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**Psychoanalytic Accounts of
Consuming Desire**

John Desmond

Hearts of Darkness



Psychoanalytic Accounts of Consuming Desire

Also by John Desmond

CONSUMING BEHAVIOUR (2003)

FUNDAMENTALS OF MARKETING (*with Marilyn Stone, 2007*)

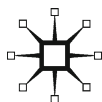
Psychoanalytic Accounts of Consuming Desire

Hearts of Darkness

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*In memory of Marilyn Stone, a great colleague, who cared for others,
whose courage and determination lives on*

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Preface and Acknowledgements

I should make clear from the outset that this was not originally intended as a book. Its beginnings lay in a course I designed at the University of St. Andrews to mark Freud's 150th anniversary in 2006. My interest in Freud is long-standing; I initially encountered his work second-hand through Ernest Dichter while studying marketing. Later I read Freud as part of a degree in psychology prior to embarking on independent study. My knowledge of Freud is thus limited to academic reading and discussion.

Over the years, I have come across occasional papers by Sidney Levy, Morris Holbrook and others at the more critical end of the marketing spectrum. It is noteworthy that Ernest Dichter has received more attention of late. As the anniversary approached, I waited in confident expectation that this would be marked by the marketing academy in some significant way, if not through eulogies, then at least by reflection and discussion of Freud's life and work. When one year passed and then another, I realized this was not going to happen.

This book bears a close relation to the course that preceded it. The course was lively, insightful and fun to teach, due in main part to the contribution made by the students who participated in it and I can only hope that in this book I have not made the work too ponderous. Now that it is written, I note with some surprise that materials, which enlivened course discussion, play a relatively minor role in the text. This is probably because, when writing the book, a central aim was to be as true as possible to the elucidation of psychoanalytic viewpoints, with their marketing application as a secondary aim. Now that it is written and I am reading back over it, I am aware of its various omissions. Another difference between course and text is the extensive use in the former of images from art, advertising, cinema and TV and of music from Buddy Holly to Grunge. By introducing a selection of Freud's original works, my aim in the course was to enable students to encounter at first-hand Freud's admixture of acute observation, fluent description, hesitation and reflection that is nowhere present in writing today. There was also the idea – so far as possible – to trace the development of his ideas by moving chronologically, drawing samples of his work from beginning to end. This is more or less the case in the book, where the chapters follow a course from *Dreams* (1900) to *Sexuality* (1905), *Narcissism* (1914), *Drives* (1915), *Mourning* (1917) and *the Ego* (1923).

Not all of the chapters follow in chronological order because another aim is to discuss the transformation of Freud's ideas by key others such as Melanie Klein, Jacques Lacan and René Girard. The chapter featuring Lacan's works should properly precede that on death because in his account death

enters the subject through lack. The decision to place the chapter on Lacan after that on death is partly intuitive, as I thought it best to explain Freud's reasoning on death prior to that of Lacan; maybe I need some fresh brains? Apart from satisfying my contrarian tendencies, the reason why the chapter on hysteria, which should be first, is presented last is that a large section is devoted to reading Freud from Girard's non-Freudian perspective.

The book does not presume prior knowledge of Freud or of the others mentioned here, although hopefully it will encourage those unacquainted with Freud to search for more comprehensible texts and those who know better to clarify its omissions and mistakes. It seeks to strike an uneasy balance between the three Freuds: of philosophy, social theory and science. The Freud of the lively engaging mind, who connects us to essential readings, such as the *Symposium*, is splendidly revived by Jonathan Lear. He is linked to the second Freud, most often reincarnated in the form of Lacan, who forms a bridge to Deleuze and Derrida, amongst others. I have found several authors helpful, particularly Lionel Bailly's excellent introduction to Lacan, Bruce Fink's clear discussions of the seminars and Cormac Gallagher's superbly colourful translation of Seminar XVII. I believe that reflections on these insights, illustrated by examples drawn from the visual arts, literature and music, can be more fruitful than a sheaf of scientific papers in conveying ideas that science has yet to verify. There is thus a fruitful contribution to be made here in relation to the arts and marketing. The third Freud, the neuropsychanalyst, is reborn in the work of Mark Solms, who argues that his ideas have continuing relevance for scientists today. His work might usefully form a bridge to those consumer researchers who study the dynamic role played by the unconscious in the life of the consumer. Who knows, before long scientists may actually prove what Freud wrote about in 1900! Finally, the work of Darian Leader is insightful in explaining the continuing clinical relevance of psychoanalysis.

I am grateful to the students who attended MN4224, 'Consuming Culture', at St. Andrews University in 2006 and 2007, where these ideas first found concrete form; their enthusiasm surpassed expectations. I am also grateful to my friends. Iain Munro, Bob Grafton-Small, and my brother Donat, who gave generously of their time, reading and comments on drafts. Particular thanks are due to Douglas Holligan for his painstaking reading and comments. The section on hysteria which introduces Girard derives from my continuing collaboration with Donncha Kavanagh. It was also interesting to discuss Melanie Klein's work with Sebastian Green during my visits to University College Cork. Darach Turley aimed me towards the delights of Terror Management Theory and also helped through his collaborative work on mourning and commemoration with Stephanie O'Donohoe. It was also always a pleasure to discuss these matters with Tim Scott. Beth Irvine, too, generously gave of her time to discuss the LGBTQ community. M. J. Deene, F. Magroarty and other members of the AFNS lent the work its particular

shape. Thanks to my colleagues at St. Andrews and particularly to Barbara Lessels. I would also like to thank those journal editors and reviewers who have taught me the true worth of books. In addition, many thanks to Virginia Thorp and Keri Dickens at Palgrave for their patience, to Vidhya Jayaprakash and colleagues at Newgen who prepared the proofs, and to Martin Drewe for his patience and understanding. Finally, thanks to Fiona for putting up with me.

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1

Dreams

What do androids dream of? (Dick, 1968)

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three parts. Freud's ideas are outlined in the first part, which are then related to consumption in the following two parts. In part one, three dreams are used to introduce Freud's understanding of the dream process. The dream of Irma illustrates the role played by processes of condensation and displacement, acting in concert to shape the manifest content of the dream into a rebus requiring decoding by analysis. The dream of *la belle bouchère* illustrates the role played by identification, which Freud draws on in his analysis to demonstrate that a dream always fulfils a wish, even when appearing to deny it. Finally, the peculiar hallucinatory nature of dreams is discussed through Freud's analysis of the dream of the burning child, which also illustrates the role played by regression in the dream process. The second part touches on the recruitment of Freud's ideas by commercial interests during the 1940s and 1950s in seeking to market the consumer dream. This concludes with a brief discussion of the furore created in the late 1950s surrounding the use of subliminal advertising. The final part addresses some of the criticisms that have been levelled against Freud's theory of dreams, focusing specifically on Hans Eysenck, who amongst others, contributed to the death of Freud's ideas in the USA.¹ There follows a discussion of recent evidence in relation to the role played by unconscious processes in consumer behaviour; it concludes that these are in line with a psychoanalytic understanding.

For the newcomer attuned to the demands of modern science, perhaps the most disconcerting thing about Freud is that he seems to feel challenged to explain absolutely everything. Inscribed into his theory is the idea that when one gazes into the character of the modern person, one detects the sediment of layers laid down through the long course of human evolution.

Nowadays the construction of such grand narratives has largely gone out of fashion, perhaps ironically, due to a succession of authors erecting the grand narrative that there is no narrative to be told in the post-modern era.

When Freud seeks to explain the process of dreaming, he is not content simply to explain to the reader the often offensive reality of the latent, or hidden, content of the dream, as opposed to its superficial, manifest content. He also feels bound to explain to us that the process of dreaming itself connects us to our primeval past. As he explains it, when in the process of dreaming, we move from the sophisticated realm of conscious language to the unconscious realm of the dream-image constituted by primitive perception, we re-trace the steps that humanity took in the course of its long evolution. Even in the dream, which is surely the most symbolic realm described by Freud, there is the link to the animal and indeed the reptile within.

The Interpretation of Dreams (Freud, [1900] 1999) was not published until Freud was in his forties, and it was a decade before it made him famous. The text begins by reflecting on ancient and modern accounts of the functions of dreams. For example, one function is that of sensory excitation; we hear a noise while asleep and it is woven into our dream; or we dream of finding ourselves naked, waking to find that the bedclothes have slipped from the bed. Following detailed investigation, including the analysis of his own dreams in addition to over a thousand others, Freud concluded that such events form part of a more complex process wherein the dream combines recent, often trivial material from the past few days with that from infantile memories in fulfilling an unconscious wish. The dreamwork is thus intimately bound up with the expression of hidden desire.

Understanding dreams

Freud's brief description of his dream of Irma is amongst his most famous. His recollection begins as follows:

The dream of Irma

23–24 July 1895

A great hall – many guests whom we are receiving - among them Irma, whom I immediately take aside,, as though to answer her letter, to reproach her for not yet accepting the 'solution'. I say to her: 'If you are still having pain it is really your own fault'. – She replies: 'If you only knew what pains I now have in the neck, stomach and abdomen; I am drawn together.' I am frightened and look at her. She looks pale and bloated; I think I have overlooked something organic after all. I take her to the window and examine her throat. She shows some resistance to this, like a woman who has a false set of teeth. I think she does not need them.. Her mouth then opens without difficulty and I find a large white spot to the right, and at another place I see extended grayish-white scabs attached

to curious curling formations, which have obviously been formed like the turbinated – I quickly call Dr. M. over who repeats the examination and confirms it.... Dr. M. looks quite different than usual; he is very pale, walks with a limp, and his chin has no beard.... My friend Otto is now also standing beside her, and my friend Leopold percusses her small body and says: 'She has some dullness to the left below', and also calls attention to an infiltrated portion of the skin on the left shoulder (something which I feel as he does, in spite of the dress).... M. says; 'No doubt about it, it's an infection, but it doesn't matter; dysentery will set in and the poison will be excreted' ... We also have immediate knowledge of the origin of the infection. my friend Otto has recently given her an injection of propyl formulation; propylene.... Proponic acid.... Trimethylamine (I see its formula printed before me in bold type).... Such injections are not to be given so rashly ... Probably also the syringe was not clean.²

The dream contains a number of characters who are somewhat recognizable to Freud. They include Irma, a friend but also one of his patients, and also his colleagues Dr M., Leopold and Otto. Freud's analysis of the dream begins with his recognition that much of its content happened recently; he had been writing up Irma's notes late into the night. He deals systematically with each aspect of the dream by meticulously drawing out its associations through the technique that he calls free association. In the course of this detailed analysis he notices that Irma and Dr M. are not portrayed as they are in real life. On further examination he finds that the image of each dream character is different to that of the real person, being instead a composite of the attributes of several real people. This is an example of the major dream process that he called condensation. Freud relentlessly follows in turn the chain of associations inspired in him by each element of the composites. For example, the character Irma who appears in the dream shares some characteristics with his real patient Irma, who had rejected Freud's 'solution', but more of that later. The real Irma is characteristically rosy cheeked, so Freud asks, why is she depicted in the dream as being pale and puffy? The real Irma did indeed suffer from stomach pains but not from pains in the abdomen or throat. Freud recognizes that the dream relates to his anxiety, that perhaps his diagnosis of Irma is wrong and that, after all, her illness really is organic. Freud had never examined the real Irma's throat before. So whose throat is in the dream? This reminds him that he had examined the throat of a governess who on first impression looked beautiful but had destroyed that impression by removing her dentures to facilitate his examination. Where did the image of Irma standing by the window come from? Freud recalls another association. The real Irma had a close woman friend whom Freud admired. When he visited her one evening, he discovered this lady in the same position, by a window, as the one Irma assumed in the dream. The woman's physician, Dr M., who also appears in the dream, said that

the woman had a diphtheritic membrane. Freud also recalls that, like Irma, this other lady, too, was prone to hysteric choking. He concludes, 'So in the dream I have replaced my patient for her friend.' Now Freud recalls that he had wondered in real life if this lady had need of him, but she had so far shown herself strong enough to deal with her symptoms by herself. Irma's paleness, puffiness and bad teeth bring to Freud's mind another patient, one who was shy and unusually pale and puffy.

This chain of associations leads Freud to wonder why he had exchanged Irma with the other women in the dream? Was this because the real Irma had not accepted his solution? Some time ago, when Freud had first started treating her, he had explained that all he could do for his patients was to make them aware of the hidden meaning of their symptoms, a 'solution' which he now repudiated. In this respect Irma was like her friend, who believed that she could go it alone and had no need for Freud's solution either. The figure of Dr M. in the dream is also a composite, fashioned from aspects of the real Dr M. and Freud's brother. Freud recognizes that one reason he may have fused them in his dream is that he had earlier put a proposition to each which they had rejected. Like Irma, Dr M. also had little time for Freud's solution.

As Freud progressively unravels the meaning of the dream, so the impulses revealed become darker. The white patch in the throat recalls the serious illness suffered by his daughter two years earlier. The scabs on the nostrils recall Freud's own experience of such scabs consequent to his early habit of cocaine ingestion. The later reference to an injection is linked by Freud to the death of a friend from cocaine abuse, to whom Freud had earlier espoused the drug. On further reflection the dream yields up its sexual nature. A friend of Freud's had associated trimethylamine as one of the products of the sexual metabolism. The real Irma is a young widow, as is her friend who helps form the composite of Irma in the dream. Freud's male friend, the expert in trimethylamine, is also an expert on the nose and has revealed some very remarkable connections between the nostrils and the female sexual organs.

At its heart the dream fulfils certain wishes. It becomes clear to Freud that a major role of the dream, particularly in its latter parts, is to mock those who might disagree with his 'solution'; that is, with psychoanalysis. This is what unites the triad of figures constituted by Irma, Dr M. and Otto. Freud comes to understand that in the dream he had wished that Irma had an organic illness, which would basically get him off the hook as her pain would be Otto's fault; it is Otto who in the dream gives her the injection. The dream thus avenges Freud on Otto, who in real life annoyed Freud by saying that Irma continued to suffer and so could not be considered cured. The dream exonerates Freud of responsibility for Irma's condition, tracing this to a number of factors. Dr M., who also disagreed with Freud in real life, is also ridiculed in the dream for making the nonsensical comment,

given that dysentery would set in, with the elimination of the poison Irma would get better.

Read in its entirety, which is to be recommended, Freud's dissection of the dream is a masterpiece of detailed reflection and recollection. What is even more amazing is his capacity to reveal to himself knowledge that would have been painful, even caustic: that in his sleeping hours he is as preoccupied as the least of us in jealously protecting his world view.

The dream of Irma has since been subject to a huge amount of discussion and further analysis. Lacan conducts an extensive analysis as part of his 1954–1955 seminar on the developmental stages in the formation of the ego.³ While the goal of wish-fulfilment might be the goal of all dreams, this does not mean the recuperation of the narcissistically wounded ego for Lacan but rather the decentring of the subject in relation to the ego. Considering the dream as a two-act drama, the first major incident occurs at the end of Freud's dialogue with Irma; when confronted with the scabs, Freud stares straight into the abyss of trauma. Lacan's argument rises to a height of florid speculation, likening Freud's vision of the scabs to his own concept of the Thing, pointing to 'the horrible discovery of the flesh one never sees, the ground of all things, the underside of the face'. This is a moment for Lacan of extimacy by rendering what is profoundly intimate as an impersonal representation, producing an identification with human mutability and decay (Lacan, 1988d). The second key scene of the dream involves a shift of register. Where the first scene revolves around the triad of figures that form the composite of Irma, the second stages the rivalry of three brothers (Freud, Otto, Leopold) in relation to an imaginary father, Dr M., who functions as a representative of the paternal law. This second triad does not stand for death but for judicial speech and the symbolic law. This dream inaugurates for Lacan psychoanalysis; 'Where id was, there ego shall be.'

He emphasizes however that to recognize oneself as being a subject of the unconscious, one's ego must do more than simply traverse the experience of a traumatic impact of vulnerability in the face of death. Arriving at an appropriation of the unconscious which after all is the aim of analysis, the subject fades before symbolic law. By not waking up and instead moving seamlessly from a dialogue with a representative of death to making an appeal to a representative of paternal authority, Freud performs this subjection to the symbolic order.⁴

Bronfen (*ibid.*), retracing the actual events that occurred between Freud, Fliess and Irma, describes their unhappy relations in excruciating detail, including the botched operation on Irma's nose and its aftermath, from which it took her months to recover. Fliess had inadvertently left a sizeable piece of gauze in the wound, which he had then sutured, leaving it to

suppurate. From Freud's reports at that time, he identified with Irma, reporting his feelings of lassitude and helplessness. There are three women in the dream, Irma, the governess and the third, whom Freud mentions in passing in a footnote, is his wife Martha (née Bernays), who is pregnant at the time with a child, unwanted by Freud or Martha. Overall, an altogether darker story emerges from Bronfen's analysis of its marginalia, involving the treatment of vulnerable women by powerful men.

Discussion

The dream of Irma is scarcely three-quarters of a page long. Freud's analysis of the dream is eleven pages long, and subsequent discussions by others would fill volumes. This indicates the degree of compression that takes place in a dream. In the dream of Irma, Freud provides a glimpse into the different forms of operation of the unconscious, which he described as the primary mode of thought and how this differs from the secondary process of conscious thought. The dream shows how in the unconscious each individual impulse seeks its own satisfaction separately from all others so that contradictory impulses rest side by side. The condensed images follow lines of unconscious associations that seem to defy logic. For example, in the dream Irma is portrayed as standing near a window, but as Freud then makes clear, in real life it was not the real Irma but her friend, who was also attractive and available. So one object or person who is similar to another in some respect may be substituted for the original. The objects to which the wishes are directed are likely to be replaced by others along a line of substitutions.

In discussing the idea of ethics in dreams, Freud acknowledges that generally people think that dreams are only remotely related to consciousness. In this view dreams have no intrinsic meaning but are simply froth that is unrelated to our waking lives. For instance, in emphatically denying an outrageous accusation, a person might say, 'I wouldn't dream of doing it.'⁵ This belief became particularly salient during the 1970s, when psychiatric orthodoxy developed around the belief that all dreaming takes place during REM sleep, which is generated in the pontine system, which, being located in the brainstem, is a primitive part of its functioning, lacking the capacity for complex symbolic operations of the kind described above by Freud.⁶ Freud counters such views by asserting that his explanation of dreams would not be complete if the often unpleasant knowledge they contain were not denied. At some level we actually do believe there is some link between dreaming and the action of consciousness. The ethical function of dream analysis is then revealed. The latent meaning of a dream can directly threaten our everyday consciousness of ourselves as decent, moral, human beings. By understanding the dreamwork we can learn the most uncomfortable facts about ourselves. Freud recounts that he had dreamt one night of handing a urinal to an old man who was urinating out of one eye. Freud

interprets the old man to be his father. Because his father was blind, Freud had to hand him the urinal. This recalled a painful childhood experience: against his parents' instructions he had urinated in the chamber pot in their room, and his father had chided his mother, saying 'the boy will come to nothing'. These cutting words remained with Freud until the dream, which reversed the original scene. Here the roles are reversed: the father is dependent upon the son; the father makes a fool of himself in public. Freud had helped cure his father's blindness; Freud's father had come to nothing and Freud to something.⁷ Dreams thus can show us how to live by enabling us to more fully understand who we are. Freud's dream of Irma, like that featuring his father, holds meanings that are for Freud deeply uncomfortable, but he believes that one can use the knowledge yielded by the dream in seeking to live a better life.

