "operative thinking" (pensée opératoire), is defined by a lack of fantasy associated to a concrete cognitive style, which leads to the manifestations of the third characteristic (Bagby, Taylor, Parker & Dickens, 2005). Generally speaking, the characteristics comprised by the construct of alexithymia are considered to reflect a deficit in the cognitive processing of emotions (Sifneos, 1994) and therefore, in the symbolic representation of emotions (Lane et al., 1996).

Symbolization is the capacity to link emotions to various types of cognitive representations, to create links between these representations in order to form a complex schema, and to verbalize these links and the system they create. Thus, the construct of alexithymia is not characterized by an absence of somatic manifestations of emotions; rather, emotions are felt but are seldom verbalized (Zimmermann, Salamin & Reicherts, 2008). Depending on the degree of alexithymia, this type of psychosomatic disconnect can be compared to emotional agnosia (not knowing or not recognizing emotions) or anomia (lack of words for feelings) (Taylor, Bagby & Parker, 2016), two conditions in which the ability to adequately link non-verbal emotional symbols (e.g., emotions) with verbal organization (e.g., representations or associations of representations) is impaired (Sifneos, 1994). Nevertheless, emotional experiences must be symbolized in order to be integrated into psychic life (Lecours, Bouchard, St-Amand & Perry, 2000) and to foster an effective regulation of emotions.

Since alexithymia is conceptualized as a deficit in the symbolization of emotion coterminous with felt emotions, it seems essential to examine the manner in which high-alexithymia individuals integrate experiences of emotions into their psychic lives. Discourse analysis is a powerful tool to evaluate three abilities related to the integration of emotions. Firstly, the approach allows us to analyze, through individuals' discourse, available symbolization resources used to articulate verbally affective experiences (Lecours & Bouchard, 2011). Secondly, emotional discourse can be in and of itself an emotion regulation strategy; for example, by sharing a difficult emotional experience in order to elicit social support (Bagby & Taylor, 1999a). Accordingly, this also allows us to analyze a variety of emotion regulation strategies. Lastly, discourse analysis allows us to examine the cognitive treatment of emotions (Luminet, Rimé, Bagby & Taylor, 2004) and subsequently, representational deficits, which compose one of the core features of alexithymia. Despite being a central characteristic of the alexithymic experience, the quality of emotional discourse in alexithymic individuals has not been thoroughly empirically evaluated (Lecours, Robert & Desruisseaux, 2009). Consequently, analyzing the emotional discourse of high alexithymia individuals appears to be a crucial step in order to better understand cognitive symbolization and emotion regulation deficits experienced by individuals with alexithymia.

Emotional Discourse in Alexithymic Individuals

The earliest descriptions of alexithymic discourse come from incomplete clinical observations. For example, Bagby and Taylor (1999a) described some patients capable of labelling their emotions, although they were incapable of either elaborating

on them or linking them to memories or fantasies. McDougall (1978) emphasized that alexithymic individuals tend to use language as an act as opposed to a symbolic means of communicating feelings. For instance, language would be used to elicit a reaction in others instead of expressing and sharing an emotional experience.

From a more empirical point of view, the beginnings of alexithymic discourse analysis were mainly based on quantitative elements of verbal content. In written essays, Páez, Velasco, and González (1999) found negative correlations between high alexithymic scores and levels of introspection, the frequency of self-references, and the ratio of positive words used in describing positive emotions. Roedema and Simons (1999) also found that high alexithymic subjects used less affective words to describe their state than their control counterparts. Also, a study by Luminet et al. (2004) measuring the proportion of emotional words used by alexithymic individuals, suggested that the deficit in the use of emotional words would be present only in emotionally charged contexts. Thus, it would not be considered a deficit in accessing emotional vocabulary. Although these studies generally demonstrated a negative relationship between the frequency of emotional references and the degree of alexithymia, their relevance is only partial as they fail to address the level of cognitive organization of affects associated with the personality construct (Lecours et al., 2009). However, a more recent study attempted to address the level of cognitive organization of affect by analyzing the semantic conceptual level of emotion representation, through the number of recurrence of certain language patterns and knowledge related to emotion in individuals with high levels of alexithymia (Wotschack & Klann-Delius, 2013). The study's findings revealed the presence of a reduced differentiation and elaboration of emotion schemata in high-alexithymia individuals compared to low-alexithymia individuals, including a significantly lower use of words to conceptualize emotions (emotion words), fewer physiological-expressive terms, fewer synonyms, and a heightened level of hesitation and of null responses. The study concluded that alexithymia moderates language use by demonstrating that semantic differentiation of emotion is reduced in individuals with high levels of alexithymia. While the study by Wotschack and Klann-Delius (2013) addressed the conceptual level of emotional representation in high-alexithymic individuals, it has not examined their ability to put emotions into words, and the subjective aspect of the speech of high-alexithymia individuals.

More recently, some studies have taken an interest in the formal aspects of the discourse of alexithymic individuals in order to better understand notions related to the mentalization of affect (Lecours et al., 2009).

A first instrument, the Verbal Elaboration of Affect Scale (GÉVA) (Lecours et al., 2009), measures the mentalization of affect by evaluating the levels of tolerance and abstraction of verbalized affects. The use of the measure with individuals with high levels alexithymia also revealed that high-alexithymia discourse, when compared to low-alexithymia participants' discourse, is characterized by a diminished level of verbal elaboration of affects (Lecours et al., 2009). Furthermore, the spontaneous verbalization of affect and the use of references to emotions have also been demonstrated to be reduced within this population (Lecours et al., 2009).

A second instrument measuring formal aspects of discourse is the Level of Emotional Awareness Scale (LEAS) (Lane, Quinlan, Schwartz, Walker & Zeitlin, 1990). Based

on a piagetian framework, it assesses four hierarchical levels of emotional representation, and distinguishes between the two lower levels termed implicit and the two higher levels termed explicit. The higher the level achieved, the more elaborate the emotional awareness of the individual tested. Based directly on verbal expression, the lowest score is attributed to individuals who describe thoughts instead of emotions. The implicit levels are characterized by the descriptions of physical sensations, the use of general and undifferentiated emotional words (e.g., I would feel bad) or the descriptions of actions. The first explicit level includes individuals capable of differentiating typical emotions, and the second explicit level represents individuals capable of integrating various emotions to describe a nuanced psychological state. Hence, the discourse of individuals with low emotional awareness would be characterized by the use of vague emotional words, and descriptions of concrete actions and bodily sensations. A study found that the TAS-20 subscale "externally-oriented thinking style" is significantly, negatively correlated to the LEAS (Waller & Scheidt, 2004), suggesting that only the cognitive component of alexithymia is related to lower levels of emotional awareness. Important conceptual and psychometric differences appear to exist between the concepts of alexithymia and emotional awareness, as shown by the overall lack of correlation between the total score of the TAS-20 and the LEAS (Subic-Wrana, Bruder, Thomas, Lane & Köhle, 2005; Waller & Scheidt, 2004). It thus seems that the two concepts are partially overlapping, but measuring different aspects of emotional functioning (Taylor et al., 2016).

Finally, the Affect Consciousness Instrument (ACI) (Monsen, Eilertsen, Melgård & Ødegård, 1996) measures the degree of consciousness and tolerance of affect, as well as the conceptual and non-verbal expression of emotions (Monsen et al., 1996). The dimension of conceptual expression of emotions evaluates the capacity to use clear, differentiated and nuanced language to describe a specific emotional experience. Hence, a low score of emotional consciousness refers to an individual who demonstrates difficulty in verbally describing and distinguishing emotions. This instrument's total score has been found to be significantly, negatively correlated with the "externally-oriented thinking style" and the total score of the TAS-20, but not significantly correlated with the LEAS (Waller & Scheidt, 2004). This suggests, once again, a partial overlap with the alexithymia concept (Lecours et al., 2009) and the measurement of a different aspect of emotional functioning (Waller & Scheidt, 2004).

While these findings provide a better understanding of the emotional organization underlying alexithymia, the instruments discussed above are only obliquely related to alexithymia. Although aspects of mentalization, emotional awareness and affect consciousness characterize a portion of the verbal behaviour associated with alexithymia, a large part of the alexithymic discourse remains unexamined.

Symbolization of Positive and Negative Emotions

Studies that have assessed alexithymic discourse quantitatively or formally have typically done so without differentiating between types of emotions, despite reports by clinicians mentioning a possible distinction in emotional symbolization based on specific emotions (Lecours, 2007). Indeed, some studies have reported that positive affects seem easier to mentalize than negative ones (Lecours & Bouchard, 2011; Lecours et al., 2000). Differences appear to exist even within the class of negative

emotions. For instance, deficits in symbolization of sadness have been considered more problematic as they are associated with more clinical symptoms and with borderline and narcissistic personality disorder traits (Bouizegarene & Lecours, 2017; Lecours & Bouchard, 2011).

With regards to alexithymia, the TAS-20 score has been found to be negatively correlated with positive emotions and positively correlated with negative affects in a number of studies with different samples (Lundh, Johnsson, Sundqvist & Olsson, 2002; Taylor & Bagby, 2013; Taylor, Bagby, Kushner, Benoit & Atkinson, 2014). These findings are not surprising considering the strong association between alexithymia and anhedonia, as described by Krystal (1981). They suggest that alexithymia is not characterized by a homogeneous deficit, affecting all types of emotions in the same manner.

Despite these results, only a few studies (Luminet et al., 2004; Páez et al., 1999; Wagner & Lee, 2008; Wotschack & Klann-Delius, 2013) have measured positive and negative emotions separately within the discourse of individuals with high levels of alexithymia. One of these studies (Páez et al., 1999), found a significant negative association between the number of words used for positive emotions and the TAS-20 difficulty describing emotion subscale, but no significant association was found between the subscale and the proportion of negative emotion words. Another study, by Wagner and Lee (2008), which measured the verbal expression of positive and negative emotions separately for a positive and a negative event, found a significant negative correlation between the verbal expression of emotion and the TAS-20 total score, only if the emotion's valence was congruent with the event's emotion valence. These findings highlight the need to further investigate the differences in the symbolization of emotions based on the valence (positive or negative) of experienced emotions.

Objectives and Research Questions

Taking into account the aforementioned theoretical and empirical contributions, the present study's objective is to provide a more elaborate portrait of the qualitative aspects of the discourse of high-alexithymia individuals, in an effort to gain further insight into these individuals' subjective experiences of feelings. To meet this goal, an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), grounded in a constructivist paradigm, will be conducted. The exploratory nature of the research requires an inductive approach specific to qualitative methods. Furthermore, the principle of co-construction, underlying the constructivist paradigm, is an essential contribution to research on subjective experiences. Since high-alexithymia individuals tend to have a marked difficulty expressing their feelings, the dynamic between the researcher and the participant is fundamental because it can help the participant stay focused on, and verbalize his or her introspective experience of emotion. The researcher's participation in the construction of the participant's experience is also critical in facilitating inferences for understanding the symbolization process, which the participant may not be able to express alone.

The analysis of discourse will rely on experiences of joy and of sadness considering that the symbolization processes might differ with regards to positive or negative

emotions. The comparison of positive and negative affect verbalizations will allow a better understanding of how deficits in the symbolization of emotion vary in relation to positive and negative emotions. Since symbolization deficits appear to be more strongly associated with negative emotions, an analysis of discourse on sadness will allow us to better recognize the deficits in the structure of emotional elaboration. Hence, the present study seeks to address the following research questions:

- How do high-alexithymia individuals describe emotional experiences of joy and sadness?
- What are the themes and formal characteristics of a typical emotional discourse in high-alexithymia individuals?