Freud's dream of Irma shares common characteristics with all dreams. First, it is composed of elements that are condensed into composite characters (of Irma, Dr M. and so on) through the process that Freud sensibly calls condensation. Secondly, if meaning is condensed into composite images, it is also displaced to the extent that the meaning of each term is not self-enclosed but can be located only by unravelling layers of meaning and following the meanings of the other terms in the chain. Freud thought that raw images of desires that would prove to be too shocking if revealed fully to consciousness are censored, being substituted by elliptic and circumspect images that screen the former. Taken together, condensation and displacement are the two foremen of the dreamwork.⁸ Lacan situates these twin processes of the dreamwork within a linguistic framework to argue that condensation is metaphoric and displacement metonymic.⁹ In doing so, he opens a new field of enquiry. If one treats the unconscious as if it is a hidden language, then this allows one the potential to access its meanings by means of semiotic tools.

The dream illustrates the context-dependent nature of dreaming. In order to understand the meaning of the dream, one has to look to the life circumstances of the dreamer. The dream is heavily influenced by Freud's medical knowledge and training, through mentions of 'diphtheritic membrane' and 'trimethylamine', and by the knowledge gained from his reading in a medical journal of a connection between the sexual organs and the nose, which enables him to make the particular link between the two. In this respect it would be foolish to try to say that the appearance of noses in another person's dream would provoke the same or a similar signification.

Dreams as wish-fulfilments

'What does the goose dream of. Of maize?'¹⁰

Freud insisted that all dreams are wish-fulfilments. It is not at all unusual to dream that one is satisfying some unproblematic desire, such as, when

the dreamer wishes to stay asleep and so, when pressed by the wish, may hallucinate this action in the dream. Freud noticed that when he retired to bed after eating anchovies or olives in the evening, he would dream that he was drinking gulps of delicious cool water, which could taste so good only when he was parched.¹¹ Waking, he would find himself thirsty and have to get a drink. In this case, although clearly wanting to remain asleep, the hallucination of satisfaction in the dream was insufficient to quench his thirst, and so he had to wake in order to satisfy his desire. The explanation of the dream seems to be straightforward; the thirst causes the dream-wish, which sparks the dream, which eventually wakes the dreamer because the hallucination of satisfaction cannot satisfy him. The difference between this state and waking life is that in the latter situation one would find oneself thirsty and would slake the thirst without any intervening process. Hopkins (1991: 98) argues that the dream is irrational because the dreamer believes that he is active and satisfying his thirst, whereas in reality he is passively hallucinating temporary relief. The dream-wish in the example deceives the dreamer about his motives and about what he is actually doing, for so long as he dreams, he is held back from forming or acting on a real desire to drink. However, the dream conveys something about Freud's underlying motives. Freud dreams, not simply of drinking water, but of gulping delicious, cool water, water that might occur only in a dream, water that cannot be found while awake. The dream thus illustrates the kind of drink he would really like if only he were freed from the constraints of reality. It is precisely such unrealizable fantasies that advertising seeks to awaken, which the product can never fail to disappoint. So even apparently simple dreams are not entirely straightforward.

Freud's analysis of his dream of Irma reveals his unconscious wish not to be responsible for her illness and to displace the blame by dumping it onto his friends. His analysis of the dream is protracted, painstaking and painful. Lear (2005) argues that the dream opens the possibility to create an interpretive science of motivated irrationality.¹² Freud, a perfectly reasonable human being, finds himself the bearer of emotions embodying a combination of intense competitiveness, rivalry and duplicity that most people in their waking lives would be loath to express to others.

Distortion in dreams

Sometimes a dream seems to be the opposite of what the dreamer wishes for because the dreamer may be defensive about or seek to cover up his or her wishes. In such cases it may be that the only way in which the dream can make an issue known is by raising it in its opposite sense. Freud explains dream distortion by analogy. The political writer must be careful in telling those in power unpleasant truths they will probably not wish to hear. If these truths are openly expressed, then their work may be suppressed

or censored. In order to get the message across, the writer must moderate and distort the truth in a way that evades censorship but which can be discerned by informed public opinion. With dreams the psyche gets the message across by this work of self-censorship, dressing it up as something else in order to make it more palatable. The reason we forget dreams so quickly is that the conscious self wants to minimize the effect of these unconscious thoughts in everyday life. The dream recounted below is perhaps the most famous of those cited by Freud in support of his view that dreams are wish-fulfilments.

The dream of a failed supper party

One day a bright young female patient challenged Freud's argument that dreams are wish-fulfilments by presenting him with the following dream.

I want to give a supper, but having nothing at hand except some smoked salmon, I think of going marketing, but I remember that it is Sunday afternoon, when all the shops are closed. I next try to telephone to some caterers, but the telephone is out of order. Thus I must resign my wish to give a supper.¹³

Freud knows the young lady, who will be referred to hence as *la belle bouchère*, and proceeds to ask her some questions. Her husband, who is a wholesale butcher, remarked to her the previous day that he was getting too fat and that he intended to get up early, exercise, go on a strict diet and, above all else, accept no further invitations to dinner parties. He recently made the acquaintance of an artist who offered to paint him because he had never seen such an expressive head, but he replied that he felt sure that the artist would prefer a piece of a pretty girl's backside to the whole of his face. *La belle* is very much in love with her husband and has asked him not to give her any caviar. She has for some time harboured a desire for a bread roll with caviar every morning but has grudged the expense. Her husband gladly offered to buy this for her, but she told him not to in order that she could continue teasing him about it. Freud thinks this a flimsy explanation; the question is why is her desire unfulfilled? Freud then notes that after a pause, 'congruent with overcoming a resistance',¹⁴ she tells him that the previous day she had paid a call on a friend whom she is jealous of because her husband always speaks so well of her. Fortunately this friend is very thin, and her husband is more interested in buxom women. During the conversation, her friend had said that she wished to put on some weight. She also asked, 'When are you going to ask us over again?' Her husband the butcher, on the other hand, wished to lose weight.

Freud provides two interpretations for the dream. The first is that if *la belle* invites the friend to her house, it will enable her rival to become more

buxom and thus more attractive to her husband. In telling her friend that she cannot throw a dinner party, the dream is fulfilling her wish, which is to maintain her friend/rival's skinny figure. But the smoked salmon remains unaccounted for. Freud asked her what might have led her to think of the smoked salmon that was present in the dream? 'Smoked salmon is this friend's favourite dish.' Freud also knows her friend and concurs that she is as fond of salmon as *la belle* is of caviar.

The second, more subtle explanation offered by Freud does not contradict the first. At the time she had the dream about the failed dinner party, *la belle* had in real life denied her own wish for caviar. Her friend, too, had expressed a wish, which was to become more plump. Given this information, Freud would not have been surprised that *la belle* would dream that her friend/rival's wish to put on weight would be thwarted. But instead of this, she dreams that her own wish has not been fulfilled. A new interpretation arises if, in her dream, *la belle* means not herself but her friend, if she has identified with her friend/rival by putting herself in the other woman's shoes. This requires some explanation. Identification occurs when one seeks to master something external by bringing it into the self. She puts herself in her friend's place in the dream when she creates a symptom by refusing her wish. Freud explains it thus:

She is putting herself in her friend's place in the dream because the friend is putting herself in her place in the eyes of her husband, because she – the friend – would like to occupy her place in the husband's reflections.¹⁵

The focus is on the triangle involving *la belle*, her friend/rival and the butcher. Freud argues that *la belle* places herself in her friend's shoes, seeking to control this troublesome desire by bringing it into her psyche. The dream of the failed supper party has subsequently been reinterpreted to fit with every possible configuration of identification. Lacan asks what *la belle* desires by metaphorically substituting the desire of her friend/rival for her own, (smoked salmon for caviar)? He deflects attention to the other members of the triangle; we know what the friend/rival wants, but what does the butcher desire? Recently, he had let it be known that he wished to lose weight. Lacan asks, 'Has he too, perhaps, not got a desire that is somewhat thwarted, when everything in him is satisfied?' He continues, 'Yet he is drawn to a thin woman like a fish to water.'¹⁶ It is thus the husband's desire for the friend that becomes the point of identification for his wife, 'To be the phallus, if only a somewhat thin one. Was not that the ultimate signification of desire?'¹⁷ In seeking to be the phallus for her husband, *la belle* seeks to complete him, to comprise his sole object of desire. Where Freud locates the point of *la belle's* identification in her friend/rival, Lacan slides along the metonymic chain to suggest her identification with the desire of the

butcher. Clément (1983) pushes Lacan's argument an extreme by suggesting that if one assumes the centrality of the butcher's desire, given that *la belle* places herself in her husband's position, she must desire the woman her husband desires. *La belle's* identification with her husband's desire 'thus opens up a space for a forbidden homoerotic object choice'.¹⁸ Diana Fuss mentions several other explanations of the potential role played by identification in the dream, concluding that:

The butcher's wife has been read, variously, as a feminine-identified heterosexual (Freud), a masculine-identified heterosexual (Lacan), a masculine-identified lesbian (Clément), a maternal -identified infant (Chase), and a feminine-identified lesbian (Fuss).¹⁹

From the above, even in the case of the most unlikely material, a dream may be considered to be the fulfilment of a wish. But is this true for every dream? Freud certainly suggested that this is true of most dreams, even nightmares. Later in his career he made one very serious revision to this idea in the specific instance of dreams that repeated traumatic events. Rather than being recollections, such dreams were more like direct recordings of reality that were transmitted onto consciousness, with the dream process replaying the same terrifying content over and again. Freud came to explain this phenomenon as being the result of a desperate attempt by the ego to live off or master the traumatic event. In some events the original trauma proved so powerful that the process appeared to get stuck trying to assimilate the material.

Generalizing from dreams

Freud encountered a number of what he called 'typical' dreams. In one species the dreamer is partially unclothed or nude. Freud had little difficulty in interpreting such dreams as relating to infantile exhibitionism. Children are exhibitionists who often delight in exposing their genitals to those of the opposite sex. Later in life, once reaction formations have set in, this can be reversed, and the adult can become paranoid, suffering the illusion of being watched while dressing. In their dreams these people were in the company of strangers, and this embarrassed them. Freud's interpretation was that the unconscious intention was to continue the exhibitionism while the demand of the censor was to break it off. The dream thus represented a conflict between the first and the second of the psychical systems.²⁰

Another typical dream is that of the death of a loved one. Freud's analysis is here at its most provocative and challenging because he thought that dreams that are ostensibly about the loss of a loved one – for example, a brother or sister – act as cover for something quite different. In adult waking life the person loves his or her brother and sister and would do them no

harm. But this covers up their infantile hatred for one another, a hatred that would see the other dead;

The child is absolutely egotistical; it feels its wants acutely and strives remorselessly to satisfy them, especially with its competitors, other children, and in the first instance with its brothers and sisters.²¹

Adult dreams of the death of a sibling are thus often ambivalent in that the death represents, on the one hand, loss of the adult loved one, on the other, loss of a child rival.

Freud found that the meaning of symbols was generalized across different contexts. His psychotic patients possessed an uncommon capacity for understanding dream symbolism. Additionally, the symbols in his dreams shared representations in common with those used in myths, legends, folklore and jokes. This led him to wonder if symbols hold permanently fixed cultural meaning? An everyday object such as an umbrella could easily represent displacement of anxiety in relation to the penis, whilst the narrow space constituted by the alley between high walls or by a tunnel could readily be assumed as substitutes for the vagina. However, he was also aware of the danger of too readily pinning down the meaning of dream symbols, stressing that sometimes the dreamwork employs a symbol whose meaning is by no means obvious and that dreamers integrate the meaning of symbols in ways that fit the other material in their dreams. Whilst arguing that these different approaches leave the analyst 'in the lurch', his solution offers a combination based primarily on the dreamer's associations, with the analyst filling in the gaps by drawing on his or her superior knowledge of symbolic systems.²²

Learning from texts

Freud argued that the great works of myth, poetry and literature are replete with the stuff of dreams:

The depths of mankind's eternal nature, which the poet invariably counts on arousing in his listeners, are made of those motions of our inner life rooted in that time of our childhood which later becomes prehistoric.²³

In his discussion of exhibitionism Freud draws from Homer and from Anderson's fable of the emperor's clothes. His account of death-dreams and the obsessional neurosis of the man who had the urge to kill strangers concludes with a description of Sophocles' account of the legend of King Oedipus, son of Laius, king of Thebes. This is a most significant moment as it is Freud's earliest reference to the myth that formed the linchpin of his explanation of human sexuality. He describes how in the tale Oedipus is abandoned as an infant because an oracle had proclaimed to his father

that his unborn son would be his murderer. He is rescued and grows up to be a king's son at a foreign court. One day he consults the oracle about his origins and receives the advice that he should flee his home city because otherwise he will become his father's murderer and his mother's spouse. On the road from his supposed home city he encounters King Laius and kills him in a sudden quarrel. He then arrives before Thebes, where he solves the riddle of the Sphinx as she bars his way and in gratitude is chosen by the Thebans as their king and given Jocasta's hand in marriage. He lives in peace and dignity and begets two sons and two daughters with his (unbeknown) mother until a plague breaks out. The oracle is consulted once more, and messengers bring word that the plague will end when the murderer of Laius is driven from the land. Freud now says that the action of the play follows a process of delayed revelation that is comparable to that of psychoanalysis; 'that Oedipus himself is Laius' murderer but also that he is the son of the murdered king and Jocasta. Shattered by the abomination that he himself has committed, Oedipus blinds himself and leaves his homeland. The oracle is fulfilled.'²⁴

Freud describes Oedipus as a tragedy of fate, reflecting the contrast between the all-powerful will of the gods and the vain struggles of humanity. He draws the conclusion that the 'deeply moved spectator' must learn about his own powerlessness in the face of the divine. He proceeds to argue that this cannot be the case for modern man, who is governed by a different sensibility in relation to eternity. If the tale can move modern people, then the subject matter itself must have resonance for us. We are moved by the fate of Oedipus because it could also be our own:

His fate moves us only because it could have been our own as well, because at birth the oracle pronounced the same curse upon us as it did on him. It was perhaps ordained that we should all of us turn our first sexual impulses towards our mother, our first hatred and violent wishes against our father. Our dreams convince us of it. King Oedipus who killed his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta is only the fulfilment of our childhood wish. But more fortunate than he, we who have since succeeded, at least insofar as we have not become psychoneurotics, in detaching our sexual impulses from our mothers and forgetting our jealousy of our fathers. We recoil from the figure who has fulfilled that ancient childhood wish with the entire sum of repression which those wishes have long since undergone within us.²⁵

The primitive dream material that fed the development of the Oedipus tale corresponds to two universal dreams; first, that men dream of having sexual relations with their mother; secondly, that they dream of the death of their father.²⁶ The story has significance in representing symbolic castration, involving the repudiation of desire for our mother by submitting to

the symbolic law, as preferable to the fate of Oedipus. But for this, Oedipus's destiny might well have been our own because all humans direct their first sexual impulse towards the mother and their first murderous wish against their father. The myth acts, too, as a focus for discussion of unconscious desire. We are unaware of our desire, which is forever severed from consciousness, being bound by unconscious processes that return us time and again to the same predicaments.

Over the years I have used different texts to introduce psychoanalytic concepts to my students. They are receptive to myths such as Oedipus and Antigone. They have engaged creatively with fairy tales such as Andersen's 'The Red Shoes' and 'The Goblin and the Huckster',²⁷ the former being particularly useful to illustrate relations between metaphor and metonymy. Class discussion was enhanced by drawing upon a diversity of material from literature, music and the visual arts. The possibilities offered by the last are virtually limitless. Whilst students were not encouraged to discuss their dream material, Belk and his colleagues asked their students to keep journals that included their personal stories of desire to generate material for discussion of fantasies, dreams and visions of desire.²⁸

Explaining dream processes

Why is the wish in the dream so poorly expressed? Why does it have to make its way to consciousness by means of the roundabout methods of condensation and displacement? Dreams are complex signals from one part of the mind to another. The reason for the complexity is that desire must be hidden in civilized society. There was a curious dichotomy in the extremely strait-laced Viennese society that Freud lived in. On the one hand, it was thought to be extremely outrageous to publicly mention sex, never mind to explain it in the detail that Freud ventures into. Freud was admittedly taking a huge social risk in opening up such avenues for discussion. Freud was not alone; while the prohibition on public discourse about sexuality remained in force, that which was conducted in private escalated, especially amongst the middle classes.²⁹ Freud also recognized another quality of dreams that in his view distinguished them from daydreams or fantasies. This is apparent in the dream recounted below.

The dream of the burning child

For some days and nights a father had watched at the sickbed of his child. After the child died, he retired to rest in an adjoining room, leaving the door ajar, however, so as to enable him to look from his room into the other, where the corpse lay surrounded by burning candles. An old man, who was left as a watch, sat near the corpse murmuring prayers. After sleeping a few hours the father dreamed that the child stood near his bed,

clasping his arms and calling out reproachfully, 'Father, don't you see I am burning?' The father woke and noticed a bright light coming from the adjoining room. Rushing in, he found the old man asleep, under the covers and one arm of the beloved body burned by the fallen candle.³⁰

Freud's explanation is that the bright light had fallen on the father's eyes, leading him to draw the same conclusion as he would have done had he been awake, that the fire had started when a candle had fallen near the body. But why the contrivance of having his son rouse him? Surely this is a wicked thing, given the son is already dead? Freud interprets this to mean that the dream allows the father, even at the expense of awakening slightly earlier in response to the direct evidence of his senses, to maintain his wish for the life of his son by one more moment.

The hallucinatory quality of the dream raises a further question. What happens in the dream is vividly real to the father; it is his son who wakes him. But how can it be that dreams appear so real? Considering the relationship between dreams and daytime fantasies, Freud accepts that each has the quality of occurring in the present, where a wish is fulfilled. However, a major difference is that while daytime fantasies are represented by thoughts, dreams are represented by images which are so powerful that we believe they are true. The dream involves a hallucination of reality. In searching for a mechanism to explain the strange work of condensation and displacement, Freud constructed a simple model of mental processes that is replicated in Figure 1.1 (a).

From Figure 1.1 (a), psychical activity is initiated by stimuli entering the perceptual system emanating from internal or external sources and ending in motor activity. At the front end on the left-hand side is the sensory

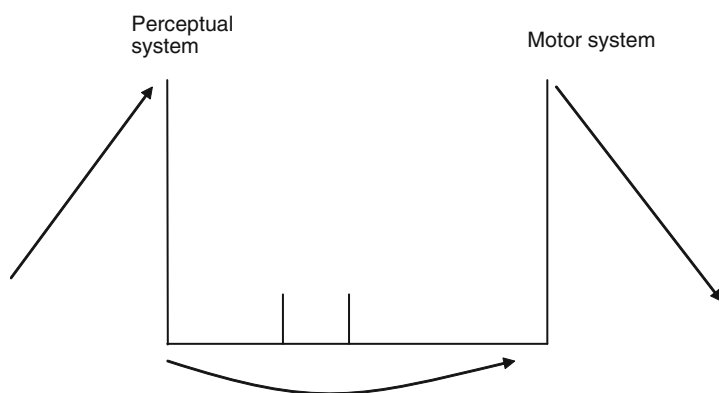


Figure 1.1 (a) A simple model of the dream process

Source: Adapted from Freud ([1900] 1913), Fig. 1: 426.

system that records sense-perceptions, and at the motor end is another system linked to motor activity. For example, a mosquito lands on my arm and cuts my skin to secure access to a vein. I feel a sharp pain as the stimulus is above the threshold level and raise my hand to swat the source of irritation.

Freud surmised that the perceptual system operates without memory. Behind this lie unconscious automatic memory systems that permanently store perceptual inputs in a variety of ways so that the same excitation can imprint different permanent records. Furthermore, memory traces are organized into more complex associations, especially if the events occurred contemporaneously. These are included in [Figure 1.1 \(b\)](#).

All perceptual memories are unconscious and can play an important role in affecting behaviour without conscious awareness. Freud notes that whilst we describe our character in relation to our conscious recollections, memories which can be brought to consciousness but which are generally unconscious, especially those gained in earliest youth, have the greatest effect.

The system operates in a progressive fashion from raw sensory impressions to unconscious memory stores and thence to thoughts and action. What is the role played by dreams in this system? At this early stage in his writing Freud had not yet developed the concept of the 'ego'. He surmised the existence of two psychical agencies, one unconscious and the other constituting the executive function that directs our voluntary conscious action when awake. This latter agency, which Freud called the preconscious, stands between the unconscious and consciousness. Unconscious thoughts have no access to consciousness save through the preconscious, which operates as a censor. During daytime the link between the preconscious and the unconscious is blocked by resistance. But when asleep the censor is only

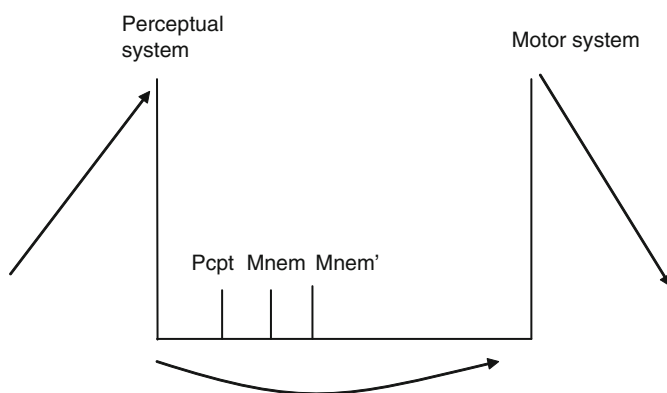


Figure 1.1 (b) A more complex model of the dream process

Source: Adapted from Freud ([1900] 1913), Fig. 2: 427.

partly operational and thus allows the display of hallucinatory images such as those displayed in the burning child dream. The unconscious and preconscious are shown in Figure 1.1 (c).

Whilst dreams may be attached to preconscious dream thoughts, their motive force springs from the unconscious. For example, the thought of the father in the burning child dream is similar to what he would have experienced in waking life: that the room his son is in has caught fire. However, in the dream, his unconscious grasps hold of this thought, reviving the son to life to fulfil his wish to have him alive again, whilst simultaneously the character warns him and admonishes him.

Regression is the process occurring when an idea transforms itself back to the sensory images from which it once emerged. Freud argued that waking recollection and dreaming differ with respect to how far back regression goes. In waking life, executive conscious recollection is held at the level of remembered associations, whereas during sleep, the dream process moves further back to the vivid sensory images stored in more primitive systems.³¹ Hallucinatory dreams are thus regressive, moving backwards from thoughts to associative memories and beyond these to raw perceptual memories which are then subjected to processes of condensation and displacement.

From the above, the iceberg and labyrinth are each appropriate metaphors to describe the power of rote automatic unconscious processes for encoding and storing information in relation to the relatively limited powers of the executive function that operates over and above these. The Dada journal *Minotaur* reflects the idea of the unconscious as an underground warren inhabited by a monstrous creature that is half-man and half-bull, where the executive who apparently reigns above is a puppet in the hands of others.

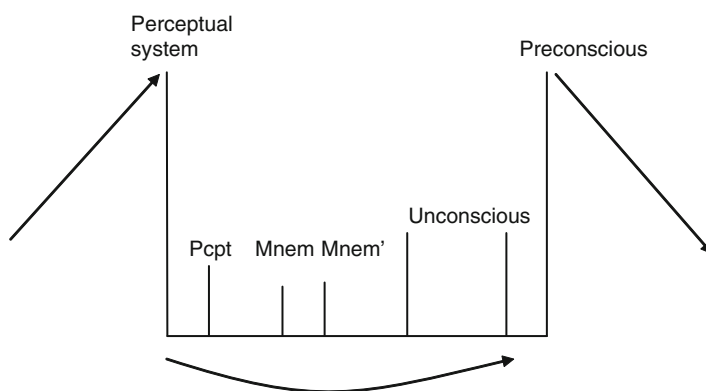


Figure 1.1 (c) A complete model of the dream process

Source: Adapted from Freud ([1900] 1913), Fig. 3: 429.

Repression occurs when the executive function withholds memories that are too distressing or threatening to admit to consciousness by not retrieving them. The exclusion of these memories from consciousness is damaging because in the normal course of events the admission to consciousness is where they would be consciously remembered, worked on and mastered. The repressed memories do not disappear but instead regress and find expression in repetitive symptoms.

Freud used hallucination to explain the visions of people of sound mind in addition to those conjured by people suffering from paranoia and hysteria. These are regressions, or thoughts transformed backwards into images. The only thoughts capable of undergoing this process are those connected intimately to repressed or still unconscious memories. For instance, a twelve-year-old boy was prevented from sleeping because when he shut his eyes he would see 'green faces with red eyes'.³² The ghoulish face in the dream was that of a boy whom his patient had known four years previously, who had introduced him to masturbation.³³ His patient had linked this in his mind with what his mother had told him, that such boys became weak minded, could learn nothing at school and died young. Freud argues that his patient made her prediction come true, making no progress at school and being terribly afraid of death. The protagonist in Herda Müller's *The Appointment* follows the regressive movement traced by Freud from thought to hallucination during the interminable tram ride that constitutes her story. At the beginning she says she can't sleep, kept awake by the 10 o'clock appointment she must keep with the secret police. As the story unfolds, her rational consciousness unravels, too, so that by its end she appears in a state of psychotic hallucination.

The simplicity of Freud's schematization belies the complexity of the different perceptual and memory systems and their interaction. Solms and Turnbull (2002) describe a multilayered system comprised of automatic coding and storage routines overlaid by an executive control function that shares many similarities to that described by Freud.

Selling dreams

Freud's ideas had a huge impact in society at large, especially in the United States. Mundane objects became psychically and sexually charged; no longer was a pipe for smoking, it was a 'phallic symbol'; images of slippery footpaths between narrow buildings indirectly signalled the vagina; fur signified pubic hair; and so on. While controversial, these ideas held appeal for those working in the new industries of public relations and marketing. Edward Bernays, regarded as the father of public relations, readily adapted his uncle's ideas to the world of government policy and commerce. Bernays drew selectively from Freud's canon, especially *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, heavily influenced by Gustav Le Bon's conception of the

power of the crowd. Bernays is best known for orchestrating propaganda through PR campaigns aiming to manage public opinion. These included the 'torches of freedom' stunt, an early media pseudo-event which cleverly linked cigarette smoking to women's suffrage.³⁴ Another notorious campaign sought to destabilize the newly elected government of Guatemala and its president, a left-leaning democrat who was hostile to the US-owned American Fruit Company, by associating the regime with communism in the mind of the US population.

Just as with neuroscience today, so business corporations fell over one another in seeking to be first to find the hidden sources of consumer motivations for consuming their products. Ernest Dichter (1960) was one of the first aboard in the 1930s, stripping Freud's theory and fitting it out for commerce as one ingredient in the eclectic mix comprising motivation research.³⁵ Dichter drew on Freud's insight to argue that business should be chary of rational explanations of consumer behaviour, offering his services as a psychic detective to locate the elusive sexual and aggressive motivations lying at its root. For instance, in 1939, not long after arriving in the United States from Austria, he conducted a study for Chrysler Corporation that associated convertibles with mistresses and sedans with wives. In the early 1960s Dichter provided his definitive guide to consumer motivation, which was based on 2,500 studies.³⁶ Motivation research conducted in the United States and by the Tavistock Centre in England made an immense contribution to the developing field of marketing research by developing and refining research instruments such as the Rorschach test, the Szondi test, the depth interview technique and the focus group; the last being developed separately by Dichter and by Bion at the Tavistock.³⁷ One can see parallels in the 'emotional mining' and thematic analysis used today by Gerald Zaltman.³⁸

Advertisers fed on Freudian insights used the imagery of dreams to communicate messages that might otherwise be seen to be offensive. To avoid censorship, they sought to arouse sexual fantasies in socially acceptable ways, using substitute symbols that were similar to the original sexual stimulus but sufficiently masked so as to alleviate public concern. Often accompanied with a 'knowing wink' to those in the know, this became the paradigm for the communication of all kinds of otherwise risqué messages to selected segments who could detect the 'hidden' meaning to which the mainstream audience was oblivious. Freud had noted the sexual meaning that dreams of flying had for men, which may of course have had nothing to do with subsequent ads featuring attractive air hostesses saying 'Fly me'.³⁹ Over time and with rapidly changing attitudes toward sexuality, the 'knowing wink' to the cognoscenti became transformed to a blatant in-your-face approach that all but the most naive could hardly fail to recognize, as in the later Cadburys Flake commercials.

The use of crude symbolism by advertisers has long been sent up in film and television comedy. Dave Allen was particularly adept at constructing

these sketches, such as the one where two 'lovers' are first shown gazing deeply into each other's eyes and then tangled together in a knot of limbs as they disappear behind a sand dune. This is followed by a rapid succession of images depicting trains entering tunnels, towers and chimneys rising up, and waves dashing furiously against rocks. Gradually the imagery shifts into reverse as trains back out of tunnels, towers and chimneys collapse and the tide ebbs away. The couple re-emerge slightly dishevelled but looking quite pleased with themselves!

The controversy over subliminal advertising

During the 1940s firms actively experimented with means to bypass human critical consciousness, and in 1950 the *Journal of Marketing* carried four articles dealing with the 'depth' approach. This aroused the attention of a Penn State English major turned journalist called Vance Packard, a loner who began to investigate them. Published in 1957, *The Hidden Persuaders* became a best-seller, exposing the covert operations of corporations to national attention, despite being panned by some critics as journalistic. Packard's main focus is the use of motivation research and its translation into advertising appeals. He didn't use 'subliminal'.

The London *Sunday Times* front-paged a report in mid-1956 that certain United States advertisers were experimenting with 'subthreshold' effects in seeking to insinuate sales messages to people past their conscious guard. It cited the case of a cinema in New Jersey that it said was flashing ice-cream ads on to the screen during regular showings of film. These splashes of message were split-second, too short for people in the audience to recognize them consciously but still long enough to be absorbed unconsciously. A result it reported, was a clear and otherwise unaccountable boost in ice-cream sales.⁴⁰

Packard asserts that research using 'subthreshold effects' had been ongoing for some time by the time his book was published. On questioning the newspaper about its sources, he was told that 'the authorities in question are unwilling to come any further into the open', but that BBC Television had since made two programmes about the subject. In retrospect, it is for this small feature that Packard is remembered, not his extended attack on motivational research. In September 1957, some months after the publication of *The Hidden Persuaders*, James Vicary, mentioned in the book as a motivational researcher, created a media storm by announcing his discovery of a means to influence consumer behaviour without the public's knowledge. He reported the results of an experiment conducted in a New Jersey cinema where the messages 'Drink Coca-Cola' and 'Eat Popcorn' were flashed onto the screen at 1/3000th of a second every five seconds to 45,699 people. He claimed that sales of Coca-Cola and popcorn increased over the research period by 18.1 and 57.7 per cent, respectively. Vicary's claims were taken so

seriously that a congressional investigation was launched that November. The experiment was replicated in 1958 but was unsuccessful, and interest in Vicary's innovation rapidly faded.

Marketers quickly marshalled arguments against the power of subliminal advertising. Writing in 1958, just after the Vicary episode, Bauer argued that subliminal advertising efforts are doomed to failure because of primitive anxiety against persuasion by others, which evokes the response, 'nobody's going to tell me what's good for me!'⁴¹ Bauer did not factor into his argument that most Americans are favourable to advertising and are not particularly bothered about most of the ads they see, thus allowing advertising a heightened influence.⁴² Concerns at the use of subliminal advertising were raised again in the 1970s, but this had much less influence than the earlier episode.⁴³ Writing in the late 1980s, Moore argued that the prevalence of subliminal advertising was probably underestimated. However, he suggested that this was not a matter for concern for two reasons: first, because subliminal stimuli are weak and because the threshold of consciousness varies widely between individuals, most are not just unaware of subliminal stimuli but are oblivious to them; secondly, he reiterated Bauer's argument asserting the advertising audience as actively possessing a highly mobile selective attention. Studies of the general public and advertising professionals in the 1990s indicated that although most Americans (including advertisers) believed subliminal advertising to be used, only 7 per cent of advertisers said they actually used it.⁴⁴ It was clear from these studies that most people did not understand the meaning of 'subliminal', which they equated with 'subtle' cues. Advertising practitioners agreed the line followed by Bauer and Moore, arguing that consumers erect powerful 'radar shields' to screen ads: 'Consumers are like roaches. We spray them with marketing and, for a time, it works. Then they inevitably develop an immunity, a resistance.'⁴⁵

Forget Freud?

If the Freudian tide ran strongly from the 1940s to the late 1950s, from then onward it began to turn, and by the next decade a definite ebb had set in. Eysenck's *Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire* (1985) was influential. Eysenck was annoyed by the tendency to speak of 'Freudian' symbolism as if Freud had invented this, when quite patently the idea that sharp and pointed objects may signify the male genitals and tunnels, the female containers was well known to poets and philosophers.⁴⁶ It is difficult to understand Eysenck's point because Freud himself refers quite meticulously to his sources of inspiration. One might also consider it a strength to so ably weave the ideas of others into one's argument.

Eysenck raises the more serious question that Freud realized but failed to heed: that one never deals with dreams as such but with constructs elaborated by memory and thereby changed beyond all recognition from the original dream content. He charges Freud with failing to account for the

fact that dreams are constructions, actively worked on and altered by the dreamer. This is a good point. However, Freud recognized the tendency for one to quickly forget the contents of a dream and that it is recollected most faithfully soon after waking.⁴⁷ He also recognized that the dreamer might recover only a fragment of what had occurred during sleep. He wondered about the extent to which retrospective thoughts might be dream thoughts, arguing that whilst they might be new thoughts, they would remain connected in some way to the content of the dream. Where Eysenck argues about the ways in which one might consciously reconstruct the dream contents, he misses Freud's point, which is that as a result of the dreamwork, through condensation and displacement, the dream content is itself likely to be so compressed and minimal that it defies conscious reconstruction. The dream comes to consciousness as a compressed garble, a ball of tightly knotted string that one can crudely set down in language but that must then be subjected to free association if its messages are to be revealed. The more that consciousness reworks the dream, the more intelligible it seems and yet the further away one is drawn from the latent thoughts.⁴⁸

Eysenck next asks, why disguise a dream when its content is patently obvious to the dreamer? He offers as an example a dream and its analysis by an American psychoanalyst, E. Frink:

A young woman dreamt that she was walking along Fifth Avenue with a lady who was a friend of hers. She stopped for some time in front of a milliner's shop-window to look at hats. She remembered going in at last and buying a hat.⁴⁹

In real life the lady had walked along Fifth Avenue with the 'friend' who appeared in the dream, but she had not bought a hat. She remembered being uneasy because her husband was ill and she could not rid herself of the notion that he might die. At this time her friend called, and her husband suggested the two women take a walk, which would do her good. The woman also remembered that she had spoken to her friend of a man whom she had loved prior to her marriage. When asked why they had not married, she replied that his circumstances were so high above hers that this could not be contemplated. Associations regarding purchase of the hat were that she had admired it and had much wanted to buy it but that this was impossible due to her husband's poverty. Clearly the dream was allowing her to satisfy a wish by allowing her to buy the hat. But in her dream the woman remembered that this 'had been a black hat, a mourning hat'.⁵⁰ The analyst suggested that the day before the dream, the patient had been anxious that her husband might die and that by having the dream she was buying the black hat satisfied the death fantasy. In real life she was prevented from buying such a hat because of her husband's poverty, but in her dream she was able to buy one, which implied that she had a rich husband. These

associations led to the rich man and the fact that if she were married to him, she could have as many hats as she wished.

Eysenck says that when presented with the above analysis, the woman had agreed that it was justified and presented several facts to support it. The most important of these was that the man with whom she had been in love had also been in love with her. The dream is taken to illustrate condensation: 'A large number of different ideas is condensed into a very short and rather uninteresting dream.' However, like many of those cited by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, it contains no repressed infantile wishes, and instead most of the wishes appear to be conscious. Eysenck makes a good point. The woman may well have agreed with the analyst's interpretation once this has been pointed out to her. However, because he does not tell us whether or not she was surprised to learn this interpretation, one must draw from the facts as related by Eysenck. The woman was agitated that her husband suggested she call a friend and go for a walk, thus implying that she was consciously anxious, being afraid that her husband might die. The fact that the dream allowed her to calmly foresee not only his death but also her reunion with an old lover would lead one to suspect that she might, at the very least, have been taken aback by the analysis. The facts revealed in the analysis may have been precisely what she had known all along but had nevertheless hidden from herself. That no repressed infantile wishes were apparent in the dream is neither here nor there. Freud said that many dreams are examples of such wishes but that not all dreams are. In sharing a similar structure to that of *la belle bouchère*, discussed above, one might argue that its better understanding demands more context than is supplied by Eysenck.

Given the above, it is unsurprising that Eysenck believes the function of dreams to be expressive, not repressive; dream symbols are terse and abstruse ways of communicating complex ideas.⁵¹ This may well be true in some instances. But what is the central truth revealed by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*? Freud shows the power of identification, the ability of a person to take the place of another, and consequently that human life is fundamentally lived through others and otherness. Does Eysenck mean to presume that condensation in dreams never occurs? While unlikely, this appears to be the case, given that he argues that when a man dreams that his mother is a cow, he is simply reflecting that he believes her to be a nurturing person!⁵²

One point made by Eysenck had the potential not just to damage Freud's theory of dreams but to destroy it. This is linked to the fact that dreaming takes place within rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. Humans spend approximately 25 per cent of sleeping hours in REM sleep, so named because it is accompanied by rapid bursts of eye movement. This occurs in 90- to 100-minute cycles, alternating with four well-defined stages of quiet sleep, known as non-REM sleep. The rapid eye movement associated with REM sleep led observers to believe this to be the physiological concomitant to the psychological act of dreaming. REM sleep is controlled by the most

primitive part of the brain, located in the pontine system in the brain stem, lacking the capacity to produce sophisticated symbolic processes characteristic of the dreams analysed by Freud. However, the claims about REM sleep are disputed. Solms (1995) cites neuropsychological evidence that dreaming in fact occurs in the forebrain and the brainstem oscillator which controls REM sleep is one of the many arousal triggers that can activate this forebrain mechanism. In other words, Freud's position is tenable because dreaming and REM sleep are controlled by different mechanisms.