The second question has important clinical implications since the identification of typical characteristics the verbal productions of high-alexithymia individuals will facilitate the identification of these patients within clinical settings, and subsequently, will allow clinicians to tailor psychosocial interventions according to their specific needs.

Method

Participants

The study was based on interviews conducted with 9 participants who each provided narratives on sad and joyful experiences. Data saturation for the present IPA analysis has been reached using this sample. According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), the discourse analysis of 4 to 10 participants is most appropriate since it prioritizes the qualitative aspect of each individual experience. Therefore, this recommendation was followed. The participants were undergraduate psychology students, recruited from Université de Montréal. The sample was comprised of 6 women and 3 men, aged between 19 and 27 (mean age = 23 years).

Alexithymia was measured with the TAS-20 and only participants with a score higher than 60 (thus attaining the threshold for the presence of a high level of alexithymia) were analyzed. TAS-20 scores ranged between 61 and 73 (mean = 64.2) in the present sample. This sample was extracted from a larger pool of participants who took part in a larger study. Although not a part of this qualitative study, some participants who were included in the larger study had very low alexithymia scores (below 30 on the TAS-20) and were also interviewed in order to obtain a description of a relational event involving the experience of sadness and joy. In order to contextualize the present findings, transcripts derived from interviews with three individuals with low levels of alexithymia will be used for comparison purposes when discussing the results. The three low-alexithymia individuals were all women, aged between 20 and 23 years, and their TAS-20 scores ranged between 24 and 29.

Instruments

The 20-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20). The TAS-20 is the most commonly used instrument for measuring alexithymia (Taylor et al., 2016). This self-report questionnaire has demonstrated adequate validity and reliability, as demonstrated by a Cronbach alpha of .81, a test-retest reliability within 3-week

intervals of r = .77, an adequate pattern of correlations between factors, and an adequate convergent validity (Bagby & Taylor, 1999b). A French translated version with similar psychometric properties (Loas, Otmani, Verrier, Fremaux & Marchand, 1996) was provided to participants in the present study. The total score of the TAS-20 is based on three subscales. The first, called the "difficulty identifying feelings" scale, is used to assess the level of affect representations (e.g., "I am often confused about what emotions I am feeling"). The second, referred to as the "difficulty describing feelings" scale, is used to assess the capacity to find words in order to communicate one's emotional experiences to others (e.g., "It is difficult for me to find the right words for my feelings"). The last subscale, termed the "externally-oriented thinking" scale, is used to measure individuals' tendency to focus their attention and consequently, their level of interest outside of their internal emotional life (e.g., "I prefer to analyze problems rather than just describe them" reversed). In this study, the total score was used to assess the overall level of alexithymia. Participants considered to have high levels of alexithymia had a global score equal to or higher than 61, in accordance with predefined cut-off scores (Bagby & Taylor, 1999b).

Procedure

In the context of a larger study, participants first had to complete online questionnaires for about 75 minutes (which included the TAS-20). They were then contacted by email for an interview, for which they received a compensation of $15. Interviews began with participants being asked to recall a relational event involving a typical experience of sadness and then a typical experience of joy, narratives which were used in the present study. This was followed by an experimental emotional induction task which involved viewing only a sad excerpt from a movie. The study ended with a post-induction interview. All interviews were recorded and were later transcribed. The interview segment used in this study, from the initial phase of the larger study, started with the following statement: "I would like you to give me an example of a specific relational exchange that made you feel sad, a typical example that illustrates well your usual experience of sadness". The interviewer then used reformulation strategies and reflections to further explore and specify the participants' word choices. A similar statement was used for the joyful event, which was read as follows "I would like you to give me an example of a specific relational exchange that made you feel joyful, a typical example that illustrates well your usual experience of joy".

Analysis

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was used to analyze the data. This type of analysis focuses on the individual experience of each participant. It allows a better understanding of how participants make sense of their experiences. Grounded in a constructivist paradigm, this analysis takes into account a process in which the interpretations of both the researcher and the participant are involved. This analysis follows 6 specific steps. The first step consists of reading the transcript of one participant several times to allow the researcher to become thoroughly familiar with the content of the original data. For the second step, notes on the semantic content, the language used, and the voiced concepts are added to the verbatim. During the third step, emergent themes are developed. The fourth step consists of seeking overlapping

themes within the added notes. The fifth step is a repetition of the first four steps for each of the remaining participants. Finally, the last step involves the examination of patterns emerging within participants' expressed themes (Smith et al., 2009).

Results

Data from the interviews revealed six themes associated with sadness and three themes associated with joy. The themes reflected how sadness and joy are phenomenologically experienced but they also permitted to draw inferences about the relative levels of symbolization of emotions. All themes were present in the majority of the participants' discourses. The themes associated with sadness were (1) avoiding contact with sadness, (2) pragmatic sharing, (3) lack of engagement in a resolution process, (4) emotions as the result of external events, (5) confusion with anger and (6) perceived difficulty in identifying and expressing emotions. For joy, although a smaller number of themes emerged, they still suggested a distinct form of symbolization linked to this positive emotion, probably associated with alexithymia. These themes were (1) achievement of goals, (2) expression through action and (3) joy experienced as a shared emotion.

Sadness

1. Avoiding contact with sadness. Participants described sadness as an affect that they wished to avoid rather than as a subjective inner phenomenon specific to certain relational events. When asked to elaborate on their way of experiencing sadness, participants had a tendency to describe strategies used to minimize their experience of sadness, as well as contact with or awareness of it. Among strategies to decrease contact with sadness, participants talked about evacuation and suppression. First and foremost, participants who seemed to use a suppression strategy talked about "burying", "repressing" or "eliminating" sadness. For participants, this attempt to minimize contact with sadness seemed necessary in order to regulate and handle events surrounding the affect, as if the affect was considered too dangerous or painful to be integrated into psychic life.

> P4: I repress it, I think about other things. […] but, if it's not that, I'll either… um, either, um… It's either self-mutilate, or… to let it pass. […] I repress it, I listen to music. So that's it, I disconnect myself a little to let it pass.

> P1: I was telling myself that this girl, I'll see her again in two of my courses plus the sport that I am training in, so I needed to keep in mind that that I still wanted to keep some kind of good relationship with her, so to eliminate as much as possible my negative feelings.

Several suppression strategies were used by participants. Some also expressed a need to concentrate on other tasks or activities. This need to be "focused" or to "think" about other things denotes a tendency to decrease awareness of the emotion. Others simply talked about eliminating the affect rather than ignoring it.

Another strategy mentioned by participants aimed at reducing contact with sadness is evacuation. The affect was described as something that needed to be "evacuated" or "taken out" of themselves. As for suppression, this means of rejecting affect seemed to be a method for participants to regulate negative affects when they emerged. This strategy seemed to be used by participants who did not know how to experience sadness otherwise.

> P9: I don't have a phase where I lie flat in my bed moping for a week. […] Well, you know, of course, of course I'm sad inside myself but… That's how I evacuate it. Of course, that's sad but um… you know, I don't know I don't care! (laughs). I'm sorry, but for me, that's how I manage.

2. Pragmatic sharing. This second theme was linked to the first since it also demonstrated that participants indirectly avoided engaging in behaviours that may lead them to come in contact with their feelings. Indeed, even if seven participants out of nine chose to share what happened with someone, they exclusively shared events or facts. They did not mention their experienced affects or their inner states, which enabled them to decrease their contact with it. This finding evokes the operative thinking aspect of alexithymia. Indeed, the content that was shared had a concrete rather than a subjective tone, suggesting that an inner mental space to symbolize emotion was lacking.

> P3: I expressed [the fact of being sad for leaving everything behind] by explaining why I had to go. Why I had to rebuild my life and all.

> P8: I didn't say to my friend that I was feeling sad, I don't say how I feel but I tend to talk about the events.

3. Lack of engagement in a resolution process. The third theme that emerged was also strongly linked to the first, as it emphasized some sort of avoidance of sadness, whether it be a defense mechanism or the result of a feeling of helplessness when confronted with the emotion. Indeed, when participants tried to explain how the relational event that generated sadness ended, they did not engage in a process aiming to resolve the situation. Results show two strategies used by the participants when a resolution of the sad situation was explored: they either let time pass by without acting, or they severed the relationship linked to the affect by detaching completely from others, or through self-isolation.

On one hand, the tendency to rely on time or to ignore what had happened denoted a certain level of passivity in addressing the emotional situation. The participants' discourse showed that emotions were experienced as imposed on them and that they didn't feel that they could act upon it.

> P7: I would say that it's just time you know. Just let my frustration pass, and um, because actually nothing could have eased my frustration, it's just really time. To say to myself, too bad, it's done, move on.

> P5: How it ended, there's not much to do, so I accepted it and that's it.

> P1: I just understood that I needed to move on to something else.

In these excerpts, participants addressed the necessity (i.e. "need") they had to stop thinking about the event and to leave it behind them, suggesting that affects were avoided and could hardly be accepted and integrated.

On the other hand, some participants tried to avoid their affects by decreasing or breaking all ties to the individuals that were part of the relational event responsible for the sadness. Even if these participants undertook an action, this strategy was also experienced as an imposed necessity. Furthermore, the strategy didn't allow individuals to engage in a resolution process that would support an adequate regulation of the experienced affect.

> P7: I isolated myself, I would always take long walks […]. It seemed that I had to be alone because it was as if others had betrayed me.

> P8: I cut-off all contact, I said okay, I have to move forward. […] well, too bad and I have to forget about this.

Avoiding to engage in a resolution process seemed to denote that sadness was perceived by participants as a state on which they could not act. It also meant avoiding contact with the emotion.

4. Emotions as the result of external events. The fourth theme added to the third, for it also showed that affects were perceived as a state that cannot be acted on, as imposed by events, as if the participants had been spectators watching them unfold. Indeed, participants described a series of events concretely and concluded that these events had saddened them. Affects were thus perceived as having an external cause triggered by oneself or others and these events "inflicted" sadness upon them. Affects and the subjective aspects pertaining to the events were not addressed, suggesting a lack of integration of the emotion into the participants' experience.

> P8: What made me feel the most sadness is when I talked to my best friend again [who doesn't live in the same country anymore].

> P3: […] in the end, it's sad to quit, to quit everything to make sacrifices. […] It's the unknown that makes me sad to quit everything.

> P4: But he doesn't accept it, and that is what makes me sad.

5. Confusion with anger. Although a defining feature of alexithymia is a difficulty in labelling feelings, participants in this study identified a wide variety of feelings associated with sadness. Among them, anger was expressed by most participants to various degrees ("discontent", "frustrated", "angry", "enraged").

> P4: It's pretty mixed when it happens to me, I'm not too sure between sadness and anger. Both are alternating. It mostly comes after a state of anger that doesn't last long, it gives way to sadness rapidly.

As stated by this participant, the two affects were almost interchangeable for the participants, despite being qualitatively different. Sadness is normally a response to a loss whereas anger is generally considered a response to an event perceived as an

obstacle or aggression. Nevertheless, participants seemed to experience these two affects concurrently and were unable to adequately distinguish them, exhibiting a lack of differentiation.

6. Perceived difficulty in identifying and expressing their feelings. In addition to perceiving sadness as an affect associated with anger, participants perceived themselves as experiencing only a few emotions, or as having difficulty being in touch with their feelings. They also expressed a difficulty expressing feelings, despite the fact that they labelled several different feelings when describing relational events. This theme was explicitly referred to by participants, and could also be inferred by the difficulty that some participants demonstrated in recalling a typical event associated with sadness.