Conceptions of the unconscious in marketing today

Soon after the furore over subliminal advertising died down, the concept of the unconscious more or less slipped off the agenda for marketing scholarship. There was little mileage for such ideas in a strictly positivist discipline governed from America, where the academy moulded itself to the rationalist natural sciences.⁵³ If critics asserted that Freud's ideas did not meet scientific standards of proof, there was no need to take them seriously.⁵⁴ Additionally, one might venture that the idea of the unconscious was unpalatable to marketing ideology given that the existence of an unruly, agentic unconscious susceptible to influence beyond awareness does not square with that of the masterful consumer promoted by marketing management theory. For the small minority who continued to discuss subliminal advertising, the unconscious was conceived of as akin to a pinball machine, being passive, lighting up when ads hit their target, which otherwise went down the drain.

While Freud was not the first to develop the idea of the unconscious, his argument, that such processes play a central role in the psyche, of which consciousness is merely a property, was radical for his time.⁵⁵ Indeed it is only comparatively recently that consumer researchers have awakened to its radical potential.⁵⁶ Freud at first thought the unconscious coincided entirely with material repressed from consciousness, but from 1915, he revised this to argue that the greater part of the executive processes of the ego are unconscious.⁵⁷ Consciousness plays a relatively incidental role in his scheme. Just as we become aware of the external world by representing its objects through perception, so consciousness acts as a spectator who tries to make sense of unconscious mental processes. It is thus not difficult to understand why we can exaggerate the extent of our conscious autonomy and misperceive our agency in formulating the goals and attitudes we take to be products of our own volition.⁵⁸ Freud employed *das Ich* (the 'I', translated as 'ego') not to represent a homunculus, or little person in the head, but to integrate the diverse and largely unconscious executive functions of the mind. Unity is achieved by grounding our fundamental sense of self in our bodily perceptions, on which our internal perceptions are based, which are in turn used to ground external perception. This is broadly consistent with the contemporary neuroscientific conception of a background state of consciousness, responsible for bodily self-monitoring, coupled to the

current state of the object world: 'consciousness consists of what is happening around us, grounded in a background medium of self-awareness'.⁵⁹ The main role played by the ego in the life of the psyche is to act as a secondary process to inhibit the automatic functions of the mind.

Freud used spatial analogies to illustrate his topology. The ego is placed at the surface to signify the relative proximity of its operations to consciousness and because he thought its functional equivalent in the brain was closer to the surface than the primary processes located closer to the brainstem. The unconscious is variously likened to an iceberg, a labyrinth and a seething cauldron to illustrate the power of hidden forces that proliferate in the dark beyond the remit of superficial consciousness. The properties of the unconscious are apparent in Freud's dream of Irma. External reality is replaced by psychic reality represented by the wishes of the dreamer; for instance, in the dream of Irma, Freud clears himself of all responsibility for Irma's predicament. The dream allows contradictory ideas to rest side by side; in the dream Dr M. tells the others not to mind, that dysentery will set in and the poison will be eliminated, with no care that the patient, too, could well be eliminated! The dream also illustrates the timeless nature of the unconscious by juxtaposing an array of people, places and events.

From a psychoanalytic perspective unconscious processes are not just automatic and procedural. They play a role in repression by excluding some contents of the psyche from the ego's sphere of influence. In studying the behaviour of hysterics, Freud reported his increasing belief that memories linked to a trauma have 'not sufficiently abreacted' and so make themselves felt in the body, as symptoms (Breuer and Freud, 1974: 13). This is illustrated by the case of 'Anna O' who suffered from a variety of symptoms. At one point Anna refused to drink water and became tormented by thirst, which she slaked by eating watermelons and other fruit. After six weeks or so, by which time her thirst had become unbearable, while under hypnosis, Anna mentioned her disgust, on visiting an English lady friend, at seeing a dog drink from a glass. Following a display of anger she then drank a large quantity of water without any difficulty, and 'thereafter the disturbance vanished, never to return'.⁶⁰ Cases such as this convinced Freud that painful symptoms should disappear as the elliptical operations of the unconscious are brought to light. He dispensed with hypnosis, devising the method of 'free association', as part of his 'talking cure'.

The Freudian unconscious is dynamic, open to many unconscious influences. Repression of trauma and the re-attachment of traumatic affects to substitute objects is key to its formation, enabling the complex operation of substitutions and displacements that together constitute the dreamwork. Despite the inhibitory power of the ego, the unconscious makes its presence felt by means of dreams, jokes, slips of the tongue and symptoms. Because of the key role played by identification, it is considered important to consider the desire of the subject in relation to important others.

The question of the unconscious held little interest for most consumer researchers from the 1980s to the millennium. Cognitive psychology had for some time accepted the idea of a procedural unconscious and of the operation of unconscious frames and scripts.⁶¹ However, consumer research generally presumed a consumer who is masterful and makes informed decisions based on conscious deliberation. Even when this is not the case because they take shortcuts, the focus remained on intentional processing and formation of conscious attitudes.⁶² Such assumptions have changed dramatically in recent years following the presentation of compelling evidence from positivist experimental research (what else!), which proved beyond doubt that behaviours such as politeness and rudeness can be unconsciously primed and consumer goals and motivations can be activated in like manner.⁶³ Bargh (2002) acknowledges that most people remain concerned about being influenced by subliminal messages, adding, 'and perhaps now, finally, they should be' (see also Bargh, 2005). Research demonstrates that subliminal advertising works but only when its prompting is in line with its target's goals. For instance, in one study subliminally exposing experimental subjects to the brand name *Lipton Ice* increased the choice of and intention to drink *Lipton Ice*, but this was only for participants who were thirsty.⁶⁴ However, goals, too, can be primed. For example, subjects at first primed to be sad were subsequently persuaded to listen to a CD that put them in a good mood rather than one that made them feel strong and powerful.⁶⁵

Revisiting the ideas behind *The Hidden Persuaders*, Bargh wonders about the fuss created over subliminal primes in the 1950s. This is because he believes that supraliminal primes work much better. Unlike subliminal primes, consumers are aware of the existence of supraliminal primes; for instance, when dining, we are aware of the body shapes of our fellow diners and of those who wait on us but not how they influence our choice of food. He argues the unconscious was never developed in the first place to spot subliminal cues, and so seeking to measure their effectiveness is like 'evaluating the behaviour of a fish out of water'.⁶⁶ Most of what influences us is right in front of our eyes, yet we fail to notice or are simply too confident in our ability to control its influence.⁶⁷ The revelation that much consumer behaviour that was once thought conscious is open to unconscious influence raises the question of the existence of unconscious defences. One group of researchers hypothesized that consumers should erect unconscious defences against slogans which, unlike brands, are known to be persuasive devices. Their results confirmed this hunch by confirming the existence of reverse priming effects in relation to the use of slogans.⁶⁸

A particularly interesting aspect of this research on a psychoanalytic perspective is the 'chameleon' effect, or mimetic tendency for humans to unconsciously imitate the behaviour of models.⁶⁹ Researchers studied whether the chameleon effect can be extended to the automatic activation of social stereotypes.⁷⁰ The findings of this research are fascinating. Activating

a ‘professor’ stereotype by means of priming, they found that subjects scored higher on a knowledge quiz, whereas after being primed with an ‘elderly’ stereotype, college students subsequently walked more slowly and had poorer incidental memory. Chameleon effects are also found in relation to brands. For example, a person primed with an Apple logo unconsciously becomes an ‘Apple’ person, behaving consistently in line with the meanings attached to the brand and being more creative than a person primed with a different logo.⁷¹

Recent investigations of mimetic influence in restaurant interactions are very much in line with the psychoanalytic literature discussed above (McFerran, et al., 2010a). McFerran et al. (2010b) found dieters and non-dieters behaved totally differently when attended to by a thin rather than an obese server. Non-dieters ate more snacks when the server was thin, and dieters did so when she was obese. These findings were explained in terms of the dieter’s identification with the server. A subject should identify to at least some extent with the model provided by the primed construct, and this should result in assimilation towards similar primes and contrast from dissimilar primes. On this basis, the authors argue that since chronic dieters feel a constant desire to lose weight, it is possible that they identify more with models who are overweight, or obese, rather than thin, resulting in assimilation towards behaviours associated with obesity (eating more) and selecting food choices recommended by the obese model. In a subsequent study the findings suggest that anybody who exhibits an undesirable behaviour can unconsciously be taken as a model for imitation.⁷²

Whilst one must be cautious in generalizing from this research,⁷³ there are interesting parallels with the psychoanalytic presumption of a motivated and goal-driven unconscious. This substantiates the idea of the operation of powerful mimetic unconscious identificatory processes similar to those described by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. If the influence of the body shape of the server can play a key role in one’s choice of food, depending on whether or not one is on a diet, then surely it is reasonable, too, to imagine that *la belle bouchère* can identify with her rival by denying her own desire. The only further step necessary for consumer researchers to fully admit Freud’s insights to their canon is to recognize the reality of repression, which operates by means of the exclusion of distressing memories from conscious processing and their transference into symptoms. We do not wish to admit disturbing material to consciousness; the memory is there but is blocked by an inability to retrieve it. Figure 1.2 plays on these ideas with the aim of prompting awareness and recognition of child abuse.

In declaring ‘consciousness dethroned’, Bargh (2002) worries that researchers have a major responsibility today, ‘when methods to thwart or bypass the consumer’s defences against influence are becoming ever more powerful, and yet he remains as ignorant of these influences and as overconfident of his control as in the past’.⁷⁴ One might venture that at the apex of this

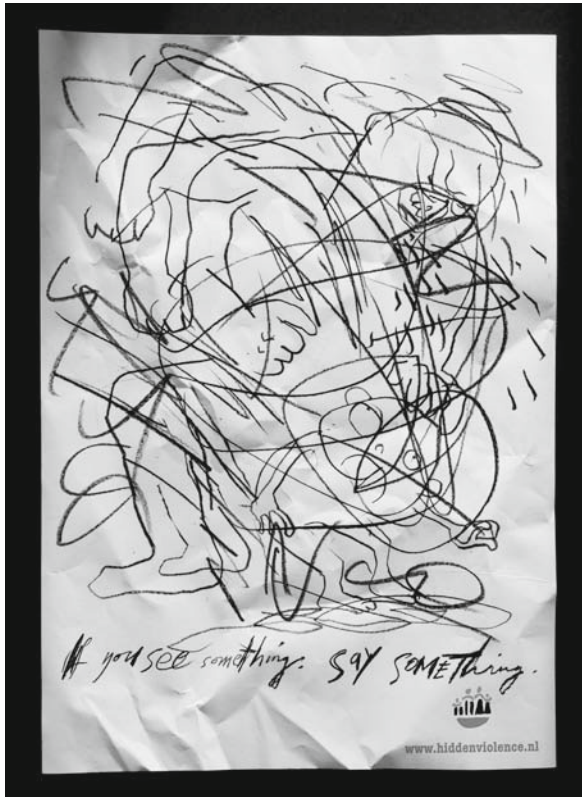


Figure 1.2 'Fist' advertisement

Source: With kind permission of Saatchi & Saatchi NL. From 'the Hidden Violence' Campaign (2007) for Stichting Geheim Geweld. Reproduced Magnus Olsson (Creative Director, Copywriter & Art Director, Anne Bando (Account Supervisor); Hameeda Lakho (Advertiser's Supervisor); Simon Spilsbury (Typographer) and Jan Willem Weisenekker (Producer).

hubristic sense of control is the general medical practitioner, who believes himself impervious to persuasion in a climate where 'the drug companies finance our medical press, support our postgraduate education, shower us with useless little freebies, and stroke us to make us feel important' – in addition to the honoraria paid to those who undertake the onerous duty of travel to exotic locations for drug launches.⁷⁵ If they believe themselves impervious to all of this (and not all of them do), they are too likely too to believe themselves resistant to the dreamlike advertising images they encounter in their trade press.⁷⁶

2

Sexuality

Introduction

In her commentary to Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality* ([1905] 1977), Angela Richards says that he made the unconscious real.¹ The path to this discovery was laid principally by his patients, most of whom were middle-class Viennese women. Listening to their stories, Freud was at first of the opinion that the source of their trauma lay in their molestation by adults when they were children. Later and controversially, he changed his mind to believe that the hysterical and neurotic symptoms they exhibited in adulthood could be traced to difficulties in dealing with their own infantile sexuality.² In this view the unconscious is governed by primary instinctive processes, including the sexual drive, which have the sole function of gaining immediate satisfaction. Running up against social constraints, these unconscious currents of desire were repressed by these adults, who pushed them into the unconscious. It took Freud some time to reach the shocking conclusion that children are sexual beings, but when he did, he did not shirk from fully exploring its implications. In directly confronting human sexuality, *Three Essays* retains its power to strike readers even today with forceful clarity and directness.

Freud argued that his discovery of the Oedipus complex provides a convincing basis for male sexual development although his reasoning is more tentative with respect to females. In *Three Essays* it is insufficient to Freud that his theory should explain current sexuality. He felt bound also to explain how it comes into being in the first place. He argued that primitive human behaviour was uninhibited, characterized by free expression of the sexual drive. This would then be progressively curtailed, or repressed, with the instigation of the incest taboo, which allowed for stability and the development of higher social units than the family.³ Repression of the powerful sexual drive by the forces of civilization has had positive and negative features. On the plus side, it led to the creation of a stable society based on the family, where 'spare' sexual energy found a potential route for

realization through sublimation. By allowing for the displacement of sexual energy into socially acceptable forms such as art, architecture and literature, Freud thought sublimation to be responsible for some of humankind's greatest achievements. On the minus side, he surmised that in a 'civilized' society, men prone to perversion will experience the potential frustration of their desire, leading ironically to its being re-doubled. On the other hand, a 'civilized' society that expects its women to be 'pure' could create in them enormous guilt feelings to the extent that they repress the sources of their infantile sexual pleasures and become subject to neurosis.

That there has been a wholesale repression in the expression of the sexual drive due to the growth of civilization has since been developed by a number of authors. Herbert Marcuse, a trenchant critic of consumer society, contends there resides at the root of the 'comfortable, smooth, democratic, un-freedom' that lies at the heart of Western society the repression of genuine sexuality and its replacement by one that is ersatz and artificial.⁴ This is labelled as the 'repressive hypothesis' by Michel Foucault, who disputes it, claiming instead that during the Victorian era, a discourse of sexuality was produced as a vehicle for the surveillance, observation and control of the bourgeois class by the medical profession. Freud's work should be situated within the general movement towards the delineation of the abnormal individual that took place as part of this process.

The new category of abnormality conjoined three figures which had hitherto been kept separate; namely, the monster, the person in need of correction and the onanist, or masturbator. Foucault discusses the eighteenth-century legal treatment of cannibalistic and incestuous monsters. These monstrous personalities transgressed the two great alimentary and sexual prohibitions: the cannibalism of the starving and the incest of the king. Celebrated monsters of the time included the woman of Sélestat, who killed her daughter, dismembered her and cooked her thigh with white cabbage, and Léger, a shepherd who killed a young girl, raped her, cut out her sexual organs and ate them and then tore out her heart and sucked it.⁵ Food and sex were fundamentally related in these monstrous acts, and the breach of the twin prohibitions of cannibalism and incest formed the great outside to normal conduct.

Foucault's thesis is that, during the nineteenth century, there was a shift in focus from the monstrous to the abnormal individual. During this period of penal reform, psychiatrists played a progressively greater role in determining if the accused was acting in accordance with reason or mad. The first psychiatrists were charged with instituting a well-founded medical knowledge, codifying madness as an illness by pathologizing its disorders in line with medical knowledge and evaluating its risks in terms of the danger it posed to society. Monomania was coined to describe a series of dangers within a particularly medical context by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Fifty years later psychiatric attention had shifted towards the notion of

'degeneration' to identify another form of social danger that could simultaneously be labelled as illness. To justify itself as a scientific and authoritarian intervention in society, psychiatry had to demonstrate that it could detect a certain danger, even when this was invisible to others. Through the course of a number of famous trials, including that of Henriette Cornier, who had murdered the children of her neighbour, such apparently motiveless acts came to be described as being produced by morbid instincts.⁶

The transition from a focus on monstrous deeds to the monsters who committed them formed the basis of the institution of psychiatry. The new focus on abnormality was linked to the concept of instincts, which gradually shifted attention from the great cannibalistic monsters towards identifying the little pervert:

Basing itself on the instincts, nineteenth century psychiatry is able to bring into the ambit of illness and mental illness all the disorders and irregularities, all the serious disorders and little irregularities of conduct that are not, strictly speaking, due to madness.⁷

Foucault seizes on the new problematic created by the instinct, which is that it comprises an entirely new way of posing what is pathological. It invites a host of questions. If behaviour is instinctual, then is it pathological to have instincts? Is it an illness to allow instincts to act? Are there abnormal instincts? Can instincts be cured? The correction and normalization of instincts constituted the major issues for psychiatry by the end of the nineteenth century, when Freud was developing the views elaborated in this chapter. Foucault describes psychoanalysis as one of the two great technologies developed for the correction and normalization of the instincts; the other being eugenics.⁸

Eros and sexuality

Freud places sexuality at the core of human being, which has led to the objection that he overemphasizes our animal nature. He counters that the sexuality described by psychoanalysis has little to do with explaining the brute sexual impulse and much more to do with the Eros of the *Symposium* (Plato, 1999). The fount of the erotic lies in the body and is directed towards bodies. Not long after the beginning of his first essay on sexuality, in dwelling on homosexuality, Freud ruminates on Aristophanes' story, that long ago there were three human genders, not just the present two. In the story the third gender is a combination of the two called 'androgynous', as it combines the male and female. The humans in Aristophanes' tale were the doubles of what they are now, created by the gods as rounded wholes, with four legs, four arms and two faces, one facing to the front and one to the rear. These humans became so powerful that they challenged

the power of the gods; so Zeus devised a plan to slice them into two parts, as one might a sorb apple. His experiment failed the first time round, as each half sought the other out and clung to it. Zeus repeated the operation in a different way, and from then on humans were doomed to wander the world in search of their lost half. From the *Symposium*, Freud will have confirmed, perhaps even formed, his views on the essentially bisexual nature of humans. Aristophanes' tale inspired D. H. Lawrence to write,

Why were we crucified into sex?
 Why were we not left rounded off, and finished in ourselves,
 As we began,
 As he so certainly began, so perfectly alone?⁹

Perhaps more importantly for Freud, the *Symposium* informs about the nature of romantic love as longing for a 'soulmate'. Moving beyond Aristophanes' story to the point in the *Symposium* where Alcibiades, himself desired for his great beauty, declares he is in thrall to Socrates. Alcibiades uses *agalma* (designating a precious offering to the gods contained in a box of little value) to describe the thing of beauty hidden in Socrates' decrepit body.¹⁰ Socrates' mind is considered by Alcibiades to be more beautiful than the bodies of others. The implication is that while the erotic sensibility is constituted in the body and begins with a preoccupation with bodily concerns, it is not contained by this but is provoked to reach beyond itself towards greater forms of beauty. According to Lear (1998), Freud made use of the human Eros to shape a peculiar conversation through which we would reach out beyond ourselves and change even the fixed structure of our psyches. He called that conversation psychoanalysis.