P6: It's not something that I live a lot, so I don't have a specific example in mind.

P9: I don't know how to describe it, I'm not that close to my emotions.

P7: I experienced… I don't know if it's sadness! I think it is something else.

The lack of contact with their feelings that the participants reported might have led to difficulties with symbolization since by feeling disconnected from their affects, and by subsequently not approaching them directly, participants seemed to have difficulty translating their emotional experiences into words.

Joy

1. Achievement of goals. For eight of the nine participants, the joy-related event that was recalled was associated with accomplishing a goal, such as obtaining a scholarship or a license, a victory, or the success of an endeavor that seemed impossible. Therefore, the experience of joy was principally associated with success-related events.

P9: When I received the letter [of acceptance], I was crazy you know, I was crazy!

Joy was perceived as a reaction to an external event without reference to an internal subjective state.

2. Expression through action. When participants were asked to describe an experience of joy, they described a series of actions rather than an internal state.

P6: How I experienced it, well I took her in my arms, I was smiling…

P9: I was jumping to the ceiling, I went to spend, like my God my entire paycheck you know.

P8: We were in a cafe, we were screaming, we were standing, we were singing and clapping our hands. […] We had a big smile that we could not take off our face.

The description of actions could have denoted a lack of symbolization when joy was described solely in terms of behaviour without attention to an internal subjective realm.

3. Joy experienced as a shared emotion. Finally, joy was reported by all participants as experienced with others, who were also experiencing a moment of joy. One of the key components of the participants' discourse was sharing the affect with others. Knowing that the affect was shared and also lived by others seemed to accentuate the subjective experience of joy.

> P1: First, you know, a night out with friends, just like that, it's a happy thing but… More than that, the event it, it brought something more, that's it, it created a, like that exactly, like an euphoria, uh, everyone, from what I thought, had a lot of fun

> P6: You know, everyone was super happy for her really, it was like, uh, really super fun to see everyone happy […]. I think that her joy was, um, her joy and her expression of her joy was contagious too.

Discussion

Individual Differences

The results of this study provide a snapshot of the emotional discourse of high-alexithymia individuals associated with sadness and joy. Furthermore, this study allows for a better understanding of the level of symbolization of emotions exhibited by high-alexithymia individuals. In contrast to the initial description made by Sifneos (1994), student participants with high alexithymic scores on the TAS-20 do not show an extreme deficit in the variety of their emotional representations. Even if participants manifested important inter-individual differences, the majority of participants were capable of naming a number of feelings and of explaining a related, emotionally-laden event. Despite the use of vague emotional words (e.g., "I felt bad"), these individuals were capable of differentiating between typical emotions, for example sadness, guilt and anger. However, it has to be noted that they were asked to discuss a specific emotional interpersonal event (saddening or joyful). As shown in previous studies, high alexithymic individuals do report some negative feelings in the form of complaints of anxiety and depression, and may also talk about nervousness, agitation, restlessness, irritability, and tension, without nonetheless being able to elaborate on these feelings (Sifneos, 1967). The participants of this study however, demonstrated a higher than anticipated degree of emotional awareness (Lane et al., 1996) and availability of emotional representations, as demonstrated by some elaboration and a more differentiated vocabulary than expected. For example, in order to describe a sadness-related relational event, participants used words such as depressed, overwhelmed, incomprehension, or surprise as the source of distress, reported feeling betrayed or not supported by others, loneliness, disappointment, guilt, and feeling torn. Moreover, they also referred to behavioural expressions, physical sensations, and overall references to emotional schemas, for instance situational references (e.g., "it wasn't sadness as when someone dies" (P5)). Some important individual differences among significantly alexithymic participants in terms of their experience of positive and negative emotions are accurately illustrated by these two participants:

P4 (sadness): How I live it, it gets stuck in the chest, well in the thorax and the throat. So it keeps it all stuck in the throat. […]

P4 (joy): (pauses) Well, I must admit (laughs) that nothing really happens like, it's, it's, it's pretty much neutral for real during that time. […] So, what happens is I'll do like others do around me, I'll be a little bit like a monkey, I'll imitate the gestures I see around, and then we'll raise our arms and we'll hug.

Although this participant demonstrated a typical alexithymic difficulty in distinguishing between subjective emotional feelings and the bodily sensations that accompany states of emotional arousal, and in mentalizing emotions, some other alexithymic participants were capable of a much more elaborate symbolization of emotion, even with similarly high, or even higher, alexithymic scores (P4 = 62, P6 = 73). Indeed, in the two contrasted excerpts, the participant that received the highest score on the TAS-20 has a discourse less typical of high levels of alexithymia:

P6 (sadness): [talking about the loss of her family cat] yeah I was sad because, uh, it was, it was still a presence […] it occurred with another event in my life where I was hospitalized […] it changed like all the family dynamics […]. Um, it was a little bit like a separation, it's not, you know, it wasn't dramatic like you know what I mean, it wasn't the end of the world but at the same time, um, well, I was, yeah, I was sad that he was gone yeah. […]

P6 (joy): It was a happy event, like this girl, she had so many hard times the past 10 years and then it was like if recently everything fell into place for her, like um, this joy that she's experiencing, well it's like it made me realize that you know, me too I've had hard times in the last few years and it says that it's not because you've been through difficult things that you'll stay there you know.

This participant was able to attribute some meaning to her experience, in part by associating the event with other significant elements from her past (Lecours et al., 2009). Therefore, the difference between these two participants on symbolizing capacities properly illustrates a more diverse and complex picture of alexithymia than the one suggested by the TAS-20's set of items (Bagby & Taylor, 1999b). A possible explanation for this difference might reside in the nature of the test itself, a self-report measure. Indeed, during the interview, participants demonstrated an ability to perceive themselves as presenting a difficulty in being in touch with their own affects. However, what constitutes a difficulty can vary largely among individuals based on subjective standards, such as expectations of what being in tune with one's feelings would normally look, and feel like. Perception of self is a crucial determinant of self-report measures, and the variety of subjective standards could explain why different levels of symbolization were noted, despite all participants being considered to have high alexithymia scores according to the TAS-20.

Sadness

Beyond individual differences, the many experiential themes shared by the participants revealed a rather unified high-alexithymia picture when sadness is concerned. Even if alexithymia is conceptualized as probably involving both ability

deficits and avoidant defenses (Preece, Becerra, Allen Robinson & Dandy, 2017), the subjective narratives of sad events, as reported by high-alexithymia individuals seem to indicate a defensive pattern of avoiding negative emotions. Based on the participants' interviews, the access, to some extent, to a feeling schema including behavioural and situational components, seems to indicate at least some cognitive abilities in the treatment of affect. From a more subjective perspective, the narratives indicate that sadness seemed to be experienced but avoided, leading to a truncated elaboration process (see Figure 1).

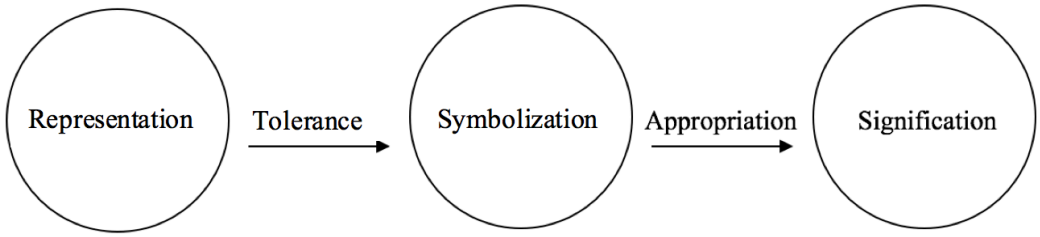

Figure 1

Normal sequence of the emotional elaboration process.

In the normal sequence of this elaboration continuum, the symbolizing capacities become more complex as the level of elaboration increases. The capacity for symbolization allows for increasing containment of the affect, which thus permits a more complex elaboration. However, high-alexithymia individuals report the subjective need to avoid sadness, which may restrict their tolerance of it, which may consequently constrict the elaboration process. Therefore, instead of depicting alexithymia as a deficit that prevents symbolization, the way high-alexithymia individuals experience sadness suggests that the first steps to symbolizing would be accessible but seldom attained as a result of their subjective need to avoid sadness, hence resulting in a defensive avoidant attitude. However, whether a defense or deficit played a role in the limited elaboration process could not be assessed by the present data.

At the lowest level of elaboration, to "represent" refers to the capacity to characterize various angles or components of an emotion. Throughout their interviews, participants demonstrated an ability to label several standard feelings, in addition to an ability to verbalize somatic (e.g., P4: "it gets stuck in the chest, well in the thorax and throat") and verbal representations (e.g., P3: "in the end, it's sad to quit, to quit everything to make sacrifices"). This reflects the participants' capacity for cognitive representation of the emotion schema. However, the confused perception of anger and sadness suggests an incomplete process of representation. Indeed, two qualitatively different emotions were intertwined, highlighting some difficulties in differentiating among representations of emotions. In an optimal process of elaboration, the presence of representations supports an ability to tolerate emotions. Yet for high-alexithymia participants, the defensive pattern associated with sadness indicates that this feeling is mostly avoided. Indeed, participants adopted a variety of defensive attitudes, suggesting a low level of tolerance.

First among these attitudes is the description of sadness as an emotion that should be suppressed or evacuated. The "evacuation" of sadness evokes conceptual formulations by Bion who proposed that unelaborated emotions (beta elements) have to be handled mentally by excessive projective identification, which amounts to the mental apparatus getting rid of the concretely painful experience (Bion, 1962). This conceptualization has been used to understand alexithymia by clinical theorists (Graham, 1988). Second is the tendency to avoid engaging in processes that include being in touch with an emotion, such as sharing the feeling with peers or initiating conflict resolution. Lastly, some typical defensive behaviours were also present, such as laughing during highly emotionally charged moments:

> P4: Yeah, and then when I talk about it afterwards, well, it makes me want to laugh, it's nervous!

> P7: […] it's that, I wish I could have helped her, but the only thing I was feeling was frustration. I don't know if you ever lived with someone who's anorexic, but it's really um… you just to shake her and say eat damn it! (laughs)

Therefore, the defensive attitude adopted by participants hinders tolerance, thus inhibiting the capacity to link representations together in order to symbolize them. Symbolic thinking refers to the emergent capacity to evoke a referent or an analogy, while associating it to representations, in order to verbally describe emotions, such as by likening emotional representations to a related situation (e.g., P6: "it was a little bit like a separation"; P7: "I needed to be alone because it was as if others had betrayed me"). As shown by the perceived difficulty in expressing and perceiving feelings, the symbolizing capacities demonstrated by the participants of this study seem to be weak and limited, due to their avoidance tendencies.

Since symbolization facilitates appropriation, the latter is also constricted by the defensive attitude described in the subjective experiences of high-alexithymia participants. Subjective appropriation is conceptualized on a continuum, with at one end an unconscious or repressed representation of affect (not-me), and at the other end, the affect is experienced as one's subjective and meaningful internal state (Lecours et al., 2009). However, for the participants in this study, sadness was often experienced as caused by external events, for example, as a consequence of another's actions. Affect doesn't seem to be fully appropriated by the participant (such as expressed with "I", considered as "their own"), suggesting that emotions are perceived as imposed rather than as internal states. The results reveal a lack of subjective appropriation, thereby indicating a lack of underlying symbolization, considering that appropriation normally comes with high levels of mentalization (Lecours & Bouchard, 1997).

Finally, appropriation in turn allows for meaningful connections, namely enriching the meaning of the emotional experience by linking it to previous life events or other elements of autobiographical memory (Lecours et al., 2009). During interviews, the underdevelopment of the elaboration process, and the subjective necessity to avoid sadness reported by the participants, suggest the presence of limited "meaning making" in their speech.

Descriptions of reactions from low-alexithymia individuals can allow for a better appreciation of the present results. Excerpts from interviews with low-alexithymia participants taken from the larger study are presented below for comparative purposes. The comparison highlights high-alexithymia individuals' low level of appropriation. Low-alexithymia participants perceive the experienced affect as an internal state and the subjective appropriation is much more elaborated:

> PControl(C)1: […] then um, an example of sadness like that, my visits there don't really happen as I would like and, I feel disappointed when I think, uh, of the quality time I spend with my parents and all that. So, it's not as I expected and I would like it to be otherwise. […] I'm the kind of person who, um, expresses how I feel and, um, tries to find solutions so that it doesn't happen again, but on the spot, I, uh well, I was a little bit like… hum, I don't know like um… I just felt that… just really disheartened and I felt like doing nothing, I felt discouraged so when it happened it was like a huge down.

> PC2: I was sad because I was telling myself that maybe it is me who's not capable of tolerating, like he's new to the job and he tries his best and all and I was thinking maybe it's me that is not capable of interacting well with him, so I was a little bit doubting myself.

These participants are engaged in an introspective process that allows them to be in touch with the contained and appropriated affect in order to regulate it. Contrary to their high-alexithymia counterparts, the discourses of low-alexithymia participants shown above do not reveal signs of defensive attitudes nor deficits in cognitive treatment of emotion and, therefore, indicate that these individuals are capable of a more complex elaboration process. Like their counterparts, low-alexithymia participants demonstrate a capacity for representation through their ability to label several distinctive feelings. However, unlike high-alexithymia participants, they do not demonstrate a confusion with regards to their perception of sadness and anger. Moreover, the presence of improved representations reinforce their ability to tolerate affects, as shown by the tendency of participants to engage in the resolution of conflicts and to reflect on their sadness, rather than avoiding it. Lastly, appropriation of affect is also developed as opposed to the high-alexithymia participants. Indeed, feelings are described as fully one's own subjective states (e.g., I was sad) as opposed to being the result of an external cause.

Joy

As an emotion, joy seemed to be easier to symbolize than sadness for the participants. All participants were able to easily share stories involving typical events associated with joy. Nonetheless, some aspects of their narratives suggest some kind of difficulty symbolizing. Although the elaboration of joy first appears quite usual and not marginally distorted by high-alexithymia participants, some observations denote a few similarities with the verbal treatment of sadness.

While joy is experienced in situations of accomplishment, the participants do not articulate or symbolize their internal state of pride. Since the experience of joy does not appear to be mediated by pride, a difficulty in distinguishing between qualitatively

different feelings is suggested, as well as some deficit in representing affects. This characteristic evokes the difficulty in distinguishing between sadness and anger when describing the relational events associated with sadness. Next, situations of success are often the result of external events such as a victory in a sporting event, obtaining a scholarship or a successful test result. This hints at the emotional experience associated with sadness described by the participants, which are also understood as caused by events. As with sadness, such an externalization of causality suggests a limited appropriation of the subjective experience of joy. Finally, participants described their joy experience with behavioural terms instead of internal states, which also points to a low level of internalization or appropriation. This last characteristic, in addition to indicating a lack of subjectivation or mentalizing, is congruent with the pragmatic thinking associated with high levels of alexithymia. However, some research indicates that positive emotions might be naturally more easily expressed through behaviour (Mortillaro, 2018), which would mitigate the interpretation of joy being less mentalized when expressed with gestures.

When the joy narrative of alexithymic participants is compared to their low-alexithymia counterparts, the tendency to associate joy with external events becomes more clearly characteristic of high levels of alexithymia. During interviews, the discourse of low-alexithymia individuals is more pronouncedly directed towards interpersonal intimacy or general well-being, themes associated with less outward or behavioural manifestations of joy (e.g., screaming, dancing, hugging, etc.). Moreover, the low-alexithymia participants had a greater tendency to describe an internal state, rather than concrete actions, than high-alexithymia participants:

> PC3: Of course when I like like, I read a lot of novels and you know, I let myself go a lot, let's say I get absorbed by the character's emotion like, but that doesn't count, that, that doesn't work, no, I don't know, just everyday joy let's say I'm happy sometimes just when my mom cooks a good meal, I'm happy to come home and… […] And well you know I'm happy inside of me like.

> PC2: We were about to go to sleep and all and we were talking like in an intimate moment and he was like very, very sweet and very kind and you know I felt really good being with him, I felt we were close and all, and that made me really happy like I felt like, uh, good to be with him and, uh, happy that I had a beautiful relationship like that like privileged. […] like a feeling of well-being like I… I had the impression that like with him everything would be okay, you know, like a feeling that… like life is beautiful and you know like general and, uh, maybe, uh, uh, hmm, ease.

To conclude, the differences between the elaboration of joy and sadness show that despite some similarities, the symbolization of positive and negative emotions is not equivalent. First, the lack symbolization of positive emotion is not associated with deficits in coping or emotion regulation. High-alexithymia participants do not report the subjective need to avoid feelings of joy, therefore it appears that participants do not adopt a defensive strategy with regards to this emotion. Rather, they tend to share and experience this feeling with others rather than to avoid it as they do with sadness. This also suggests a good level of tolerance of the emotion. However, symbolization, appropriation and signification levels are rarely reached in the elaboration process, as manifested in the high-alexithymia participants' discourse. Despite this, since the low

level of elaboration is not associated with emotion regulation difficulties, the manifestations of high levels of alexithymia are somewhat less apparent. On the whole, positive and negative affects are not accessed in the same way by high-alexithymia individuals. Nevertheless, our data suggest that the elaboration process is also incomplete for positive emotions. This result could partly be explained by some level of anhedonia, since alexithymia and trauma can be related, as described by Krystal (1981). Some studies have demonstrated that individuals with high levels of alexithymia frequently report histories of deficiencies in the caregivers' response, which result in a reduced proneness to experience pleasurable emotions (Bagby, Taylor, Parker, 1993). The reduced inclination to experience pleasurable emotions might be explained by the lack of symbolization, appropriation and signification of joy. However, it has to be noted that the participants do not subjectively report a difficulty or a reduced proneness to experience joy.

Limitations of the Present Study

This study has some limitations. Firstly, the data treated in a phenomenological stance allows a rich description of the participants' experience, but without fuller data on typical low-alexithymia verbal productions, it does not enable us to assert that this description is specific to high-alexithymia individuals. Secondly, the present sample was recruited in an undergraduate psychology program, which means that the participants might be representative of a group of more articulate high-alexithymia individuals, more characterized by defense than by deficit in the representation and verbalization of emotions. Moreover, their schemas, knowledge, and vocabulary of emotion might be more elaborate than the average population considering their studies. Also, although the TAS-20 is the most widely employed method for assessing alexithymia, a multi-method approach to the evaluation of alexithymia would have produced a more robust identification of participants presenting higher levels of alexithymia. For instance, the present findings indicate that highly alexithymic individuals vary as to their level of symbolization of emotions. The wide inter-individual variations found in the highly alexithymic individuals in the present study might rest on the mono-method assessment of alexithymia used here. Relatedly, the interview format used in the study was not typical of qualitative studies as it was semi-structured and it asked participants to discuss feelings that are well-defined and delineated. This could have had the effect of favoring a more elaborate approach to emotions. Finally, this study offers a description of high levels of alexithymia manifestations without addressing the underlying construct.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study aimed to provide a better understanding of how high-alexithymia individuals describe their experiences of sadness and joy, as well as to describe the major themes found in the emotional discourse of high-alexithymia individuals. In light of how participants reported their subjective emotional experiences, sadness was experienced as an imposed state that needed to be avoided rather than as a subjective state. Joy was also experienced as the result of external events, but was not avoided. The study also suggests that the following verbal strategies could be used to reduce contact with negative affects: experiencing an affect as the consequence of an external event, the tendency to not share emotional content

with peers and to avoid resolving problems leading to emotional events. These strategies, used defensively, could hinder the capacity to contain and elaborate affects and therefore, its symbolization. These results suggest a difficulty with integrating affect into psychic life. Nevertheless, the high-alexithymia functioning that emerges from the present data is much more diversified than what is implied by the clinically based conceptualization of alexithymia. Participants demonstrate a variety of abilities for elaborating sadness. Participants also seem to present some difficulties symbolizing joy, although it appears to be to a lower extent than for the symbolization of sadness. Indeed, high-alexithymia participants discussing joy do not tend to address their internal states and frequently describe affects as the result of external events, suggesting a low level of appropriation. Despite this, positive affects are not avoided and are shared with others, suggesting that there is a difference in the elaboration process between positive and negative emotions. The non-defensive attitude toward joy seems to confirm that symbolization differs according to emotion valence (positive vs. negative) (Lundh et al., 2002, Luminet et al., 2004; Páez et al., 1999; Wagner & Lee, 2008). This study contributes to the understanding of alexithymia by suggesting that core deficits are found in the actual verbal expression and elaboration of emotions in highly alexithymic individuals, although theses deficits appear to be more important when dealing with negative emotions such as sadness. Our findings also suggest that various levels of alexithymia severity can be found in the emotional discourse of highly alexithymic individuals.

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Where Words Trap the Mind: The Bewitchment of Psychotherapy

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Abstract

When psychotherapists reify the concepts they are using to describe human experiences, both therapist and patient are likely to end up with befuddled thinking, and become unable to grasp the lived experience of the emotional turmoil the patient is struggling with. In this context, proper use of language is of vital importance, and the first task of the psychotherapist is to think clearly about what she is doing in the therapy room and the words she uses. This essay attempts to clarify some of these issues, and to discuss their relevance to the practice of psychotherapy.

Introduction

Some fifty years ago, Jean-Paul Sartre published a tape transcript of a "psychoanalytic dialogue" he obtained from a patient.[2] The dialogue was recorded secretly by the patient during an analytic session. Once the patient had produced the tape-recorder from his pocket, the analyst refused to say anything other than demanding the immediate withdrawal of the patient from the consulting room. It transpired that the patient had taken a long time to consider such an action. He wanted the analyst to explain what he had done to him over the years. He also wanted to know what the therapeutic cure was supposed to be. Most importantly, he wanted to have this discussion *face to face* without the couch, and he wanted an audio record of what the analyst said.

The transcript clearly conveys a sense of panic the analyst feels in this unexpected situation, where the patient has suddenly taken on an *active* role, upsetting the power balance between the two participants. Besides demanding an explanation of the "science" of psychoanalysis, the patient challenges the dubious nature of his analyst's previous pronouncements (interpretations) by using the latter's concepts such as castration fear or father-complex to explain the analyst's agitated behaviour in the present situation. The result is a comic but also thought-provoking record of the exchanges between an expert and a person labelled as a patient, in an "analytic hour" that has undergone a most unusual mutation.