Three issues

The problem of civilization

Freud encountered Darwin's work when studying as an undergraduate at the University of Vienna, and it is perhaps attributable to this that, when subsequently confronted by the apparently sexually related problems of patients in his consulting room, he resorted to first principles in seeking to understand the basis of human sexuality. Freud did not study animal sexual behaviour in any depth, and in any event he believed that human consciousness ruled out any direct equivalence. But experience led him to believe that the human sexual drive is extremely powerful, and this led him to pose the question as to how human civilization arose in the face of such a powerful instinct. He narrowed this problem down by formulating the hypothesis that human civilization initially arose with and is maintained by the institution of the taboo against incest. Freud spent much of his life addressing this problem and in revising and expanding his theory.

The puzzle of gender

A second question, which is related to the first, relates to how humans attain a gender identity. For example, if a person is born as sexually male, equipped with a penis and scrotum, does he identify as being male? Freud believed that individuals are born bisexual, and so just because one possesses the physical accoutrements of male or female sexuality does not in his view determine identification as male or female. His solution to this question is closely related to the aforementioned incest taboo.

The question of normalcy

Given that Freud believed that human sexual behaviour is originally polymorphous, he became concerned to classify and to explain the huge variety of sexual practices to be observed. His explanation is oriented around the construction of a normal sexuality. If the proper aim of the ego instinct is self-preservation, then the aim of the sexual instinct is to treat its host as a node linking it as part of a chain from the past into future generations. Following this trajectory, Freud argued that while the sexual instinct might express itself in relation to a number of objects, its proper object is a sexual partner from the opposite sex, and its proper goal, human reproduction.

Sexual development

It is easy to miss some of Freud's most original insights, which can seem relatively pedestrian when set against the general warp and weft of his thought.

Objects and aims

To Freud the sexual instinct is not an indissoluble unity but rather consists of objects and aims. Here it seems clear that his ideas were influenced by the *Symposium* and in particular that part where Socrates and Diotama discuss sexual reproduction in relation to the base forms of love. Immortality is the proper aim of sexual relations, with the proper object to achieving this being genital relations. Lesser desires linked to the baser forms of love described in the *Symposium* focus on direct objects for their satisfaction. Freud's reasoned that the object of fascination in infantile sexual development shifts from one zone of the body to another, from a focus on the eye to the mouth and the curve of the mother's breast, to the anus and then eventually to the genitals. By introducing the idea of the erotogenic zones, Freud widened the understanding of sexuality, drawing attention to a diverse range of sexual pleasures, including voyeurism, exhibitionism, ritual mastery (or submission to others), and oral and anal stimulation.

Figure 2.1 is my crude figuration of Freud's schematization of the two great currents of instinctual desire flowing upwards from the left- and right-hand sides towards the top of the page, reaching the point of confluence,

where the waters of love and sensuality pool. The flows from the ego and sexual instincts are shown, respectively, on the left and right of the page. Freud proposed affection as the older of the two as it is initially formed on the basis of self-preservation, based on the affection that one develops for caregivers. Sensuality springs from the sexual drive linked directly to the eye (scopophilia) and smell (coprophilia).¹¹ The processes flowing from the sexual instinct are more numerous and better described than those for the ego instinct, an indication of where Freud's energies were directed in his early writings although he did turn to explore the ego in more detail later in life.

Freud considered it important to understand the normal course of sexuality because, by definition, pathological behaviour will consist in deviations from this. He fancied himself as an explorer, likening the mind, especially the female mind, to a dark continent for which he would provide the map. The fragmentary picture sketched from his analysis of dreams revealed the contours of a land that was strange by any standard of physical map making. This uncovered a realm of reversals, condensations and displacements fabulous even by the standards of *Alice in Wonderland*. What necessitated such immensely complex dream work? Why the need for such heavily coded messages? Freud initially had the hunch from his work with neurotics that some extremely powerful impulse was being covered up by the need to conform to 'normal' civilized conduct. But in investigating the norms of sexual behaviour, he was confounded, not by the strength of the norm, but by the immense variety of expressions of 'normal' sexuality he encountered, which varied immensely in proportion to its aims and its objects. From his investigations he became deeply pessimistic that any more than a few 'educated' people could pool the two currents of sensuality and affection in a 'normal' manner and was certain that most men are 'psychically impotent'.¹² In the battle between civilization and sexuality, he conceded ultimate victory to the sinuous power of the sexual instinct:

Thus we may perhaps be forced to become reconciled to the idea that it is quite impossible to adjust the claims of the sexual instinct to the demands of civilization; that in consequence of its cultural development in renunciation and suffering, as well as the danger of extinction in the remotest future, cannot be avoided by the human race.¹³

Stages of sexual development

Figure 2.1 can be read from the bottom up with each stage of formation comprising a gate to the development of a normal sexuality. Like the salmon that must negotiate the various weirs on a river if it is to successfully spawn, so the infant must negotiate successive hurdles to attain a normal sexuality. Difficulties experienced at any stage leave it psychically stranded. To move beyond the hurdle presented by primary narcissism, the infant must

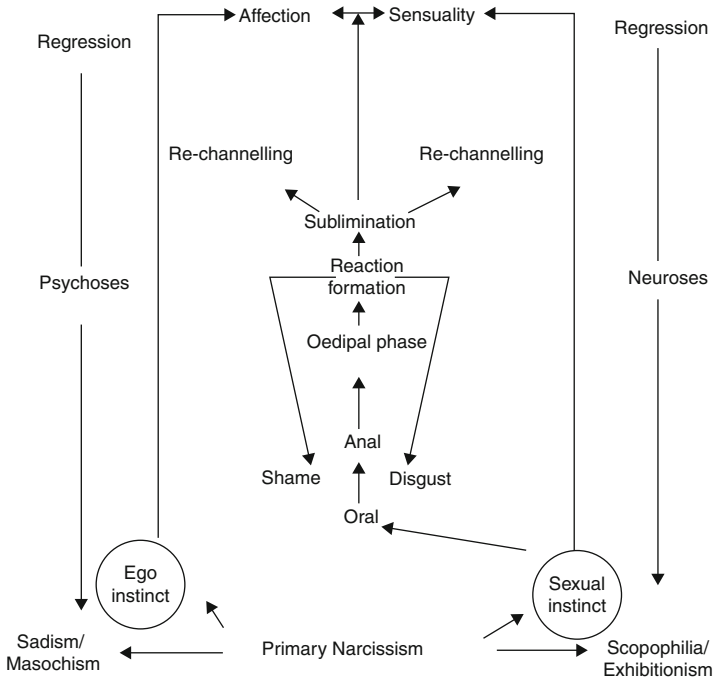


Figure 2.1 Sexual development in Freud

first dissociate from fascination with self and turn towards an other, such as the mother, to form what Freud calls an anaclitic, or leaning, attachment. If infantile narcissism is transcended, the next passage is through the anal stage, where the infant must learn to balance autonomy and shame. The next transition is to traverse the phallic stage under the shadow of the Oedipus complex. Finally, as the person grows beyond puberty, he or she must reconcile the two alternating currents of desire, as expressed in the ability to combine love (springing from the ego instinct) and sensuality (springing from the sexual instinct) in response to a partner. The figure can also be read in a crudely similar way to the game Snakes and Ladders. Some shock or disturbance in later life may bring a regression to a stage that presented some particular satisfactions or frustrations.

Component instincts

Although the main source of satisfaction for the infant is linked to the oral, the instincts of scopophilia, exhibitionism and cruelty appear independently during primary narcissism. The sexual instinct is not yet fully developed but split into components that operate separately from one another.

Exhibitionism is common in younger children, who proudly display their genitals to others. Scopophilia, or more commonly voyeurism, begins with the infant's expression of a 'lively' interest in peeking at the genitals of others. Cruelty comes easily to the child because the construction of the capacity for pity develops relatively late. Cruelty towards playmates and animals arises from the instinct for mastery, and Freud warns that if a strong enough link is made between cruelty and feelings of pleasure prior to the development of pity, this link may prove to be unbreakable in later life. Cruelty, or the sadistic impulse, may reverse into its opposite to reflect a masochistic tendency where the child gains a degree of pleasure from being smacked or bitten.

Oral stage

In the first year the mouth is the zone of interest and the breast of the mother (or its substitute) is the object of interest. Winnicott (1957) described the role played by transitional objects as substitutes for the breast. Comfort blankets, teddy bears and the like are important, enabling the infant to master separation from the mother by transferring the site of satisfaction to another object. The infant obtains most gratification from sucking, and when teeth develop, pleasure comes from biting. If the mother responds by over- or undergratifying the demands of the infant, great tensions may develop involving feeding. Anxiety may reach intolerable levels, at which stage the ego may repress the impulses responsible for tension. If the ego expends large amounts of energy in repressing anxiety, this may lead to its development as a fragile and weak entity. In this case, when the child develops into an adult, it is likely that the oral zone will be a source of fascination and anxiety. The adult may experience pleasure and guilt in oral activities such as smoking, drinking or preoccupation with the preparation and consumption of food. Severe trauma such as the death of a relative may so stretch the resources of the ego that it can no longer contain the repressed anxieties of childhood that return in full force. This can result in a neurotic disorder where the adult regresses to the oral stage and exhibits a range of disorders associated with eating.

Anal stage

The infant may greatly enjoy the performance of defecation. Development of sphincter control of the release of bodily wastes presents the first opportunity for the infant to choose between a narcissistic or an anaelitic, or 'lean-ing-on', object choice. In the former, by retaining control of this process, the infant remains tied to auto-erotic pleasure, whereas the latter involves entering into an object relationship with the mother by obediently offering one's faeces to her as one's first gift. Those acquainted with two- to three-year-old toddlers will be aware of the frequency of referrals to 'pooh', often accompanied by shrieks of laughter. Young children openly refer to faeces,

play with them, and have 'accidents' involving them and will frequently use their newfound ability to control evacuation in a battle of wills with their parents. Freud noted the many cultural associations between obstinacy and the anal region – for example, the invitation to kiss the buttocks or display them to others – are expressions of scorn and defiance.¹⁴ The link with money is an age-old association in myth and fairy tales. In Babylon gold was known as 'the faeces of Hell'.

In the early 1960s Italian artist Piero Manzoni put his excrement into tin cans and sold it as art.¹⁵ True to the spirit of the age, he said that he was exposing 'the gullibility of the art-buying public.' Collectors and galleries the world over, including London's *Tate*, queued for Manzoni's droppings. They appeared even more gullible when, on 11 June 2007, Manzoni revealed that the tin displayed at the *Tate*, labelled *Merde d'Artista 1961: number four out of ninety*, for which it paid £22,300 in 2000, describing it as a seminal work (surely a misnomer), contained no excrement, but plaster. No shit! Agostino Bonalumi, who worked closely with Manzone, recalled that the pair of them and one other artist rebelled against traditional art forms but found no takers for their ideas in Milan. 'All these Milanese bourgeois bastards want is crap,' wrote Bonalumi in *Corriere della Serra*. From there the path was laid to the production of *Merda d'Artista*.

Phallic stage

The phallic stage, from between the ages of three and five years, culminates in the emotional crisis known as the Oedipus complex. Before this boys and girls identify with their mother. Freud believed that he had confirmed his insight with evidence as the result of his analysis of the five-year-old he called Little Hans. Hans's mother had recently borne a second child, who displaced Hans as the centre of his mother's love and attention. Hans was curious to discover where this imposter had issued from. Enquiries from his parents received an evasive response; nevertheless, Hans alluded to Freud that the baby had grown inside his mother. When questioned further by Freud, Hans attributed a penis to everyone, including females, and when he saw the imposter's – his sister's – genitals, he said, 'Her _____'s still quite small. But when she gets bigger it'll grow all right.'¹⁶ Eventually Freud came to the view that on sight of the female genitals, children come to believe girls have been castrated. In seeking the perpetrator of this crime, the boy needs to look no further than his father, who up until now has been the central rival for his mother's attention. The father is perceived to be a powerful rival, and the boy's terror becomes so great that eventually he splits his affections away from his mother and identifies himself with the father. It is by means of this identification that the boy child achieves a male identity. In identifying with the father and 'introjecting', or internalizing, the father's values, there develops from the ideal-ego, a new structure, the superego, or conscience, which replaces the external control his parents exercised over him.

The first sight of the genitals of another person is shocking, and when confronted with the sight, the boy may literally refuse to believe the truth of what he has seen. If the idea of a woman with a penis becomes fixated, then the subject, when later confronted with a woman's genitalia, is horrified by their mutilation. Freud mentions that the infantile image is so powerful that this reaction cannot be altered in any way when informed by science.¹⁷ Refusing to believe the evidence of his eyes, the adult male is likely to develop a homosexual object choice, believing himself a woman and seeking out men who remind him of women.¹⁸ Other boys will react to the trauma of the sight of the female genitalia by disavowing the reality and turning away from it. Such is the trauma for the child that the fetishist chooses as his sexual object that which he saw immediately prior to the female genitals such as a foot or shoe, underwear, stockings or pubic-hair. For Freud the fetishistic attachment to this object is perverse in that, in later life, the adult cannot achieve orgasm without the fetish.

Freud struggled to provide an adequate understanding of female sexuality and openly acknowledged the tentativeness of his reasoning. Young girls also form an attachment to the mother after they give up their narcissism. The key moment for the girl is recognizing that she has been castrated. She can then follow one of three courses of action: first, she can respond with revulsion against sexuality; secondly, she can defiantly cling to her threatened masculinity; finally, she can follow the 'very circuitous' path to normal female sexuality.¹⁹ In this last course the girl seeks to identify with her father and to distance herself from her mother, who is now taken as the rival for his affection. However, the girl's physical resemblance to the mother means that she cannot physically identify with the father or with his power. As a result, Freud thought that the formation of the female superego was a more difficult process and more unstable than that of the male. He argued that women fixated at the phallic stage cling to their now threatened infantile masculinity by becoming obsessed with power and its symbols, from powerful sports cars to expensive watches.

Latency

The period of quiescence known as latency may last between five years of age and puberty. Reaction formations arise as dams in the mind to counter activities once intensely pleasurable, which now produce a reaction of shame or disgust. The process of reaction formation is instigated through the formation of the superego. The basis of this is the ideal-ego, formed when the infant abandons its primary narcissism by identifying with the mother. This is an image of perfection that the child seeks to live up to, which also arouses feelings of being watched. As the child moves beyond the ideal universe comprising herself and mother to identify with the father and the values of the wider culture, so the old ideal-ego is shed in the manner that a snake might shed its skin.

Under the gaze of the judgemental and watchful superego, activities that were once pleasurable are deemed bad and may be abandoned. Anal eroticism may be sublimated into socially acceptable aims such as orderliness, reliability, conscientiousness and cleanliness. These are reaction formations against what is unclean and disturbing and should not be part of the body; Freud described dirt as simply being matter in the wrong place. Those who have sublimated their anal eroticism may also display a stubbornness akin to that which is linked with the withholding of their stools during potty training alongside traits of parsimony, avarice and obstinacy. The original erotic interest in defecation is extinguished, and the interest in making money appears as a new interest. This makes it easier for the earlier impulse to be carried over into a new aim.

Freud recalls with some delight the story of a friend who, on reading his account of the infant sitting on the pot pondering whether or not to defecate, began to laugh. Later, while they were sharing some cocoa, the friend said that upon seeing the cocoa, he suddenly remembered that as a child he used to pretend that he was the cocoa manufacturer Van Houten (he pronounced it 'Van Hauten') in possession of a great secret for the manufacture of this cocoa. Everyone was trying to get hold of his secret that was a boon to humanity, but he had managed to hold on to it. He did not know why he had settled on Van Houten but surmised that this was probably because the company's advertisements were more persuasive than others. Freud replied, 'Wann Hautn'n die Mutter?' (When does the mother smack?). The first two words in the German phrase are phonetically the same as 'Van Hauten'. It was then that Freud realized this was a screen fantasy. His friend's fantasy involved the use of phonetic associations ('Kakao' ['cocoa' = 'Kaka' is the common German nursery word for faeces]). There was a displacement in the fantasy from the back of the body to the front; excreting food became taking food in, and something that was shameful and had to be concealed became a secret that was a boon to humanity.²⁰

Puberty into adulthood

At the onset of puberty, the sexual instinct, which had hitherto been based on the pleasure obtained from different parts of the body, now finds a sexual object bound to reproduction. Freud noted that in his time, 'the sexual life of maturing youth is almost entirely restricted to indulging in fantasies, that is, in ideas that are not destined to be carried into effect.'²¹ He also discusses the difficulties of ensuring that such fantasies are attached to the opposite sex, noting that this is largely a matter for authoritative prohibition by society.²²

At this stage on the river of life, the confluence, while in sight, is not yet reached and many will fail to leap this last hurdle. To be 'normal' one must re-connect the primitive currents of affection (proceeding from the ego) and sensuality (proceeding from the sexual instinct). Rather than flowing

naturally together, he likens this process to the confluence formed by a tunnel dug through a mountain from different directions to unite the two streams. Affection comes from the ego. After his own self, a man's first love object (ideal-ego) is based on his mother or parents. This imago is taken as the model for the basis of new object choices; the man leaves father and mother and marries a woman based on the imago, onto whom he transfers this affection. All goes well if this affection is united with the sensual passions that issue from the sex drive. On the other hand, affection and sensuality may occupy different registers, crudely described in the 'virgin versus whore' dichotomy. Freud surmised that when a man becomes involved with a woman who reminds him of his mother, he may place her on a pedestal, overvaluing her in relation to his affections and undervaluing her sexual allure and treating women who arouse him sexually as sluts. This leads to psychical impotence: 'Where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love.'²³

There are only a very few educated people in whom the two currents of affection and sensuality have become properly fused; the man almost always feels his respect for the woman acting as a restriction on his sexual activity, and only develops full potency with a debased sexual object; and this in turn is partly caused by the entrance of perverse components into his sexual aims, that he does not venture to satisfy with a woman he respects.²⁴

On the other hand, the women of his day linked sensuality to prohibition and so become frigid. Freud equates this frigidity in women to the tendency for debasement engaged in by men, attributing both consequences to the long period of delay between sexual maturity and sexual activity.

Neurosis

Neurosis is flight from reality, where powerful instinctual impulses that were a source of infantile pleasure are censored by repression. However, repression is imperfectly executed, and consequently, the repressed material hollows out alternate channels through which it flows, producing symptoms in its wake. In Freud's time middle-class women, who were subject to intense demands to be 'pure', suffered most from neuroses. A woman had fallen in love with her brother-in-law but repressed this knowledge. Whenever she came into his presence or this knowledge threatened to come to consciousness, she was troubled by a severe pain in her leg. Obsessional neurotics form themselves around their own mini-religion of rites and observances, a pattern of behaviour to which they appear to be addicted. Neurotic ceremonials consist of little prescriptions, performances and restrictions that appear to be mere formalities but where neglect can lead to a formidable angst, which forces the addict to perform the rite instantly.