Sartre has commented that the crucial point about the "dialogue" is that the hitherto passive "patient" – the *object* of the analysis – has become an active agent, that is, a *subject*. The idea of *subject* is fundamental to Sartre's existentialist philosophy. In

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[2] Originally the "Psychoanalytic Dialogue" was published in April 1969 in the journal *Les Temps Modernes*; the article was later reprinted in Sartre, J-P (1974). *Between Existentialism and Marxism*.

acting as a subject, the patient demands to be treated as autonomous. To turn the table on his challenger, the psychoanalyst declares the patient dangerous and out of touch with reality. In doing so, he is trying to wrest back control through labelling the patient with words that could condemn the latter to psychiatric incarceration. Words uttered by professionals carry the authority of institutional sanction, reflecting the power imbalance between experts and lay-people.

Some years ago, a collection of papers (Casement, 2004) was published with the provocative title *Who Owns Psychoanalysis?* It contains material about the conflicts between different factions within psychoanalysis. But what interests me is more the fact that "ownership" has arisen as an issue in the first place. The idea of ownership is not just to do with possession of physical resources and means of production in the material world; it is, more importantly, to do with control of the *superstructure* of a society, of which language and meanings are vital constituents. Ownership, in this regard, embodies the right to decide what orthodoxy is and what is judged to be heresy. It also controls the delineation of who is "in" and who is "out", thus defining "us" versus "them". In exercising such power, those who owns the right to produce meanings ensure that truth, or *Truth*, is established in accordance with their view.

Freud no doubt saw himself as the sole originator, and hence owner, of psychoanalysis; and to that extent, he believed he was the guarantor of the purity of psychoanalytic knowledge. His demand that his disciples should guard the "pure gold of psychoanalysis" was not dissimilar to Saint Paul's instruction to Christians to "guard the Gospel". The phenomenon of claiming authority through *lineage* ("I was analysed by her, who was analysed by him, who was analysed by Freud".) is similar to the apostolic genealogy linking the current Pope all the way back to Saint Peter, who was supposedly enthroned by Christ as the *rock* (the head) of the Catholic Church. A fundamental conflict between different sects of psychoanalysts revolves round the question of who is truly faithful to the Founder, or who has definitively preserved the gem of psychoanalytic truths. In this regard, it is not inappropriate to compare the whole edifice of psychoanalysis to a religious faith.[3]

In this connection, it is interesting to note that Adam Phillips (2007), the general editor of the New Penguin Freud series, wanted to avoid "psychoanalytic politics" when organising the new translation of Freud's work. He wanted as many non-analysts as possible to do the translation so as to allow different voices to emerge. He believed that to promote a single-translator *Standard* Edition would lead to dogmatic canon formation harmful to psychoanalysis, particularly if only analysts were involved or if the project was under the control of psychoanalytic institutions.

According to Adam Phillips (2014), Freud began his exploration of the human psyche with uncertainty but ended up becoming overly certain. In my view, dogmatic certainty gives a false sense of power which stifles creativity and new discoveries, whereas genuine openness extends the horizon of understanding. Treating all theories, including psychoanalysis, as provisional may prove to be a fruitful way of thinking about psychotherapy.

[3] For a classic critique of psychoanalysis as (quasi-)religion, see Gellner (1985).

Putting "Neuro" into Psychoanalysis?

While Freud's work is undoubtedly instrumental in making *the unconscious* a dominant concept in modern culture, this concept has been grappled with by many thinkers long before Freud (see Ellenberger, 1970). Thus it is important that the development of Freud's ideas be seen in the context of the intellectual history of Europe, particularly in relation to nineteenth century German Idealism in philosophy (e.g., Hegel or Schelling; see Fenichel, 2015). As Ffytche (2011) has cogently argued, the question is not whether Freud inherited the unconscious from earlier writers, but which version of it did he inherit. It would be fair to say that the emergence of the notion of the unconscious in Freud's work (and related concepts like repression or the Oedipus Complex) was made possible by the cultural milieu of the day. Thus it is not helpful to talk about Freud "discovering" the unconscious (or the Oedipus Complex) as similar to Joseph Priestley discovering oxygen in the field of chemistry.

A more fundamental question to "what is the unconscious" is no doubt *what is consciousness?* This is a conundrum that philosophers have been (unsuccessfully, I feel) struggling with throughout history. In contemporary psychoanalysis, there is an attempt to bring the neurosciences to bear on this question (Kaplan-Solms & Solms, 2000; Levin, 2003; Oppenheim, 2005; Solms, 2013; Solms & Turnbull 2002).

The thrust of Mark Solms' work is to bolster the credibility of Freud's ideas by appealing to the findings of neurosciences (hence *neuropsychoanalysis)*. Solms believes that his work is a continuation of Freud's 1895 "Project for a Scientific Psychology", with the aim of establishing the neuroscientific basis for psychoanalysis. In working towards this goal, Solms also tackles the question of how consciousness has arisen.

While Solms does acknowledge that the "hard problem" of consciousness is far from resolved (how consciousness emerges from matter), he is adamant that the "easy problem" of consciousness (how neuro-chemical processes correlate with cognitive functions) has already been subject to rigorous research resulting in a lot of important findings. His own solution to the "hard problem" is "dual-aspect monism", which suggests that:

> we are made of only one type of stuff but … this stuff is *perceived* in two different ways… *in our essence* we are *neither* mental nor physical beings… the brain is made of stuff that *appears* "physical" when viewed from the outside (as an object) and "mental" when viewed from the inside (as a subject). When I perceive myself externally (in the mirror, for example) and internally (through introspection), I am perceiving the *same thing* in two different ways (as a *body* and a *mind*, respectively). (Solms & Turnbull, 2002, p. 56, original emphasis)

Essentially, Solms is saying that the distinction between mind and brain is just an artefact of perception. He then goes on to say:

> The mind *itself* is unconscious, but *we* perceive it consciously by *looking inwards*. It is this capacity for "looking inwards" (for introspection or self-awareness) that is the most essential property of a *mind*. (Solms & Turnbull, 2002, pp. 76-77, emphasis added)

What Solms has said here begs a number of questions. First, the phrase "the mind itself" implies there is a boundary to the mind which could be distinguished from what is not mind; secondly, the "we" is deemed to be separate from the "mind" as this "we" could "perceive" the mind, i.e., "we" being the subject and "mind" the object and "looking inwards" being the action of the "we" on the "mind"; and thirdly, he said "looking inwards" is an important capacity of the "mind", which suggests "we" (the subject doing the looking) and the "mind" (that which is being looked at) are one and the same, which is confusing. Moreover, the word "inwards" is difficult to explicate, *where* is "inwards" and *how* is *looking* inwards achieved?

My view is that the mind is inseparable from a person's immediate phenomenal *experience*, and is not some *thing* transparent to itself. To analyse what it means by "the mind looking into itself" will only lead to an infinite regress, i.e., is the mind analysing what it means by the mind looking into the mind? This is pure confusion.

Solms' distinction between perceiving himself externally and perceiving himself internally is equally perplexing. Seeing one's *image* in a mirror cannot be equated with seeing one's *self* because the mirror-image is not a self, but the optical effect of light on a reflective surface. Also, this seeing is not *external* in the literal sense – this seeing oneself in the mirror is always an internal process involving the visual cortex, the prefrontal lobe, and the complex function of self-recognition. To say this "external" perception and perceiving oneself through introspection are two *different* ways of perceiving "the same thing" (where and what is this "thing"?) has set up a dubious distinction, to say the least.

Solms' "monism" implies that matter is the only stuff there is, which means "we", the brain, and the mind are all made of the same stuff. The unanswered question is how does this one and only stuff (matter) separate into brain and mind, and is this "we" the brain or the mind? To me, dual-aspect monism has not achieved its goal of resolving the "hard problem" of consciousness.

In relation to psychoanalysis, Solms (2013) argues that the id is associated with the brainstem and subcortical structures regulating affective states, while the ego is associated with the prefrontal cortex and executive functions. The brain structures involved in interoceptive perceptions and affect regulation are seen as the neurological basis for Freud's pleasure principle, and hence locating id in these structures is deemed appropriate. As consciousness, in Solms' view, is generated by the brainstem, he believes consciousness is not to do with perception and cognition (functions of the frontal lobe, where the ego is located) but with affect and instinct, that is, the id. As consciousness is not generated in the cortex, he concludes that the ego is unconscious while the id is conscious, thus turning Freud's idea on its head!

The logic of Solms' argument is as follows: id is *defined* (not independently verified) as to do with affect (the pleasure principle), and as the brainstem is correlated with affect and also with consciousness, so id must be localised in the brainstem and is therefore "conscious". But this is merely giving the label "id" to the brainstem processes without *adding* anything. Thus Solms' reasoning is circular or tautological.

Solms further suggests that the therapeutic effectiveness of psychoanalysis is through changing the brain by "rekindling" critical periods of frontal lobe development artificially via the regressive transference relationship, and through extending the functional sphere of influence of the prefrontal lobes via language and internalisation, thereby strengthening the ego (Solms & Turnbull, 2002, pp. 287-289). This is an unsubstantiated hypothesis that is struggling to put the prefix "neuro" to "psychoanalysis" - a rather futile attempt.

In all of this, Solms uses the word "consciousness" in a confused way. The assertion that consciousness is generated solely by the brainstem does not distinguish *wakefulness* from either phenomenal consciousness or consciousness of the self. Certainly if the brainstem is damaged, an individual person would lose consciousness/wakefulness; but is a functioning brainstem, *without* the prefrontal cortex (and other brain structures), enough to ensure the *experience* of phenomenal consciousness or personal self-consciousness? Consciousness depends on the brainstem but is not identical with it.

In the concluding chapter in *The Self in Neuroscience and Psychiatry,* Kircher and David (2003) have outlined the central qualities of phenomenal consciousness at the core of *selfhood*: sense of temporal continuity/consistency, sense of agency, and sense of distinction from the environment. There is no ontological identity between phenomenal consciousness (which cannot be *localised* in the neurological architecture) and brain states. Perhaps the search for the neurological location of the ego or the id is an impossible enterprise. While acknowledging Freud's contribution to human understanding, the Chicago philosopher and analyst Jonathan Lear (2005) has pointed out that Freud's belief in the possibility of explaining the mind in biological terms is misguided.

Whence and Wherefore Oedipus

Language is the human phenomenon *par excellence,* and it constitutes a tool for the exercise of power in various ways. Not only in the world of psychotherapy, but in most areas of life – politics, the law, even the home behind closed doors. Whichever faction a psychoanalyst belongs to, the power she wields over her patient is largely to do with her ownership (and deployment) of a special language that renders the latter either clueless about what is going on or incapable of assuming the role of an independent *subject*. In fashioning a mechanistic language they believe represent the truth about all human beings, many analysts, including Freud, have committed a *category error*, which has hampered the healthy development of psychotherapy and ensnared generations of practitioners. This error is the *reification* of often *ad hoc* or context-dependent concepts into objects with thing-like properties, thus bestowing upon these concepts an ontological status they do not possess.

One example of a category error is the statement "cortex without a brainstem can never be conscious" (Solms, 2013 p. 12). "Cortex" is an entity in the physical world whereas "conscious" is a description of a subjective phenomenon in the experiential world. We can (and do) say "I am conscious" but not (as Solms does) "my brainstem is conscious" or "my memory is conscious". To mix the two up is a classic category error which leads to dubious theorising.

Another example is the Oedipal Complex. Instead of being treated as a metaphor for the purpose of giving meaning to a particular person's experience (originally Freud's own), it has, through a process of theory building, become something universal, to be *discovered* through analysis. Similarly, "repression" has become an *occurrence in the mind*, with objective existence and power to control a person's life, something that can only be unearthed through psychoanalysis. Thus, analysis is not understood as a tentative, and often erroneous, groping towards a *hermeneutical* grasp of what has happened or is happening between individuals, but as a scientific procedure that uncovers the *causes* and *mechanisms* of neurosis.