Obsessional neuroses arose because of their relation to repressed sexual impulses, which usually could be traced to infancy, where they had been a particular source of pleasure but were repressed following the Oedipal period. The repressed impulse does not go away because repression had been imperfectly carried out and so threatens to break down. The impulse gnaws at its restraints, and in seeking release, it is felt as a potentially overwhelming source of temptation. The situation threatens to become intolerable as fresh mental efforts are required to counterbalance the constant pressure of the impulse. Ceremony and obsessive behaviour operate in this narrow context as defences against temptation. These prohibitions aim at maintaining at a distance situations that might lead to temptation, and in this way prohibitions replace the obsessive acts, just as phobias ward off hysterical attacks.

Freud offers as an example the experience of a woman but does not explain the infantile origin of her obsession. At the time he meets her, she is living apart from her husband and suffers from the compulsion to leave the best of whatever she eats; she merely nibbles around the outside of a piece of roast meat. Following much discussion, she tells Freud that on the very day on which she originated this behaviour, she gave up sexual relations with her husband – in other words, the best.

Perversion

Perversion represents a veering away or deviation from the normal sexual object, comprising the genitals or the normal sexual aim of reproduction. If one takes as the norm the view that heterosexual relations should be based on mutual love and respect and should occur solely in the interest of begetting offspring, then most sexual behaviour is perverse. At the time of writing *Three Essays*, Freud noted the existence of an extraordinary variety of sexual behaviours, ranging from the use of clothing and fetishes to the introduction of alternative objects, including oral and anal sex, to bestiality and practices that most people would find repulsive, such as licking excrement. 'Perversion' and 'inversion' are used by him as value-neutral descriptions to indicate deviations from the 'normal course'. These terms are not perceived as neutral today but morally loaded. Consequently, many find Freud's discussion of homosexuality as an inversion to be offensive. It is worth noting that Freud argued that everyone is subject to homoerotic desire in infancy and beyond it and regarded homosexuality a component of human development that is not innate but the outcome of a particular way of resolving the dilemmas posed by the Oedipus complex.

Perversions are conventional, meaning they are not in themselves remarkable, but become the target of normalizing influences, being proscribed by society. Perversions with respect to the sexual aim involve activities that are also part of the normal course of procreative sex, including touching, looking, sadism and masochism. The difference is that one activity

is taken by the perverse subject as the exclusive means for obtaining full sexual satisfaction. Nowadays pathological touching or rubbing (frotteurism), voyeurism and exhibitionism form part of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-IV).

An extreme case

In an article entitled 'Cannibal case just the tip of the iceberg', Alan Hall reported on the second day of testimony at the trial of self-confessed cannibal Armin Meiwes, that police officers found neatly labelled packages of 'steak', 'ham' and 'stew meat' in a deep freeze, all 65 pounds of it filleted from the body of Bernd Juergen Brandes. Police described how they found a videotape that showed Brandes whilst still alive, apparently willingly having his penis cut off. In the video Meiwes and Brandes are shown attempting to eat the penis but 'found it too tough' because Brandes had begun to feel so faint that he could not wait for it to be fully cooked, in garlic, salt and pepper. The video ends with Meiwes plunging a knife into Brandes as he begged for forgiveness, State prosecutors charged Meiwes with 'murder for sexual gratification'. Commenting on the case, Prof. Marneros of the psychiatric clinic of the University of Halle-Wittenberg is quoted as saying that cannibals disobey the rules of society because they do not believe that they apply to them; that they gain feelings of self-respect and worth through eating of their victim's flesh and that there is always a sexual element involved. 'Sex expert' Joachim Orstermann is quoted as saying that the true extent of cannibalism and vampirism has yet to be discovered and that this case may just be the tip of a vast iceberg that has been penetrated by this trial.¹²⁵

Forget Freud?

Even in his own lifetime, Freud's work was controversial. What is the relevance in our time of Freud's explanation? Does Freud's global explanation that civilization has developed on the back of the repression of desire stand up in the face of Foucault's counterclaim, which holds, to the contrary, that civilization has itself produced perversity?

Oedipus now

There are three points of view with respect to the Oedipus complex: its defenders; those who believed it true at one point in time but no longer relevant; and finally, those who never believed in its efficacy. Following publication of Bronislaw Malinowski's *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* in 1927 and *The Sexual Lives of Savages* in 1929, it became widely accepted that Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex is at best applicable to relations pertaining in a few Western societies and not to the matrilineal cultures he encountered where the taboo featured relations between brother and sister.

The powerful critique soon became the mainstream belief in anthropology and psychology.

Anthropologist Frans Boas encouraged his PhD student Margaret Mead to go to Samoa to determine whether or not the sexual practices of the islanders bore any resemblance to those of Europeans. Mead's book *Coming of Age in Samoa*, published in 1928, vigorously supported Boas's claims. Her tale of a culture that was sexually liberated challenged Western ideals of propriety by arguing that Samoans had no understanding of romantic love and scoffed at infidelity. Mead's book projected her to celebrity status. It was many years later that the true story emerged. Mead had spent some time in Samoa and was disconsolate at her inability to find evidence to support her powerful supervisor's ideas. She got on well with the local young women, but they continually shied away from her questions about sexuality. One day, late in the course of her stay, she and a few of the women visited a local island. There, away from the regular life of their home, they confided to her that all that she had suspected was indeed true but that they had kept this under wraps. The women had invented the stories they told Mead because they sympathized with her being far from home and obviously unhappy. It seemed to them a good idea at the time to give her the news she so badly wanted. Years later it was found that far from encouraging 'free' sexual behaviour, the Samoans had a strict code relating to virginity among young women in addition to a range of prohibitions for sexual conduct among adults.²⁶ It is interesting in the light of this that H. A. Powell, who was the first anthropologist to study the Trobriand Islands following Malinowski's celebrated study, concluded that the Oedipus complex was as likely to occur in Trobrianders as in any other people. Spiro (1993) argues that such is the charisma attached to Malinowski that his flawed version persists to this day.

Feminists, who have led the most sustained attack on the Oedipus complex, instead look to pre-Oedipal formations linked to female eroticism. They focus on separation anxiety, not castration anxiety, as the key to perversity. This at once displaces the power of the father in the explanation while recovering that of the mother, who is the key component of the child's attachment. While the work of French feminists such as Helene Cixious (1981) and Julia Kristeva (1980) can be challenging, Ros Coward (1984) provides an excellent and accessible commentary, discussing women's relations between eating habits and body image; fashion; the body; the mirror and the look.

Rachel Bowlby (2007) believes that, while the Oedipal myth may have been relevant to society at one point in time, it is no longer so. Freud argued that the story of Oedipus is as relevant to the formation of sexual identity today as it was in the days of ancient Greece and will continue to be for all time. Bowlby argues that, given the decline of the nuclear family in Western society, the Oedipal myth, which features a mother, a father

and their children living in the same house and sharing this social space together, has lost much of its relevance. She also argues that there are other aspects of ancient Greek stories that do have relevance for those living in the present day but which Freud did not pay much attention to.

The repressive hypothesis

Norbert Elias, whose work is expanded upon in the next chapter, historicizes Freud to argue that modern citizens are considerably more 'buttoned up' than their pre-modern counterparts, being expected to maintain constant scrutiny and vigilant self-control. In Europe, during the medieval period, one could act more or less with sexual abandon. However, such activities became privatized as individuals learned to become ashamed of their own behaviour and embarrassed to observe similar behaviour in others. Elias explains the increase in the exercise of self-control as being due to the enhancement of the superego role in advanced modern societies. This places pressure on the ego to conform to the demands of society by sublimating sexual energies in socially acceptable ways. One might consider such repression to have reached its height when Freud wrote to describe the 'psychically impotent' men and the frigid and neurotic women who peopled his consulting room.

Herbert Marcuse, a 1960s 'guru' and influential member of the Frankfurt School of social theory, argued that in modern industrial society erotic desire is subjected to an excessive 'repressive de-sublimation.'²⁷ He argues that psychic growth develops through constant exchange of energy; for example, hunger arising in the body provides energy that seeks sustenance, which is replaced and supplemented by the food received. Freud's hydraulic analogy is appropriate as the person develops physically and psychologically through the constant exchange of energy flows.

Marcuse argues that the topology of the self has been changed in modern industrial society. Modern life is so comfortable and bland that the critical dimension of self represented by the ego has largely disappeared, leaving the repression of all desire by an all-powerful superego representing the demands of the industrial system. What was once liberty is now represented by the pseudo 'freedom of choice' in the world of goods. People identify purely as consumers of commodities choosing between alternative brands of soap, car and political party. Repressive desublimation refers to the loss of the traditional role of the ego to successfully mediate or sublimate id instincts in socially acceptable ways. Traditionally sublimation was a painful but important means for facilitating the transfers of energies between the self and the world. Consumer society destroys the ability to sublimate (to increase the flow to the world and back to the self) this energy.

The modern nuclear family is thus stripped from its extended context and fitted out for work in capitalist enterprise to meet the demand for a

stable, punctual workforce. The consumer society is interpreted in this context as a means of distracting workers from their real authentic interests and perpetuating that 'comfortable smooth' un-freedom which Marcuse talks about. The modern individual is rationalized in that the critical power of her ego has been reduced to the extent that all her desires are subject to social control.

For some time Foucault agreed with the above account of the repression of sexuality. However, he eventually decided that it is an inadequate explanation of events. In his own research he found that far from being repressed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sexuality was spoken about as never before, as citizens confessed their sexual predilections and practices to the new breed of psychiatrists who sought to bring reason and scientific method to bear in separating normal from pathological sexuality. While Marcuse and others argued that sexual repression was foisted onto the working classes, Foucault found instead that this emergent discourse of 'sexuality' was first applied to the bourgeois class by its own members. In Foucault's view, although diverse forms of sexual expression were prohibited, repression is not the correct term to describe this.²⁸ This was because, at the time when repression was supposed to be at its height, the middle classes had become preoccupied with ensuring and increasing the normality, health and longevity of their stock. As is described in more detail in the next chapter, the creation of a 'healthy' sexuality involved identification and rooting out of all that was 'unhealthy' in the social body of the bourgeois class. This involved the construction of a 'body' of knowledge by medics and other experts (who were of course themselves bourgeois). The mechanism for revealing this knowledge was borrowed from the church in the form of the confessional. People confessed their diverse problems to the medics, and the medics in turn came up with a range of perversions and other 'unnatural' sexual identities. Sexuality thus came to be seen as a subject for medical attention, via the understanding of the aetiology of 'nervous disorders' and of psychiatric attention via the labelling and understanding of 'mental illnesses'. The role of the psychiatric expert was to identify the 'unnatural' or 'perverted' in the same way that a surgeon might identify a lesion. An entire mechanism of power was thus brought to bear on the body to identify the abnormal. Foucault noticed an important difference between the ways in which perversions were treated by the pre-modern code of Christianity and by the new medicine. The focus of Christianity was upon the act or the sin; 'buggery' was thus a repugnant act for which a person should confess and do penance. Medicine, on the other hand, located the act as an essential part of the identity of the person. We see here what was scattered (the sin) becoming solidified and essentialized in the construction of an identity for the person. As a result, the person becomes identified on the basis of his or her sex: 'homosexual'. As Foucault notes, 'the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species'.²⁹

Freud did not believe that more than a few privileged individuals ever reached the pinnacle of normality, thus begging the question of how normal his prescription is. It may thus be rather stretching the point to say that he formed part of the normalizing intent of the psychiatric profession. On the other hand, it is clear that some of those who followed in his footsteps were not chary to re-model the sexuality of their analysands (Schwartz 1999). The concepts he clarified have been subjected to verification and described as syndromes.³⁰ Freud's concepts have become normalized in another sense in being diffused widely throughout society and forming part of the 'common sense' ways in which people seek to understand themselves. For example, one sometimes hears of a person who is orderly and tidy being caustically referred to by others as being 'anally retentive'. It is also clear that advertising has extensively borrowed from Freud and continues to reproduce images that are replete with 'Freudian' symbolism. In this respect Freud's writings have entered the discourse of a number of agencies in society that act to imperfectly reproduce them.

To return to the point made by Foucault, one can understand, to the extent that one begins to define what is 'normal', anything that falls outside of this frame is by definition perverse. In arguing that sexuality was produced by medical discourse Foucault does not appear to be denying that at the time of the disciplinary blockade, it was distinctly dangerous for a person to admit to deviance, which would assuredly have earned him or her a prison sentence or worse. Nor does he seem to argue that, by yielding to strong societal pressures, such as the womanly ideal of purity, many women led constricted and indeed 'repressed' lives. Instead Foucault seems to focus on the manner by which perversions that previously might have been regarded as behavioural aberrations came to be seen as pathological identities in the modern period.

The new normal

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud argues that the demand that sexual expression be constrained to fit to the norm of heterosexual union is a cause of injustice:

The requirement demonstrated in these prohibitions, that there shall be a single kind of sexual life for everyone, disregards the dissimilarities, whether innate or acquired, in the sexual contribution of human beings; it cuts off a fair number of them from sexual enjoyment, and so becomes the source of serious injustice.³¹

From today's perspective it can seem as if the ideal of normalcy Freud described is now turned on its head. Household composition in the UK today is radically different from when Freud fled here in 1938. The majority

of households consist of two people (35%) or one person living alone (29%), and just 20 per cent comprise more than four. Just 40 per cent of the 12 million people living in traditional nuclear 'cereal box' families have children. These account for just over 62 per cent of all children, with around 23 per cent in lone-parent families and 14 per cent in opposite-sex cohabiting couples.³²

Against the background of changes to household composition, gender identities once judged deviant are now considered normal. The introduction of same-sex civil partnerships and campaigns for gay marriage represent, at least in western countries, the latest fruits of a long and bitter process of campaigning for gender equality and gay rights, reflecting a temporal context where social attitudes have changed dramatically (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). This was unthinkable when Freud wrote his piece on civilization, given that at that time the figure of the androgyne was considered monstrous.³³ In the UK, male anxieties over gender were heavily policed, even during the 1970s. Gillette sought to circumvent these by employing 'men's men' such as the boxer Henry Cooper and footballer Kevin Keegan to advertise *Brut*, providing reassurance that the hardest men could safely use deodorant and retain their masculinity. At around the same time David Bowie created mass appeal for a younger audience through the androgynous Ziggy Stardust persona, although the openly gay Jobriath Boone was not so successful. Opening in 1973, the *Rocky Horror Show* featured a varied array of fetish objects, inspiring the fantasy of 'Goth' culture, subsequently popularized in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and by Lucy Lawless in *Xena: Warrior Princess*. The image of the dominatrix presented leather-clad Emma Peel (Diana Rigg) in the 1960s series *The Avengers* and has since been reincarnated in the figures of Annie-Lennox, Grace Jones, Madonna and Lady Gaga. It is only recently that it has become possible to air programmes with the themes covered by *The L Word* (2004) and *Lip Service* (2010).

Marketers in the late 1970s started to use 'gay window advertising' to specifically target the lucrative gay segment without alerting conservative heterosexuals.³⁴ Subtle codes were employed, for instance, by depicting physical contact amongst same-sex groupings that could be decoded in several ways or, alternatively, ensuring that the models used were well known in gay contexts, or displaying a handkerchief or glove hanging from the back pocket of a pair of jeans. The market expanded to encompass the range of identities corralled in the acronym LGBTQ: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite, queer. LGBTQ themes in advertising aimed at the general public had up until then been used for comic effect but now appeared in more realistic, less stereotypical settings. *Absolut* vodka seems to have been the first to target this market when in 1979 the company placed an advertisement in a gay magazine called *Advocate*.³⁵ More conservative companies made extensive use of narrowcasting by marketing directly to their target. In 1994 AT&T mailed a letter about the corporation's lesbian- and gay-friendly policies alongside

a rainbow-coloured phone cord in a lavender envelope to a bespoke list. Today sexual variation and gender-bending themes are linked to a chic lifestyle with explicit references appearing in haute couture magazines.

There has been soul-searching among those who identify as LGBTQ about the relative benefits of commercialization. Erica Rand argues that commercial sponsorship enhances the visibility of gay issues. Gay window advertising provided public recognition and social approbation from the Big Other for identity projects. Stuart Ewen makes a similar point in relation to the earlier use of advertising targeted towards women homemakers in the 1900s, which empowered them by recognizing their role as 'quartermasters' of their households.³⁶ Rand worries that advertising might just be 'gay-wash' providing a feel-good factor to displace attention away from products or production processes that might otherwise attract unwelcome attention. She is also concerned that the predominant focus of commercial advertising on white males renders females and people of colour invisible. Additionally, the commercial identities offered as lifestyle choices might misleadingly suggest that LGBT identities are disposable and can thus be discarded like the latest fashion.

The big brands waited until the late 1990s before venturing onto the fetish scene. *Absolut* were in the vanguard, possibly because of their earlier commitment to the LGBTQ market. Schroeder and Borgerson's analysis of two fetish ads for *Absolut* shows how they operate as gay window advertising, deploying coded signals to attract gay consumers through the use of the colour lavender and by ensuring the sex of the characters in the ads to be indeterminate.³⁷ With fetishism now regularly featuring in advertising brands as diverse as *Irn Bru*, *Elle* and *Agent Provocateur*, it appears that anything goes, except perhaps the open display of hairy armpits or flabby body.³⁸

The normalization of sexual practices once considered deviant is not restricted to developments in popular culture. Academics, too, argue for the reclassification of perverse practices. Baumeister distances masochism from self-destructiveness, arguing that it should be considered alongside intoxicification, physical exercise and meditation as a means of release from the burden of maintaining a symbolic self, by narrowing perception from a normal state of self-awareness to a state of sensory immediacy.³⁹ Anita Phillips shares with Baumeister the view that masochism should be rescued from the clinical discourses that label it as an illness in order to re-establish it within the diversity of human experience and creativity.⁴⁰

Pornography

McNair, among others who write of the relentless sexualization of public space, seems as preoccupied with size as his subjects, quoting staggering figures about the growth and sheer volume of the 'pornosphere'.⁴¹ Admittedly, these are impressive. The one reputable source I contacted estimated that

around 46 per cent of the total worldwide Internet audience aged over fifteen visited an adult website in May 2012.⁴² Recent concern focuses on Internet access to pornography by children. A UK independent parliamentary report stated that of those with regular access to the Internet, just over a quarter of boys accessed pornography weekly, although some did daily.⁴³

We heard many disturbing examples of internet pornography forming part of the toolkit used to abuse children; young adolescents being pressured into risky sexual behaviour; girls and boys being referred to counseling for porn addiction, and the overall concern that children and young people have neither the experience or maturity to contextualise this imagery.⁴⁴

Perhaps even more worrying to politicians is to learn that over 80 per cent of parents expressed concern that this was 'not pornography as we know it' but is rather violent and degrading, constituting a danger to the health and well-being of their children. Alternatively, there is a minority argument that pornography should be fully accessible.⁴⁵

Pornography presents a continuing problem for policymakers, especially in the USA, where concerns brought feminists into unusual alignment with conservative politicians. Radical feminists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine McKinnon associate pornography with objectification of and violence towards women, whilst conservative politicians associate it with an attack on family values.⁴⁶ The feminist view appeared supported by Linz et al. (1984), who likened repeated exposure of college males to violent pornography against women to 'exposure therapy' in that, over a period of five days of viewing 'slasher' films, their male subjects became less sensitive to violence and eventually came to enjoy what they had originally argued to be violent and degrading behaviour. Experimental subjects who were exposed to sexually violent films rated the victim in a rape trial as less severely injured than those in a control group. These findings were considered alongside others by the Meese Commission, which was established by President Reagan.⁴⁷ Associated with Reagan's mission to reassert 'traditional' values, the work of the commission was controversial from the outset.⁴⁸ Its remit was argued to be flawed, given its stated purpose, the development of 'more effective ways in which the spread of pornography could be contained', presupposed the need for its containment.⁴⁹ On publication, its findings were disowned by several prominent academics, including Linz et al. (1987; 1990), who argued the commission misrepresented its evidence by overgeneralization. The ensuing acrimonious exchanges between policymakers in search of a solution and experimental social scientists who urged caution constituted an epic mismeeting of minds.