Like many myths in antiquity, there are many variants of the Greek myth *Oedipus Rex*, but Freud took the one that conformed to his idea of the incestuous triangle in order to create a theory of childhood fantasy being the cause of neurosis. In other variants, the *exile* of Oedipus is the focus, not incest, parricide, or Oedipus's self-mutilation. The theme of wandering, of alienation, of suffering, of the difficulties of home-coming, is prominent in Greek tragedies, of which Oedipus is just one example. Another Greek epic, *Odyssey,* also has wandering at its heart - Odysseus' heroic attempt to return to Ithaca, his home. If wandering and alienation were given centrality in the human drama of neurosis (instead of parricide and incest), the history of psychoanalysis might have turned out differently.

The use of Greek myths in literary or philosophical discussions has a long history before Freud, and commentaries on works like *Oedipus* or *Antigone* often focused on ethical self-consciousness and responsibility (e.g., Hegel). Because of its plot involving incest and parricide, *Oedipus* was suppressed in England for a long time, but there was already strong fascination with it well before Freud coined the term "Oedipus Complex". As Buchanan (2010, p. 4) said, "[i]t may nevertheless seem a large leap from uncovering this suppressed classical hero to believing that his image held the secret of all of human nature". Buchanan has argued that *Oedipus* is at the centre of humanist discourse as a symbol of human self-awareness and a reflection of the limits of rationality. He suggests there was a nineteenth century philosophical strand that saw this myth as representing a traumatic but necessary transition from animistic, matriarchal nature-worship and superstition to enlightened patriarchal humanism. Thus Freud's interpretation of *Oedipus Rex* is not the only viable one.

After Freud, there have been many writers who tried to interpret *Oedipus* from perspectives different from psychoanalysis. Perhaps the most well-known is *Anti-Oedipus* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who have mounted a sustained critique of Freud's totalising dogma of the Oedipus Complex. Deleuze and Guattari (1983)[4]

[4] Unless the reader is a French philosophy expert, otherwise Deleuze and Guattari (1983) would not be easy to follow. It is a text full of anti-individualist, anti-ego, anarchist, and revolutionary polemics; nevertheless, it has been praised

believe that "oedipalisation" is a tool for oppression, and they argue that not only is Freud not radical enough, in fact psychoanalysis is very much part of the establishment. They suggest the "great discovery of psychoanalysis", i.e., the discovery of "the production of the unconscious", has been neutralized by the postulation of the Oedipus Complex (the "daddy-mommy-me" myth) which has introduced *idealism* into psychoanalysis. In their view, Freud has neglected the importance of Marx's materialist philosophy. They suggest that Freud's dislike of, and inability to work with, psychotic patients is to do with the latter not developing transference with the analyst and not capable of grasping Oedipal interpretations. Deleuze and Guattari describe such patients as resisting being oedipalised. Instead of psychoanalysis, they believe *schizoanalysis* is the way forward.

Whether we agree with Deleuze and Guattari or not, it is no doubting that right from the beginning, questions about the unconscious (and related issues such as the Oedipus Complex or repressed sexuality) have occupied the thinking public in more ways than one, and have led to disagreements, debates and controversies.

Reification of Experience

Language is fundamentally metaphorical – more often than not, words are used to achieve a purpose rather than *pointing to things*. Wittgenstein famously said "the meaning of a word is its use in the language".[5] A dictionary does not exhaust the meanings of words: usage changes and evolves, and no one is bound by the normative definition of words. Even in the area of the law, whether in day-to-day practice or legislative processes, the meaning of words is often subject to fierce debate resulting in unresolved disagreement.

Thus, words often serve as gateways to meanings in psychotherapy, not labels for concrete objects. While I am not denying that words, e.g., "table", may point to physical things, my contention is, for psychologists and psychotherapists, it is the metaphorical quality of language and the connotative complexity of words that we should attend to.

In an important, but neglected, paper published half a century ago, the psychoanalyst James Home has elaborated a cogent critique of the kind of mechanistic psychoanalysis which delights in obscure vocabularies and meaningless assertions. Home (1966) argues that psychoanalysis belongs to the realm of humanities rather than the world of science. The confusion between "causes" (appropriate for physical sciences) and "reasons" (required for understanding suffering and psychotherapy) is, Home suggests, what led Freud into the trap of reification. Home said "a meaning is not the product of causes but the creation of a subject" (1966, p. 43), and "[t]o define mind as the meaning of behaviour is to remind ourselves that mind is not a *thing* and

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by Michel Foucault as a masterpiece of anti-fascism.

[5] While this quote (Wittgenstein, 1958, Para 43) should be read in the context of Wittgenstein's detailed and complex analysis of "language-game", it is relevant to the discussion here of the metaphorical as well as connotative function of words in the production of meaning in therapy. The importance of Wittgenstein's work to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy is cogently argued in Heaton (2010).

cannot therefore be analysed as such. Mind as meaning is a quality inseparable from life, as is the concept of a subject" (p. 46). Furthermore, mind is not accessible to introspection, because "to introspection it [the mind] is infinitely recessive. We can never observe the 'I' that observes" (p. 47).

Mind, or "self" can only be *known* to the subject through her indwelling of an embodied existence in an inseparable relationship to the physical and social world. This is the subject's experience of phenomenal consciousness, not open to investigation with the logic and methods of physical science.

Writing a patient's official "story" is a manifestation of institutional control that the professional has over the patient. It is the expert defining the "self" of the patient. In such writings, reification is prevalent. It is common for psychiatrists to write clinical reports with statements like this: "mental state examination revealed a thin lady with..." – the implication of this way of talking is that assessing a person's emotional experience is akin to physical examination in physical medicine where findings such as "physical examination revealed a tender lump in the upper right abdominal area..." are important. The reification of the person (and her experience) into a thing is so blatant in such clinical reports it is hard to understand why so many psychiatrists remain unaware of what they are doing.

There are analysts who acknowledge the distinction between the concept of meaning and that of cause, but still stick to a *causal* model of psychological distress, arguing that the intertwining of meaning and cause is what characterises the human subject.[6] But how such intertwining is possible is often left unexplained, leaving unresolved the age-old dualist problem of how non-material aspects of experience (meaning, reason, belief) could produce *causal* effects in the material world (observable behaviour, physical mechanisms, etc).

The implication of Home's argument for psychoanalysis is profound. It is a different language, and a different practice, that has to be developed, not one modelled on "mechanistic medicine" ("mental state examination revealed a thin lady with…"). Although coming from a different perspective, the British clinical psychologist David Smail has written much about how both psychoanalytic and cognitive-behaviour psychotherapies have failed to do justice to human experience:

> [P]sychotherapy takes place in an ideological context of which it itself forms a part... The kind of psychotherapy which is subversive of ideology in the sense used here reveals a *world* in which we *live* and which gives us pain. It also gives back *meanings* to our *feelings*: for example, it may reveal depression not as the undesirable state of a disordered mechanism, but as the inevitable emotional experience of someone whose practised way of doing things no longer works, and

[6] This is what the analyst David Bell (2010) has suggested. He asserts that his model addresses the meaning of a symptom, and also displays its causal structure and causal history.

> as essential emotional accompaniment of the *difficulty* of learning to do things differently. Psychotherapy certainly does not cure anything... and of itself probably doesn't change anything very radically; what it can do is offer to support a subjective view of an actual world which patients may then (but also may not) want and be able to influence in some way. (Smail, 1987, pp. 398-401)[7]

One way the psychoanalyst exercises power over her patient is to monopolise the interpretation of the latter's problem: if the patient accepts an interpretation, she acknowledges the analyst is in possession of the truth; if she rejects the interpretation, the analyst can (and often does) label her as showing resistance, a symptom of her neurosis. Thus the truth about the patient is always in the hands of the analyst. While some analysts (including Freud himself) are not unaware of this criticism, in practice, such power monopoly is difficult to change.

In relation to this, Lear (2005) has tried to defend psychoanalysis thus: "philosophically speaking, the question is not whether some analysts are bullies. Rather, the question is, 'When psychoanalysis is practiced well, is there even so a tendency towards bullying?'" (p. 21). But this is not a valid defence because (1) who decides whether this or that analyst is "practising well", and (2) bullying of patients, especially by Freud, does matter as this leads to inaccurate information (or "evidence") being accrued for the formulation of (questionable) theories.

Reification happens not only in psychoanalysis but in most forms of psychological therapy. The central concept of the many variants of cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT), "negative automatic thoughts" (NATs), provides another example of how experience (in this case, *thinking*) is turned into *things*. Many practitioners talk about NATs as if they are entities in the head, and therapy is, simplistically, a matter of replacing these disorder-causing thoughts with positive or adaptive ones. The mechanical method of getting the patient to write down, repeatedly, positive statements (e.g., "I am not a failure") on a piece of paper ("thought record") is deemed the way to ensure therapy success. If we stop and ask, *Where do thoughts reside?,* we would quickly realise that the talk of NATs (or "positive thoughts") may not be a meaningful way to describe, let alone understand, human experience. But so often this is blithely ignored.

Perhaps it would not be presumptuous of me to extend Wittgenstein's dictum and say "the meaning of an experience is in its living". The crux of the matter is, *meaning* cannot be captured, framed or pinned down once and for all. It might be more fruitful to think of meaning as unstable, in flux, emergent. People who are totally committed to one particular view, who believe they possess certainty – people with God on their side – find it impossible to see the world, in all its messiness, clearly.

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[7] The late David Smail was a trenchant critic of capitalism, analysing how it underlies human misery and psychological problems. He has produced a large body of work which provides a rigorous critique of psychotherapy.

Living in the Present

When therapists turn experiences into objects, they often talk in terms of "the past" as if the latter has an independent existence, in which all sorts of things could be *found*, particularly "complexes" underlying psychological symptoms.

My contention is the past is not a *place*; it does not exist in the ontological sense. The concept of the past, the present and the future constitutes *our way of talking* about experiences. We do not *go back* to the past as such, nor could we *stay* in the past. This is a metaphorical way of speaking for particular purposes of communication.

Phenomenologically, we always, and can only, experience the present, and can never escape from it. Even when we *feel* we are in the past, we do so *in the present*. However, it is important to understand that the present is not a fixed point in time, as *experiencing* is always a phenomenon in motion, so to speak. There is no stopping at a particular present. The future is not a place either - it is our way of *imagining* (or anticipating) what might happen next (or the day after). The future will inevitably become the present, in the sense that whatever we have imagined does (or does not, as the case may be) turn out the way we imagine, and we experience *that* in the present. The felt continuity of past-present-future is how we experience our relationship to the space-time structure of the world, in which we continue to act in accordance with our personal circumstances and the cultural milieu we inhabit.

This way of understanding the past does not deny the experience of memories, but it does suggest that memories are not *things*. It is more helpful to talk in terms of *remembering*, an act of thinking in relation to what has happened. While there are neurophysiological correlates to the act of remembering, these correlates are not fixed entities in the brain, and they are not identical to what we remember. We can never point to a memory on a brain scan. Memories change as contexts vary in which the act of remembering is undertaken.