Almost a decade after the debacle surrounding the Meese report, the Communications Decency Act (1996) passed through Congress following

rising concern to limit the availability of Internet pornography to children. This was in part fuelled by the publication by Martin Rimm (1995) of his undergraduate thesis, which propelled him to stellar celebrity status when excerpts were published in *Time Magazine*, featured on ABC's *Nightline* and cited in congressional hearings. Marketing academic Donna Hoffman was enlisted as an expert witness to evaluate Rimm's research, which she judged to be seriously flawed.⁵⁰ Following the trial the CDA was deemed unconstitutional and rescinded. Ybarra and Mitchell (2005) subsequently found there had been no 'avalanche' of children seeking online pornography, with the vast majority aged 14 and older. Concerns that children could access pornography before they were developmentally ready were found to be overstated. However, the authors worried about a minority of youth for whom regular access of pornography was linked to delinquent behaviour, substance use and depression.

The rapid growth of social media provides a platform for groups to form quickly and campaign directly on issues of concern. Let Girls Be Girls was organized in Britain by *Mumsnet* in 2010 to campaign against the perceived barrage of inappropriate sexual imagery directed by marketers to pre-pubescent girls.⁵¹ A number of prominent retail chains were targeted for marketing padded bras, pink *Playboy* bunny stationery, high heels, thongs and Bratz dolls to pre-pubescent girls. The campaign bore fruit in 2011 with the launch of a number of initiatives to combat what media reports referred to as the 'sexualization' of children. *Mumsnet* acknowledged that children are sexual beings, encouraging a 'healthy' sexuality different from the porn version marketed by retailers although they do not describe the shape of this. One commentator posted a message on the site saying, 'there is something wrong with a society that tries to sell seven-year-old girls 4 inch heels, or T-shirts emblazoned with "future porn star"'.

Another concern is that the popularization of pornographic images across a variety of media platforms conveys a false image of the body and of sexual performance (Pratt 1982). Girls may suffer from a lack of self-esteem in not having perfect (artificial) breasts, whilst boys may consider themselves lacking in relation to the size of their penis or in relation to aspects of their performance. In turn, there are anxieties that boys who have learned about sex from viewing hard-core pornography place unrealistic expectations on their girlfriends to conform.

Explaining pornography use

A consensus appears to have formed amongst researchers and some policymakers, since the debacle surrounding the Meese Commission, that pornography rarely encourages deviant sexual behaviour or sexual violence. Additionally, while those who are regularly exposed to pornography are de-sensitized to victims of domestic abuse and rape, this effect is short-lived.⁵² These findings are broadly in line with what one might expect from

a psychoanalytic perspective, which would point to the role played by fantasy. It is also consistent with the evolutionary account provided by Saad:

The consumption of both hardcore heterosexual pornography and sexual services appeals to specific facets of male evolved sexuality. The depiction of men engaging in unencumbered and easily available sex with countless young and beautiful women is central to men's fantasies. (Saad 2007: 232)

Saad's perspective follows the mainstream argument in cognitive psychology advanced by Cosmides and Tooby (1989; 1992), that the human brain is best adapted to problems of survival in the Stone Age and can be unsuited to the complexities demanded by modern life. They argue modern human behaviour is dominated by domain-specific modules governing mate choice, survival, kin selection and reciprocation behaviours, which were sedimented into the genome during the archaic Pleistocene period. The argument in relation to pornography is largely shaped around the module on mate selection. Saad presents evidence that women are more cautious and choosy in selecting a mate, arguing that they invest more in childcare than men. Furthermore, it is argued that in seeking a mate, women are influenced by social status and the ability to acquire, retain and share resources, whereas men place more emphasis on attributes of youth and beauty (Saad, 2007: 63). These differences are argued to explain not only why men buy women more gifts and pay them more compliments than women do men but also the different preferences for toys expressed by boys and girls. The relation to pornography is that women in search of status fashion themselves as objects in order to attract high-ranking males. Women are prepared to accept considerable pain in furtherance of this goal, ranging from the routine pain experienced wearing six-inch heels to the more acute pain inflicted by skin peels, botox injections and invasive plastic surgery procedures. In contrast, men look for sex objects not only in pornographic magazines, such as *Playboy*, but elsewhere, as in gay magazines (Saad 2007: 126).

Saad argues, in contrast to social constructionists, that the ultimate reason why women spend so much time and money prettifying themselves for scrutiny by the male gaze has nothing to do with advertising effectiveness and other media that merely track the course of innate preferences; rather, because men desire young and beautiful women as objects, women have an adaptive preference in desiring to be objects for high-status men. While Saad does not use these terms, his conclusion points to female desire as innately subservient and masochistic, the opposite of what is argued by Anita Phillips (1998). In her opening vignette Natasha Walter (2010), in seeking to enlist the disapprobation of the reader, describes the increasingly risqué exhibitionism engaged in by the young women she observed one evening in the Mayhem nightclub in Battersea, who willingly debased

themselves in front of a baying crowd of young men by participating in a 'competition' sponsored by *Nuts* magazine. Walter's ire is directed at the phallogocentric culture that allows women to be demeaned in this manner. On the basis of his other arguments, one might expect Saad to contend that women are innately predisposed to such behaviour.

Whilst Saad summons substantive evidence to support his case, he seriously downplays the importance of culture. This weakens his argument, for example, when he asserts, 'Hence, sex-typed toy preferences (in terms of the objects and colours preferred) and types of play are not due to capricious forces of socialization' (Saad, 2007: 71). In plainer language this argument is that colour preferences (blue for boys; pink for girls) are not socially constructed but are rather predispositions conditioned by evolution. However, research shows that these preferences are relatively recent in origin, and at one time the reverse was the case, where girls were dressed in blue and boys in pink.⁵³

The scientist in Freud might well have been intrigued by the hypotheses developed by Cosmides and Tooby as refined and discussed by Saad in relation to consumption of pornography. Saad's argument can be interpreted as a restatement of that which insists that libido is ultimately masculine, because women define their being in relation to the phallus, as objects for men who desire them as such. Lacan, whose work is discussed in more detail in [Chapter 6](#), offers a different explanation in his discussion of sexuation.⁵⁴ He argues that masculinity and femininity constitute different relations to the cultural symbolic order. Each gender identifies what is Other in different ways. The Other for men is always the object, whilst for women there is always something more. As only the girl can eventually become a mother, so she has the chance to experience an enjoyment that the boy can never have access to.

The desire to engage with pornography, which as Saad notes is almost exclusively consumed by men, is spurred by the lack that fuels male desire to fantasize about the incestuous object of their dreams. Pornographic fantasies fail because pornography does not take the gaze of the lacking subject but rather the omniscient gaze of the pervert who denies the castration of the m(Other) and wants to complete her. Žižek provides a nice analogy to illustrate the play of 'normal' desire by likening it to the story of Achilles and the tortoise; just as Achilles and the tortoise are never in the same place, so 'normal' desire always misses its mark. On the other hand, there is nothing lacking in pornography, which always involves production of the real. Pornography aims for the completeness of an omniscient view. There is a vertiginous 'too-muchness' about it that Baudrillard likens to a 'quadraphonics of sex'. It adds a third and fourth track to the sexual act. It is the 'hallucination of detail that rules'.⁵⁵ In the vaginal cyclorama

Japanese workers in their shirt-sleeves (it is a popular spectacle) are permitted to shove their noses up to the eyeballs within the woman's

vagina in order to see better – but what? ...The rest of the spectacle, the flagellations, the reciprocal masturbation and traditional strip-tease, pales before this moment of absolute obscenity, this moment of visceral voracity that goes far beyond sexual expression. A sublime pornography: If they could do it, these guys would be swallowed up whole within the prostitute.⁵⁶

The 'too-muchness' of pornography punctures the balloon of fantasy by revealing in detail the forbidden act which needs to be hidden if fantasy is to be sustained. Consequently, 'instead of the sublime Thing, we are stuck with vulgar, groaning, fornication'.⁵⁷

I read *Silence of the Lambs* (Harris, 1988) and *American Psycho* (Easton-Ellis, 1991) within a year of each other. The former was generally enjoyable, whilst the latter was shocking and disgusting in some places and boring in others. From *American Psycho*, apart from remembering that Patrick Bateman dislikes the rock band U2, I recall detailed and boring asides on subjects ranging from food to wine, sex, murder and mayhem. By comparison the narrative in *Silence of the Lambs* follows a strangely romantic script involving relations between Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter ('Buffalo Bill' conveniently remains a shadowy character). In retrospect the key difference between the two books is that in *American Psycho* the reader is aligned with the gaze of the perverted psychopath, whereas in *Silence of the Lambs* readers are principally directed towards seeing the world through the eyes of Clarice. Consequently, it can be argued that, unless one is a psychopath, *American Psycho* is a more moral film than *Silence of the Lambs* because the latter romanticizes the serial killer whilst the former simply disgusts.

A study has found that 'lads' magazines equate the gaze of the reader with that of the pervert. The authors found that young men give more credence to quotes from convicted rapists if these are attributed to 'lads' magazines, whilst young women find comments from the magazines equally derogatory and offensive to those made by rapists.⁵⁸ The male body is itself now eroticized in advertising as an object for the gaze. Oswald's (2010) excellent piece first describes the positioning of the subject in traditional art and cinema as matched to that of the voyeuristic male gaze onto passive female objects. She then draws on Jacques Lacan's ideas, via Metz, to explore how this traditional gaze is potentially unsettled by the repositioning of masculinity through homoerotic advertising campaigns for brands such as *Calvin Klein*, *Armani* and *Dolce and Gabbana*. Wondering how the advertisers managed to get away with such 'frankly gay' advertising when the work of an artist such as Mapplethorpe aroused considerable protest and was banned, she argues that the brand logos and associated imagery restore a phallocentric order to the most transgressive images of gender (Oswald, 2010: 127).

Bulimia: the fourth fetish?

'Women have long since made the choice between men and chocolate and have chosen chocolate.'⁵⁹ According to Freud females cannot be fetishists because this behaviour is specifically a consequence of the disavowal by some male children that their mother lacks a penis. This leads them to substitute the item that they saw prior to this shocking discovery – the foot, shoe, stocking or pubic hair – for the genitalia. It follows that women simply cannot be fetishists within a Freudian explanation. Gamman and Makinen (1994) agree that instances of female sexual fetishism are extremely rare but argue that one can locate female fetishism in the realm of food to argue that where sexual fetishists are men, women are food fetishists. They quote statistics that 95 per cent of fetishists are male and 90 per cent of bulimics are women and then state bluntly, 'Traditionally, our culture constructed masculinity as he who fucks, femininity as she who cooks.'⁶⁰ Bulimia is described by them as fetishistic because it is as much about disavowal of individuation as of sexual difference, it carries a strong oral component and it allows for direct sexual satisfaction. It is thus perverse.

The authors argue that bulimia is used by women in order to keep control over events that are perceived to be disruptive, frightening and destructive. What is it in bulimia that is being disavowed? Some suggest that bulimic women are caught between conflicting cultural demands. Additionally, it is argued that parents of bulimic daughters do not allow them to individuate normally from the family because mothers intrude unduly into the lives of their children. In this respect in bulimics the gorging of food and laxatives reflects a loss of impulse control and is related to unsatisfied infantile yearnings for closeness and security as well as for the discharge of aggression. Most work has been done with college students since that is often where bulimia manifests itself. College, unlike school, expects a high level of individual responsibility and is perhaps the first big separation of young women from the parental authority. Chernin discusses the case of Rebecca:

The bulimic ritual offered a safe structure where she might go on automatic, relinquish her responsibilities and create a self-controlled world, a temporary respite. The loss of the stabilising family system was compensated for by the substitution of a mind-numbing panacea rooted in rigid regimentation.⁶¹

Thus, bulimia is a form of disavowal of separation. This is activated when the child's narcissistic self-image is challenged, often coupled with contradictory messages to be a success and to remain feminine and passive. Unable to deal with the demands placed on her in adolescence, the person regresses and, displacing the oral drive for nutrition, uses food as a transitional object.

Sexual fetishism presumes that sexual orgasm is achieved from an object that becomes the sole focus of the sexual aim. Gamman and Makinen argue that, like sexual fetishism, bulimia allows the experience of direct, unmediated and unsublimated sexual pleasure by eating/purging. Gratification is oral in the case of the food fetishist and genital in the case of the sexual fetishist. Food is used by bulimics to re-direct sexual energy. Unlike sublimation, where the urge is denied and moved onto the metaphorical plane, in bingeing the pleasure is experienced in the plane of the real. Bulimic consumption is fetishistic because bulimics focus precisely on those soft, sloppy foods that recall regression to infantile orality.

The authors suggest the need to enquire into the cultural factors that lead men to be sexual fetishists and women food fetishists. As part of this endeavour they conducted a survey that sought to determine the extent to which women engage in bingeing behaviours. The women in their study saw food as a vehicle for them to pleasure themselves, being alluring and forbidden. Chocolate topped the list of guilty pleasures.

3

Mastery and Self-Control

Introduction

Since neo-liberalism finally came into its own towards the end of the 1970s, Western citizen-consumers have been constantly reminded that the world is their oyster. 'You've Got It!' was the slogan that united the calls of politicians, property developers, bankers and company directors, who between them inflated the biggest credit bubble in history, with many of them managing to walk off with the proceeds just before it burst.¹ Rather than questioning and reforming the basis of this ruinous enterprise, the response has been generally to accelerate state withdrawal from key sectors of public life and to intensify the implementation of privatization, as national economies struggle to balance the books. The prevailing rhetoric of those heady years, about the centrality of consumer mastery and choice, rings hollowly for millions of consumers today.

Recognition of consumer sovereignty is the central mission of marketing. Marketers construct the consumer as an 'operant' resource,² who is placed centre stage in the economic scene as co-producer, even co-creator, of value. Communities gather around consumer brands (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001), forming relationships predicated on the same pattern as those formed with humans (Fournier, 1998). Marketing aims to provide the consumer experience of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981) – a deep level of involvement and control that extends to total immersion in activities involving prosthetic objects, such that the experience of time slows. When driving a car, flow is the feeling of oneness with the machine, which performs as if it were an extension of the body; when surfing on the Internet, it is the seamless sequence of responses facilitated by machine interactivity, being intrinsically enjoyable, self-reinforcing and accompanied by loss of self-consciousness.³ Whilst marketers seek to link the consumer experience to feelings of empowerment and control, the realities of driving are traffic jams, road rage and the rising costs of motoring, not to mention the occasional accident. Surfers,

too, can be overwhelmed, pestered for passwords they cannot remember, irritated by the daily chore of removing spam from email, or coping with the consequences of spyware, cookies, remote diallers and viruses. The fruits gained by maintaining the hit of flow provided by experiential consumption comes at the price of the additional labour required to pay for it, by working at home without cutting back on work in the office (Nie and Erbing 2000). More seriously, those who bought into the consumer dream to sustain their hit of flow in the 'good times' now find themselves perched on a shifting precipice of debt.

This chapter discusses the drive to mastery in relation to human insufficiency. Humans are born prematurely compared with other social animals, relying for their survival on care from others and on transitional objects. Adam Smith argues human insufficiency is the basis of the unique division of labour that enable human superiority over other animals. Freud argued that the aggressive drive to mastery must be constrained in the interests of civilization. This chapter begins by discussing ontogenetic and phylogenetic explanations of development of control prior to venturing further to discuss the paradoxical nature of human mastery.

Ontogeny

In his early work Freud considered the desire for mastery to be the most powerful instinct. The little monster that glares out at us from inside the pram can understandably, in the majority of cases, come to the conclusion that she is an omnipotent ruler, around whom the rest of the world revolves. Her ego is totally devoted to the pursuit of pleasure and to the avoidance of pain; she loves everything that provides the former and hates any intrusion of the latter with a vengeance. A central question for psychoanalysis was thus how this sense of mastery comes to be tempered – how is the little monster transformed, in a few short years, to the sweet little thing who happily does the other's bidding?

One of Freud's greatest contributions was through his argument that human being is in process and is not a steady state. Most will be familiar with his idea that the infant must negotiate the hurdles presented by the oral, anal and genital stages of development. They will be acquainted with the concepts he devised, particularly that of the 'ego', although use of the English 'I' is preferable in order to retain its subjective element. His use of the term 'narcissism' to describe the initial formation of this ego is understandable, given his belief in the total self-absorption of the infant at life's beginning. How is the drive for mastery that is located in the wilful and omnipotent ego to be reined in? In his early work, Freud conjectured the existence of agencies related to the ego that spring into existence by means of the process of identification and act to connect us to others and to modify and control our behaviour.

Mastery, love and hatred

Identification is central to Freud's idea of mastery. In one of his later works he argues that the ego amounts to little more than the residues of previous identifications. To begin with, the infant is relatively indifferent to the external world due to its auto-eroticism. It relies on objects from that world if it is to survive, however, which causes it pleasure coupled with a certain amount of displeasure (Freud, [1920] 1991: 133). Insofar as what it receives from the mother is pleasurable (milk and warmth), this is incorporated or introjected into the self; whereas what causes displeasure is expelled or projected, being vomited or shat out from the self.

Freud calls this new formation of the ego the pleasure ego to denote that this now consists of the introjection of all that is good within the self and the projection of all that is bad outside of the self. This pleasure ego, so far as its consciousness of self is concerned, consists of everything that provides the infant with pleasure, including apparently extraneous objects such as the breast of the mother and the feel of the comfort blanket or teddy bear. These are 'loved', to the extent that they provide satisfaction and are thus perceived to form a part of the self. In this view, 'an instinct "loves" objects towards which it strives for satisfaction' (Freud, [1920] 1991: 136). He recognizes, however, that linguistically it makes more sense to say, with respect to objects which further self-preservation, that we *love* them; we emphasize the fact that we *need* them. Love is originally narcissistic but then moves on to encompass those objects that have been incorporated into the extended ego. Love also becomes attached to the later and complex development of the sexual instinct:

At the first of these aims we recognize the phase of incorporating or devouring – a type of love which is consistent with abolishing the object's separate existence and which therefore might be described as ambivalent. At the higher stage of the pre-genital sadistic-anal organisation, the striving for the object appears in the form of an urge for mastery, to which injury or annihilation of the object is a matter for indifference. Love in this form and at this preliminary stage is hardly distinguishable from hate in its attitude to the object.⁴

The notion of 'love' becomes fixed to sexual objects in the narrower sense and to those objects which satisfy the needs of sublimated sexual instincts. Thus, I may 'love' chewing gum or smoking (orality); counting my money (anality) or driving my big red car (sublimated phallic object). The external object that has not been mastered and subjugated is regarded with hatred:

The ego hates, abhors, and pursues with intent to destroy, all objects that are a source of unpleasurable feeling for it.⁵

Freud surmised hate to be older than love as it derives from the narcissistic ego's repudiation of the external world, along with its chaos of stimuli. The anal stage, in particular, is productive of the urge for mastery and control. Freud argues that it is only at the genital stage of development when love turns into the opposite of hatred. In Freud's explanation, love is ambivalent in that it is so often mixed up with impulses of hatred against the same object. This hatred is partly derived from the preliminary stages of infantile loving which continue to exert influence. If a love relation with an object is broken off, then hatred can arise in its place.