Thus, when a psychotherapist helps a patient "recover" a crucial memory, it is not a matter of rummaging in the bottom of a drawer "in the mind" to retrieve an object, but an act of jointly creating an experience of the patient thinking, in the present, of what has happened in the past. As such, it is of paramount importance that the *context* of remembering, not only the patient's current life but also the patient's relationship with the therapist, be taken into account when trying to understand whatever the patient has managed to remember. Interpretation is not a technique for discovering some *thing* from the past but a way of pointing to possibilities of meaning.

While many psychoanalysts understand that the past is never fixed, but a creation in the present and a realm of experience full of vicissitudes, they may still see the *recovery* of the patient's past as a major aim of therapy (as if it is already in the mind waiting to be found), and believe only they have the knowledge and authority to ascertain whether the "past" thus unearthed is the real past or not.

The Ego, the Mind and the Soul

Psychoanalysis has evolved significantly since the time of Freud. However, the trap of reification continues to affect many, particularly in theoretical writings, even if not in

therapy work. For example, while acknowledging the limitation of Freud's mechanistic models, some analysts still lapse into talking about the id, the ego or the superego as entities:

> The id is entirely unconscious. Its *contents* can be considered to be equivalent to the unconscious of Freud's earlier topographical model. Its *existence* is inferred from derivatives such as dreams or slips of the tongue. The *energy* of the id is derived between two types of instincts: the life and the death instincts. (Lemma, 2003, p. 20; emphasis added)[8]

When Freud formulated his ideas of the structure of the psyche, he used the common German words "it" (*es*), "I" (*ich*) and "over-I" (*über-ich*) to describe the three aspects of mind: the irrational, the rational and the moralistic-punitive. Freud conceptualised these forms of mental functioning as concrete *mechanisms*, even though he chose to use *personal pronouns* to label them. Perhaps the early English translators wanted to use words which looked scientific or specialist, rather than pronouns, in order to give psychoanalysis a more respectable sheen. Unfortunately, the translation of the German words into "id", "ego" and "superego" has further reified the formulation, making it much easier for the pronouns to acquire thing-like properties, to such an extent that many psychoanalysts (and other people) talk about the id (or the ego or superego) as if it has an existence independent of the actions of a human person, with its own "contents", "energy", etc.[9]

If, instead of "ego", we stick to "I" (but not as Freud did – he used the phrase "*the* I" [*das Ich*], which is reifying), we would no doubt think in terms of agency or subjectivity: "I" being the grammatical subject, the first person of language use, the source of actions, the creator of meaning. Unlike the connotation of the word "ego", "I" does not reside "inside" a person's "mind". "I" is the active person herself. *I* am struggling with the experience of conflicts – conflicts do not *happen* in a place called my "mind". When I said my mind is beset with conflicts, I am talking metaphorically, not referring to an internal place.

Another example of the problem of translation, as McGrath (2011) has pointed out, is the translation of the German word *Trieb* into English as "instinct" instead of the more accurate "drive", thus concealing the continuity of Freud's metapsychology with German idealist philosophy (such as the work of Schelling), where *Trieb* is of central importance. This concern has been expressed by Jean Laplanche - that collapsing "drive" (*Trieb*) and instinct (*Instinkt*) into one concept has made psychoanalysis vulnerable to biological reductionism. The "soul" was another key idea in idealist philosophy, but its appearance in Freud's work (*die Seele* in German) has been

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[8] This quote is from the psychoanalyst Alessandra Lemma, who has discussed Freud's concept of id as *process* but still lapses into a way of talking that reifies the id-process into an entity.

[9] Authors such as Sander Gilman and Bruno Bettelheim have expressed the view that the translation of *Ich* and *Es* into English as "ego" and "id" is a barrier to a proper understanding of psychoanalysis.

rendered as "mind" in Strachey's Standard Edition, probably to avoid the impression of being "unscientific".

There are of course practitioners in the psychoanalytic tradition who are not afraid of using notions such as the soul. The most notable is Carl Jung, who broke away from Freud and established a separate therapeutic tradition, *analytical psychology*. One contemporary Jungian, Wolfgang Giegerich, has become influential in the Jungian world.[10] Here is Giegerich in his own words:

> As the human being is dethroned from the central place around which psychological life allegedly has to revolve, the psyche can finally in truth be recognized as what Jung tried to see it: as objective or autonomous psyche, or as I would prefer to say, as the logical life of the soul, a life that is its own (even though it lives through us and needs us to give expression to it). (Giegerich, 1996, p. 24)

> It is a naïve and narcissistic mistake to take oneself so seriously as to confuse oneself with the true subject of the soul's life (what or whom it is about). *We* are no more than the stage or place where *it* happens, but where it happens for its own sake not for ours. The fact that it needs us to acquire a real presence in the world and undergo its process of further-determination must not go to our heads (Giegerich, 2012, p. 312).

Jungians, like Giegerich, often talk about the psyche or soul as if it in itself is a sentient being with a life of its own. This anthropomorphism is confusing at best. To fend off criticism, Jungians might say this is only a metaphorical or poetic way of speaking in aid of understanding. The question is why not speak plainly, focusing on the subject ("I") of psychological life, instead of introducing such quasi-mystical vocabulary?[11]

To be fair to Giegerich, he has usefully analysed contemporary issues such as globalisation (Giegerich 1996), but the tendency towards anthropomorphism ("globalisation" as autonomous being) is still his stumbling block. To eliminate ("dethrone") the *individual* from a description of (psychological) reality is Giegerich's attempt at revising the Jungian doctrine of individuation. But his colleague, Greg

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[10] See Giegerich (1996, 2004 or 2012) for a taste of his work. One devoted admirer, a Californian Jungian, Jennifer M. Sandoval, said at the beginning of a talk about Giegerich's work, "There's no doubt, people have trouble with Giegerich" (Sandoval, 2013) – because his writing is dense and difficult to follow!

[11] Although Giegerich has said to Ann Casement that for him "there is no such thing as a soul. The soul does not exist. It is the depth of the logical life at work in what happens, no more" (Casement, 2011). This admission makes it more intriguing why he did not use less mystifying language in his writings.

Mogenson, has judged this attempt a failure, arguing that the distinction between the individual and the collective remains vitally important (Mogenson, undated).

In a helpful paper on Giegerich's work, the London-based Jungian Ann Casement has published a quote from the personal communication she received from Giegerich regarding his way of working with patients:

> In the consulting room I try to be present with such a psychologically-trained consciousness, but otherwise forget theories and approach the patient unprejudiced (as much as is humanly possible) in the spirit of Nowness and Eachness. The concentration is on this phenomenon now (this dream, symptom, memory, fantasy today). And the question is: what does it need? Here, I think my intuition needs to come into play. Great openness. No 'technique'. No psychological jargon (rarely do I use words like anima or shadow or self, etc. I avoid psychological brainwashing of my patients: staying with what shows itself!) Undogmatic. Improvisation, playing it by ear. This also requires honesty: my honest response at this moment to what shows itself. The work can be very different with different patients, but also different from session to session with one and the same patient. Openness to the Now (which even includes the Now of my mood and my perspective)… Especially important is for me the respect for the psychological difference. I try to be present in the sessions as the concrete ordinary person that I am (human, all-too-human) and to also see the ordinary human being in my patient. (Casement, 2011, pp. 539-540)

I believe this way of working is the best (as one human being with another, not relying on techniques or jargons, but with a receptive and mentalising attitude) – the question is, why then does Giegerich *theorise* in such an opaque and mystifying way?

If an analyst does not think of the id, ego or soul as entities in the mind, she should desist from describing a patient's experience of emotional conflicts in terms of, e.g., "a cruel primitive superego watching the patient all the time", or "the superego masquerading as the ego causing the patient enormous pain". Even if she meant this metaphorically, the reader (and of course the patient) would be forgiven for thinking that she does believe the superego exists as an entity with a will and power of its own. If the analyst argues that her description is only a metaphorical way of talking, it would be incumbent on her to make sure that the patient (and readers of her writings) does understand this.

It is not my intention to suggest metaphors like "superego" should never be used. Psychotherapy would be poorer if that were the case. The use of metaphors leads to expansion of the horizon of possibilities. It moves one area of experience to another,

one way of remembering to the next, forming a trajectory, an arc of meaning(s), thus enriching understanding. But there is always the risk of a metaphor becoming reified, or being fixed in its meaning by "experts" with power; and hence the paramount importance of finding a way of writing and talking about therapy (especially to patients) that does justice to the distinction between the denotative and the connotative use of language, and the nature of its fluidity.

The Trap of Theories

Many psychologists and psychotherapists are beguiled by the excitement of building theoretical models, particularly grand, overarching theories. They have the example of Freud to follow, whose theories have lasting impact on the evolution of psychotherapy. But theory often becomes a trap. This trap does not just affect psychoanalysis, but most other therapies as well. One example, from outside the psychoanalytic world, is the Self-Regulatory Executive Function Model (S-REF) formulated by the British clinical psychologist Adrian Wells[12] to explain emotional disorders. Structures such as "control", "appraisal", "plans" etc are postulated as components of the cognitive architecture within a multi-level cognitive processing system that determines the emotions and behaviour of the individual. While it is often the case that such cognitive models contain scant reference to established neuroanatomical structures or neurophysiological pathways, it is implied that the model is based on the actual functioning of the brain.

With Freud as exemplar, analysts do not shy away from postulating various psychic structures in theory building, even though they might not employ sophisticated-looking flow diagrams or elaborate acronyms as cognitive therapists often do. Many analysts talk about symptoms as the outward expression of deeper psychic structures, and therapy is to understand these structures as a route to removing the symptoms. ("Removing the symptoms" is a mechanistic medicine way of talking.) It is unclear whether any attention is paid to the distinction between causes and reasons in such theorising; or whether the theorists are aware of the possibility of committing category errors.

The allure of theory building may entice the psychotherapist into talking nonsense unawares. John Heaton warned about this pitfall forty years ago, in a book chapter that unfortunately is rarely referred to nowadays. Proper theoretical work in psychotherapy, he argues, is not about building complicated models of how structures in the mind (be they automatic negative schemas or unconscious defence mechanisms) cause neurosis. Rather it should be an endeavour to "foster the recognition of the limits of language and the contexts in which words come to represent", and to clarify "the nature of action"[13] One example Heaton has used to illustrate the importance of explicating the workings of language is to ask how we would react if a woman said her husband "reported" to her that he had made an observation of his feeling of love towards her. No doubt we would think this odd –

[12] This complicated sounding model that Wells has created is basically a cognitive therapy model. See Wells (2000).
[13] Heaton (1979, p. 194).

ordinarily the husband would simply *tell* his wife "I love you". There is nothing to *report*, so to speak; the *declaration* of love is not a matter of reporting.

In a similar vein, if, as therapists, we make patients "report" to us their thoughts and feelings or symptoms and complexes, we are removing them away from the natural situation of first and second person (I-and-you) interaction, and turning their experience into a thing that could be observed and reported on (it cannot be; experience is *subjective*).

Theoretical work in psychotherapy is not about producing notions such as Oedipus Complex and claiming empirical verifiable status for them. Such notions cannot be judged in terms of their truth or otherwise but only in terms of their usefulness in the hermeneutic task. Meaning is not the same as truth; psychotherapy is dealing with the former not the latter, especially not in its capitalised form.

"I am angry", "I love you" or "I feel hopeless" is a declaration, a *telling*, not a reporting of internal state which could be observed or content of the mind which could be inspected objectively. "Telling people things calls for a response or series of actions between the people concerned"[14] Even the utterance "my mother has died" is not a report but a telling that demands a response (say, from the therapist). Psychotherapy is not a theoretical science like physics but a *practical* science like politics or ethics. It inhabits the ordinary world, not the scientific world; its language is the vernacular, open-textured and equivocal, not definitions-bound and univocal; it cannot be couched in terms of the logical-deductive language of physics. Thus theory in psychotherapy cannot take the form of theories in physics or mechanistic medicine. Heaton suggests that "[s]ome procedures of psychotherapy could be seen as rituals designed to evoke the recognition of powers latent in the patient which are necessary to his being able to act in a satisfying way."[15] Therefore, theoretical work in psychotherapy is to do with clarifying the language we use to help patients know themselves better through interacting with the therapist in relevant and meaningful ways, thereby getting in touch with their own resources which might enable them to live differently. To use an old-fashioned term, psychotherapy is a *moral practice*, rather than a scientific one.

Apart from bringing Wittgenstein's work to bear on psychotherapy (Heaton 2010), John Heaton has also written extensively about the importance of phenomenology and the ancient Greek philosophy of scepticism in helping us think about what psychotherapy is.[16] Despite criticism of being obscure and impossible to grasp, phenomenology has undoubtedly made one major contribution to philosophy: the idea of the fundamental inseparability of subjectivity from the world. While we do not have to use the rather clunky phrase "being-in-the-world", it is important to acknowledge the interdependence between subject and world - neither can exist without the other. Things do not exist, in any *meaningful* way, in and of themselves. They are always in a relationship to the subject who acts on them.

[14] Heaton (1979, p. 180).
[15] Heaton (1979, p. 187).
[16] See, for example, Heaton (1993) and Heaton (1997).

One central concept in phenomenology is *intentionality* - not in the sense of intention (as in motive), but "directedness". The experience of being alive is never an isolated "essence", but a relatedness, a connection (to be "directed" towards) of subjective action in and to a world which the subject inhabits. Thus intentionality is that which binds subject (person) and object (world) in an indivisible unity.

Heaton (1993) said "[p]sychotherapy depends on the cultural and traditional world in which the patient and therapist live and have their being. Conversation, the way we move people and are moved, the power of language, all depend on the cultural regularities and values embodied in our use of language" (p. 114). Thus people *find* themselves ("have their being") in the context of a world, and they construct a life in and through this world.

Hermeneutics and the Search for Meaning

If psychotherapy is a project through which we explore and grasp the meaning of existence ("have our being"), the question of context must be attended to. In this regard, social constructionism offers important insights similar to, though also different from, what phenomenology provides.[17] The most significant feature of a social constructionist perspective is the prominence given to the collective construction of meanings, narratives, worldviews, discourses, etc within any community. The meaning of a handshake is only intelligible in the sort of modern-western society like ours, but not in say certain African tribal communities. Within a western society, a *particular* handshake might only be meaningful to you if you are a member of, e.g., the Freemasons. By the same token, the meaning of being overweight is socially and culturally determined, and its construction is not the result of one single individual's passing whim, although the individual's psychology has a part to play. Even the notion of "self" cannot be taken for granted as a universal, unitary given, but as a socially constructed discourse which requires reflexive analysis in the context of specific socio-cultural and political circumstances.

The social constructionist notion of narrative is closely associated with story-telling, myth-making, and the idea of "there could be meaning in all this". A narrative must not be divorced from the social world from which it arises. To put experiences into a narrative is to enable meanings to emerge, to make possible the formation of a *Gestalt*, to create a world out of chaos, out of the void, almost as God did at the dawn of the universe, as the first chapter of the Book of Genesis so poetically describes. This is also poetically portrayed in Saint John's Gospel: "In the beginning there was the Word, and the Word was with God and God created the world through the Word…" We don't have to be a Christian to see beauty in the Genesis myth or in Saint John's description. We don't have to take this literally; we only need to think about it poetically, metaphorically – how the *Word* has made the world!

In psychotherapy, narratives can be constructed at different levels: the level of a single narrated event; the level of various stories coming together to yield richer meaning during a therapy session; the level of narratives constructed through a whole

[17] There is a large literature in social constructionism; a good starting point is John Shotter's work, e.g., Shotter (1993).

therapy over months or years, moving towards a meaningful completion of therapy work; or indeed the level of the narrative of a lifetime, of our one and only existence, each and every one of us.[18] Meaning and narrative are inseparable. From an existentialist point of view, the creation of narratives is our battle against meaninglessness (the chaos and void in the Genesis story). This is a noble task to which psychotherapy can hopefully contribute.

The hermeneutic turn in twentieth century philosophy has a great impact on the re-imagining of psychoanalysis as a discipline of narrative-interpretative assimilation of the meaning-relationships between symbols and psychological life. Thus psychoanalysis cannot be judged according to criteria appropriate for the physical sciences which are dealing with objective observations and facts.

Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricoeur believe that psychoanalysis has shown a *self-misunderstanding* of itself as a natural science, and thus a hermeneutic revision is needed. But Aldolf Grünbaum (1984) is insistent that such revision is unacceptable. Grünbaum's critique of Habermas and Ricoeur is basically saying they have got it wrong because Freud did believe psychoanalysis was a natural science whose validity could be tested in objective ways.[19] Grünbaum is missing the point: the *revisionist* aim of authors like Habermas and Ricoeur is precisely to re-interpret psychoanalysis in such a way as to draw out its real contribution to human knowledge, *notwithstanding Freud's aligning psychoanalysis with the natural sciences*. To Ricoeur, the criteria to judge the validity of psychoanalytic theory and therapy are: coherence, narrative intelligibility, interpretative consistency and usefulness to the patient (Ricoeur 1981). The value of psychoanalysis is in contributing to this hermeneutic turn, regardless of what Grünbaum said about Freud's intention.

Cultivating Intuition and Ordinariness

To borrow Winnicott's idea of "transitional object",[20] it is possible to suggest that words serve as transitional objects (the "in-betweens") that bind the subject and the world together. While there are psychotherapists who use the idea of words as

[18] One interesting work which captures the construction of a lifetime narrative is the personal and reflective book that Patrick Casement (2006), a British psychoanalyst, has written, after his retirement, about his life and his experience of becoming a psychoanalyst. Although my view about psychoanalysis is different from his, I do admire his work.

[19] Grünbaum spends one third of his rambling 1984 text to critique hermeneutic approaches, particularly the work of Ricoeur and Habermas. He also rejects Karl Popper's claim that psychoanalysis does not meet the criterion of falsifiability. Grünbaum's aim in his book is to prove that Freud has failed to provide incontrovertible clinical facts for his theory, and it is on this basis he rejects psychoanalysis. For a critique of Grünbaum's critique, see Wollheim (1993, Chapter VI, pp. 91-111).

[20] There is much reference to "transitional objects" in Winnicott's writings; see, for example, the first chapter in Winnicott (1971, pp. 1-25).

transitional objects to refer to emotionally significant (childhood) words,[21] I am using it to suggest that words *in general* (language as a whole) constitute a "me-but-not-me" transitional bridge between subjectivity and the external world. As such, words occupy a border (the transitional space) crucial for the development of self-other relationships.

Whether we think in terms of the phenomenological connectedness between subject and world, or the socially constructed nature of experience, the mediational importance of language is indisputable. Therefore, careful analysis of how words are used and understood *in ordinary life* remains the most important task for philosophers as well as psychotherapists. It is a task that ensures the transitional space between subject and world is shaped in ways that nourish and protect, where life will be cultivated and will flourish.

The discerning reader will have noticed that this essay relies on a number of rather dated sources. Perhaps it can be argued that, as the old adage goes, "there is nothing new under the sun", and despite the proliferation of many fashionable "new" therapies, we might be falling into the trap of words which do not point to anything real if we are fascinated by every new therapy that comes along.

The appropriation of ordinary words and turning them into a new school of "therapy" is an oft-repeated phenomenon nowadays. "Acceptance" and "commitment" are part of our vernacular for a very long time, before they were requisitioned to christen a new therapy. Through either reification (turning words into mechanisms) or mystification ("mode deactivation therapy" *sounds* scientific), ambitious therapists set up therapy schools, patent their techniques and disseminate their specialist knowledge to those willing to pay.

The psychological therapy world is like a Tower of Babel, where gurus jostle for prime positions. Perhaps many therapists find it impossible to give up the alchemist's dream – turning base metal into gold – of creating glossy, enticing products with promises such as "I Can Make You Thin", "I Can Make you Happy", or "I Can Make You Confident"… There is a simple solution for every problem in life, just believe in the therapy guru!

What if suffering is the essence of human existence, without which we are perhaps not living fully? Should psychotherapists aspire to being alchemists of the mind, trying to turn the messiness of human life into the sunny upland of eternal bliss? In all this clamour, it would be immensely helpful to keep in mind an idea of Freud's (even if we do not adopt his theories) - that we can only hope, through psychotherapy, *to turn neurotic misery into ordinary unhappiness*.

This essay is not meant to be a definitive critique, nor a comprehensive review, of psychoanalysis, but a reflection on a number of questions that have preoccupied me for a long time. I do acknowledge the importance of Freud, and am aware of the many

[21] In Favero & Ross (2003), the authors use this idea to refer to emotionally significant, early childhood words (mother tongue), particularly when uttered in a therapy situation where therapy is conducted in a *different* language and where the therapist does not speak the patient's mother tongue.

varied and stimulating readings of his work. But turning psychoanalysis (or psychotherapy) into a narrow-minded, exclusivist profession may not be for the best – it should be "owned" by all who care to think and think deeply and honestly. Philosophers and novelists and artists might be more capable of understanding psychoanalysis and extending it beyond institutional confines than professional psychoanalysts. Their writings are often more helpful than those of Freud's (or Jung's) devoted acolytes.

The philosopher Jonathan Lear said, "[i]t is part of the logic of psychoanalysis and philosophy that they are forms of life committed to living openly – with truth, beauty, envy and hate, wonder, awe and dread" (Lear, 1998, p. 5). *Living openly* suggests an attitude that is reflexive in thinking and tentative in judging, which is epitomised by the work of the psychotherapist Peter Lomas who, although trained in psychoanalysis, was never dogmatic or partisan. In the *Guardian* obituary on Lomas dated 24 February 2010, David Ingleby was quoted as describing Lomas as offering "not answers, but questions; not dogmas, but doubts".

Although he acknowledged Freud's importance, Lomas (1981, 1994, 1999) did not shy away from criticising psychoanalysis. While Giegerich theorises in an inaccessible manner, his description of his way of working with patients in therapy (see above) is not too dissimilar to what Lomas would recommend. Perhaps many thoughtful psychoanalysts and psychotherapists do work like this clinically. Lomas has emphasised the limitation of techniques and the limitation of analytic interpretations; qualities such as ordinariness, openness, receptivity, intuition, authenticity and wisdom are much more vital to psychotherapy. To him, therapy is a moral practice, not in the sense of moralising or telling the patient what is right and wrong, but an attempt to work towards the fundamental human question of how to live life, or as Jonathan Lear (2004, 2014) has put it, *how to live well*. Lear talks about *freedom* as the "final cause" (teleological cause or goal) that psychoanalysis as a therapy should be working towards (Lear, 2009). Grappling with the issue of freedom is no doubt part of practising psychotherapy as a moral endeavour.

Lear (2014) has summarised what the best attitude towards Freud should be:

> All of this suggests that if psychoanalysis is to live up to its promise of being a moral psychology—one which contributes as it comes to understand what it is to lead a full, rich, meaningful human life—it must find ways to mourn Freud's legacy, and move on. Even now, we are only at the beginning of such a process (p. 480).

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