Identification

With the later development of the sexual instincts, the other can be mastered in one of two ways: by seeking to *have* it by means of sexual desire or to *be* the object through identification. Somewhat confusingly, Freud often used the terms 'ideal-ego' and 'ego-ideal' interchangeably. By identifying with an ideal-ego, the infant introjects the object that it would like to be. The ego-ideal is the perspective gained when one looks at the ego from the position of the ideal-ego. Such identifications provide the mechanism by which the infant is pulled out of its self-absorptive narcissism to attend to the cultural demands of reality. The child thus incorporates or introjects the values and desires of its parents.

Like all identifications, this is accompanied by ambivalence and symbolic violence; the latter because the other is consumed and incorporated, or eaten into, the self (Fuss 1995). On the other hand, it is by means of the ideal-ego that the infant sets a standard by which she can elevate herself beyond the base desires of the ego. Once the ideal-ego has been established, this assumes the form of a perfection to which the child must strive to attend by investing her energy. This also lays the foundations for the construction of that watchful presence known as the superego, or conscience. The superego takes some of the aggression that had been hitherto directed outwards toward the environment and directs this inward towards the ego. Every time we do something stupid and exclaim 'stupid!' it is the superego who is speaking, representative of the 'Big Other' (society), which is directing aggression towards the self. In his later writing Freud thought that aggression turns fully back onto the self in the form of the death drive.

While all infants are at first immersed in the delights and comforts afforded by the pleasure principle, the state of primary narcissism is unsustainable for their long-run survival. The pleasure principle forms no basis for success in life, being based on the assumption that, although passive, we can control others to do our bidding. Certainly this seems to work where some parents are concerned, but in the presence of others who do not care, it is untenable. Gradually the infant must attune herself to the demands of reality by actively scanning the world, by attending to reality and by taking action to address her own needs. While the pleasure-ego can do little more

than wish, the reality principle strives for what is useful, safeguarding the pleasure principle by seeking the line of greatest advantage. The infant thus learns how to postpone pleasure by deferring it:

A momentary pleasure, uncertain in its results, is given up in order to gain along the new path an assured pleasure at a later time.⁶

Freud notes how a great deal of the efforts of education and religion are devoted to encouraging the achievement of self-control by adjusting to the demands of reality. In this way the infant sets out on that long journey that will lead her to identify with the demands for civilized conduct.

Transitional objects

After its own self, the most important object to the child is the primary caregiver, usually the mother. The first separation involves being weaned, and the question arises as to what will replace the mother's breast. Winnicott (1957) developed the concept of the transitional object, including the thumb, blankets, stuffed toys and teddy bears, which help fill the gap that arises from this loss. Transitional objects often retain their ability into adulthood to re-produce the pleasurable feelings of security, comfort and plenitude experienced at the breast.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,⁷ Freud describes how, when visiting with his daughter, he observed the following game being played by his grandson, then aged around 18 months. While his mother was absent, the child would occasionally throw things into the corners under his cot while saying 'Oooooo'. Following discussion with the mother, he came to understand that this meant *fort* ('gone'). One day he saw the child throwing a cotton reel into the cot, accompanied by the 'Oooooo' sound in a hostile tone, and then retrieving it, saying something approximating *da* – meaning 'back!' – noting that the second instance was intoned with much more delight. Freud thought that he had witnessed the child's cultural achievement in mastering his instinct to hold on to the mother by letting her go without protesting. The little game enabled him to compensate for his mother's absence symbolically, through language (*fort*, *da*), acting this out by staging the disappearance and appearance of the cotton reel. In this symbolic game the act that signified departure, 'Oooooo', was staged as the necessary preliminary to a joyful return, 'da'. The act of departure was staged much more frequently. Freud understood this to be related to the child's need to master the traumatic event of the mother's departure. Throwing away the cotton reel might have satisfied his impulse to take revenge on his mother for leaving him.

A year later, when he could talk more clearly, his grandson would throw away unliked toys and tell them to 'Go to the fwont!' The boy's father was, at that time, fighting on the front line in the First World War, which, Freud surmised, was presumably where his son wished to keep him! The child

made it clear that he did not wish to be disturbed in his sole possession of his mother. Freud drew the insight from this encounter, of the impulse for a person to work over in his mind a powerful or even overpowering experience, by seeking to make himself a master of it. He came to the conclusion that such mastery is a more primary process than the pleasure principle, which could not react adequately to such an overwhelming stimulus.

Material objects play a key role in the run-up to the phallic stage of development in socializing children into gender roles. This process often begins from the moment at which the child is born; for example, where boys are dressed in blue and girls in pink; where boys are given toy guns and soccer balls and girls are given dolls and doll's houses. Traditionally society has socialized women to associate power with roles that accentuate seductiveness and nurture, while men are socialized to associate it with strength, bravery, prowess and endurance. It is not sufficient that a boy *has* a ball, a bicycle or skateboard. As every child knows, what really matters is one's prowess in *using* the object. Mastery over the use of such objects requires an enormous investment of psychic energy, which, if it pays off, results in dividends being paid back to its investor. The exercise enhances hand-to-eye coordination, sharpens attentiveness and response and develops muscles. The behaviour is doubly rewarding if in turn the child gains the respect and adulation of his peers. Those who are particularly proficient will be the object of the investment of focused attention (psychic energy) by others, and so their power will be enhanced. This is introjected into the self as an enhancement of self-esteem.

Faeces play a role in autonomy and mastery. Infants love to play with their faeces, expressing wonder that they have provided such a magical gift. In a very real sense they constitute our most primitive product. Through the period of toilet training children are taught self-control in the act of retaining their faeces until they can reach a toilet – often a trial of wills between infants and parents, with faeces acting as a marker of defiance. It is relatively common but nonetheless shocking for burglary victims to find that the burglar has doubly violated their home. During the conflict between the Provisional IRA and the British government in the 1980s, the 'Provos' insisted that those who had been convicted of terrorist crimes and sentenced to the 'H' blocks should be accorded the rights and privileges of political prisoners; Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher refused to budge. During the course of what became known as the 'dirty protest', prisoners stripped themselves of their prison garments, regarded by them as symbols of their oppression, and took to dressing in blankets. They smashed up their cells, smearing their excrement on the walls. When, after some time, it became clear that Thatcher would not relent, the protest moved to a deadlier phase. Bobby Sands was the first of a total of eighteen Provisional and INLA members to die in the hunger strike that followed. At the time of writing this piece, the real IRA are currently engaged in a similar 'dirty' protest.

By the time the child has reached five or six years of age, narcissistic mastery has been more or less fully reined in. The child exists in a paradoxical state. Compared with other social animals, she is born prematurely, lacking the ability to fend for herself. Yet during the narcissistic phase, she believes herself to be at the centre of a universe around which other objects revolve. The trauma of the mother's absence is mastered through language and material objects that act as prosthetics. The ego that emerges from the other side of the Oedipus complex is definitively not master of her own house. The primitive mastery exhibited in primary narcissism is now tempered by her accession before the symbolic law, where she is subject to language and to moral law forbidding murder and incest. Channels have already been cut for the funnelling of desire through existing routes expressed in language and the dominant modes of cultural expression that also play a role in shaping consciousness.⁸ Freud noted that in a few short years the psychic development of the individual must repeat the course taken by the entire human race.⁹ How did this come to be?

Phylogeny

Inspired by Darwin – especially *The Descent of Man* (1871) – Freud considered the earliest humans as being similar to the higher apes. They lived together in small groups dominated by a powerful male (whom Lacan sarcastically refers to as 'Big Orang'), who reserved the females strictly for his exclusive enjoyment.¹⁰ When Freud consulted the anthropological evidence regarding the composition of early human societies, he found that they differed in important respects from Darwin's account; instead, the most primitive form of human organization comprised bands of males with equal rights, who were collectively subject to the restrictions of a totemic system, including inheritance through the mother. There is an obvious qualitative difference between these two forms of organization that requires explanation. How did Darwin's pre-human horde dominated by 'Big Orang' give way to distinctively human organization comprising equality of rights within a totemic system? Something momentous must have happened to transform the first form of organization to the second:

One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do and succeed in doing what would have been impossible for them individually. (Some cultural advance, perhaps command over some new weapon, had given them a sense of superior strength). Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers; and in the act of devouring him they accomplished

their identification with him, and each one acquired a proportion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps man's earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things – of social organisation, of moral restrictions and of religion.¹¹

Following their anthropophagic murder, the brothers felt contradictory emotions, which, Freud argued, could be seen in his day in the ambivalent father complexes of modern children and of neurotics. On the one hand, they hated 'Big Orang', who constituted the obstacle to the fulfilment of their craving for power and sexual desire, whilst on the other, they loved and admired him. Once they had rid themselves of 'Big Orang' and satisfied their hatred, their affection for him – which had been pushed under whilst he had been alive – reasserted itself in the form of remorse. A sense of guilt made its appearance, which coincided with the remorse felt by the whole group. The dead father became stronger than the living one had ever been. What had been prohibited by his actual presence was subsequently prohibited by the brothers themselves. They revoked their deed by forbidding the killing of a totem animal, which was taken as the substitute for their father. They also renounced their sexual claim to the father's women. Out of this filial sense of guilt arose the two fundamental taboos of totemism, which correspond to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex. Whoever contravened these two taboos became guilty of the only two crimes with which primitive society concerned itself.¹²

Freud acknowledges that the scenes recounted in the story probably recurred on many occasions; sometimes one of the victors would seek to take the father's place, and the battles began afresh; but after many such instances, all renounced their father's heritage by forming a community with equal rights and united by the totem prohibitions that preserved and expiated the memory of the murder.¹³ The struggle marked the dividing line between the human and the animal; beforehand there was a group of hominids ruled over by fear; afterwards there is a fully functioning human society comprising language, law and the basis of religion. Whilst sexuality is of importance, power and identification are of equal or even greater importance in the story. None of the brothers can be symbolically recognized as a person by the others until they have participated in the ritual meal. Nor can any of them take the same role as 'Big Orang'. Lacan takes up this aspect of the story in relation to his discussion of *jouissance*; the brothers, by accepting symbolic prohibitions against murder and incest, forego the complete sexual enjoyment experienced by their father. This symbolic castration is the basis of what he calls phallic *jouissance*.

Freud was a convinced Lamarckian, believing that, with countless repetitions over millennia, the events narrated in *Totem and Taboo* were passed by organic inheritance from generation to generation, with the memories being

literally impressed on the human brain. From this, the ontogenetic development of the prohibition against incest and the acquisition of remorse, the guilt and moral sense that appear in the infant today consist of a 'phylogenetic precipitate' of the primal father complex of early man'.¹⁴ Norbert Elias does not directly question Freud's Lamarckianism, focusing instead on the latter's rather simplistic equation of society to a group of individuals or a crowd (Elias, 1994; Marc Joly, in Mennell, 2011). First, in Elias's view, Freud made too much of the dichotomy that he established between the individual and society, and consequently, he did not pay sufficient heed to the relational aspect of identity or how the individual 'I' identity is always in a state of balance with the collective 'we' identity. This blindness is difficult to understand given the amazing perspicacity revealed in Freud's earliest work on identification. Secondly, Elias argues that Freud did not quite grasp the dynamic relation existing between social structure (sociogenesis) and the organization of the psyche (psychogenesis) and how changes in social structure can bring about changes in the psyche. In support of this, he argues that there is much evidence to support the contention that the social habitus plays a key role in the individual personality structure; for example, the pattern of psychological repression of people who live in a long-lasting autocratic regime differs markedly from that of people living under a long-lasting parliamentary regime. Finally, Elias cannot understand why Freud, given his acceptance of Darwin, did not simply apply evolutionary theory to the question of human origins instead of going to the trouble of devising his own myth (Mennell, 2011), arguing that there is no good reason to reject the obvious idea that human societies evolve from animal societies as part of a continuous process.

Civilization and self-control

Elias's (1994) monumental work is devoted to identifying the processes leading up to the development of Western civilization. Freud's ideas make an appearance in Elias's argument that the organization of the psyche can be properly understood only in relation to the pattern of regulation of society; in other words, psychogenesis must always be understood in relation to sociogenesis. The person living in tenth-century Europe lived in constant fear of imminent danger from human and natural enemies. Aggressiveness was openly celebrated, and war was the normal state of affairs for most of the population who formed part of an armed band. Killing and torture of enemies or strangers were socially permitted acts of enjoyment and entertainment. Prisoners were considered a drain on resources and were either killed or freed mutilated so as to constitute no further threat to their erstwhile captors. Women were generally regarded as the property of the warrior class, being regarded as useful for procreation and enjoyment, if little else. There was also much gaiety and joy during this period, which was displayed with an intensity, openness and lack of constraint that would be

considered shocking by today's 'civilized' standards, including the open display of hideous malformations and diseases and of urinating, farting, defecating and sexual behaviour, all performed with no sense of shame in talking of them.

Elias argues that from the eleventh century onwards, new forms of consolidation emerged as some warrior bands gained precedence over others by means of an admixture of warfare and alliances. The residences or 'courts' of these new rulers became a focus for the concentration of an admixture of social groups: the warrior nobility, powerful bourgeois administrators and entertainers, each group being forced to live cheek by jowl with others whom they detested. Elias explains the significance of the development of court societies:

Here, for the first time in secular society, a large number of people, including men, lived together in constant close contact in a hierarchical structure, under the eyes of the central person, the territorial lord. This fact alone enforced a certain restraint on all dependants. An abundance of unwarlike administrative and clerical work had to be done. All this created a somewhat more peaceful atmosphere. As happens whenever men renounce physical violence, the social importance of women increased. (Elias, 1994: 326)

The forced interdependence and proximity of people of different ranks in the court society demanded strict control of impulses, especially towards those of higher rank and most of all towards the Lady. A very important development was the reduction in power of the warrior nobility and their transformation to courtiers subservient to the monopoly of violence of the monarch and dependent on his largesse for their survival. The state of mutual dependency within the court society had a markedly beneficial effect for the development of civilized behaviour. Whereas a warrior would have thought nothing of doing a social inferior to death, in the court society warriors had to think twice for fear of upsetting the monarch. It became distinctly advantageous to refrain from violence and, in public at least, show solicitude towards others. The difference between this outward show and inner disposition of hatred led to the cultivation of a private internal space where one could strategize, contemplate and plot. Elias argues that such strategic behaviour was aided by the popularizing of literature at this time. However, although there was a capacity within the psyche to reflect on one's actions, Elias argues this had not yet developed into the equivalent of the modern superego, or conscience. This emerged slowly as the psychological view of the self, deepened by the requirement to rationalize one's actions. The transition from warrior knight to court nobility was also linked to a heightened capacity to feel shame at one's own aberrant conduct and embarrassment towards that of others. Elias detects a growing differentiation between id,

ego and superego in the rationalization and the intensification of shame, whereby the role played by the ego in regulating self-control is advanced considerably. The same is true of embarrassment, which is defined as: 'displeasure or anxiety, which arises when another person threatens to breach, or breaches, society's prohibitions represented by one's super-ego'.¹⁵

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, social control by brutal force gradually gave way to the exercise of internal self-monitoring and behavioural control. This was not taught through the arbitrary exercise of brutal force; rather through instilling a system of 'manners', by politeness. Elias recounts how the bishop of Verona sought to improve the manners of a certain Duke Richard, who was generally thought to be well mannered but who had the irritating habit of loudly smacking his lips whilst eating. Rather than openly insulting or chastising the duke, the bishop dispatched an emissary close to royalty and well known for his exquisite manners. During conversation the emissary gently pointed out the duke's bad habit as a 'favour'. Such 'gentle' action by a social superior had an effect that was much more compelling than any use of social sanction or mockery.¹⁶

During the course of the eighteenth century, natural functions now considered unmannerly, such as urinating, defecating and sex, were removed from the view of others. Those of high rank first enforced strict control of bodily impulses and emotions on their social inferiors, which trickled down through the various levels and layers of society. Eventually the task of training young children to conform to these social expectations became the primary function of the family. Elias documents the growth in such controls through the number of manuals that became available for the regulation of 'civilized behaviour'. For example, during the fifteenth century, readers were warned that it was improper to blow one's nose into the tablecloth, whilst by the sixteenth century the nobility were urged to use a handkerchief and by the mid-twentieth century the use of a handkerchief was taken for granted.

Elias calls attention to the civilizing role played by the growing interdependency between otherwise antagonistic social groups and their common deferral to the monopoly of violence established in the name of the monarch. With overt violence being disallowed, competition between groups flowed through another channel, consisting ironically of an escalating refinement of manners. Demand for self-control increased as courts grew ever larger and chains of interdependency became more differentiated. With growing integration, the contrasts between noble and bourgeois classes diminished, leading to a heightened sensitivity to nuances of conduct and minute gestures. The erstwhile knights who were now courtiers preserved their contempt for those of a lower rank, particularly the bourgeois. Tensions between courtiers and the bourgeois were heightened as the former became progressively impoverished and the rising bourgeois richer and more powerful. Faced with competition from the bourgeois, the courtiers could not

resort to overt violence as in the past. Instead, their fears were manifested in a general revulsion, with disgust at anything that 'smelt bourgeois' being associated with vulgarity. Courtiers competed instead by means of manners, modifying their speech, gestures and social amusements to maintain a distinctive distance from the odious pressure from below. However, as courtiers actively sought to distance themselves from the 'vulgar' bourgeois, so these new practices became the target for imitation.

Stephen Mennell (1991) discusses class competition in relation to food. In the earlier period, when food was scarce, the rich distinguished themselves from their inferiors by the variety and sheer quantity of the food that they ate. However, by the mid-eighteenth century, extreme gluttony among the wealthy became the exception. As more food became generally available, the elite sought to distinguish their appetite from their social inferiors by shifting from a focus on the quantity of food to quality and refinement. This enabled the elite to maintain their social distance but also gave rise to a powerful desire to copy this behaviour by the lower class. By the mid-eighteenth century, large segments of the bourgeoisie were imitating courtly models of refined and delicate eating, providing the impetus to develop even more refined dishes. Those who wrote on culinary matters tended to emphasize the need for a discriminating palate and scorned any notion of a quantitative display of food for the middle classes.

The idea of moderation was promulgated and increasingly associated with health. Although dieting for health and slimness became prominent only after the Second World War, in mass circulation publications such as women's magazines, the ideal of the slim body image appeared in elite social circles considerably earlier. Thus, Mennell attributes increasing self-control in the governance of appetite and in the cultivation of a slim body image to the emergence of and changing relations between social classes. The middle classes came progressively to define themselves and their bodies in relation to a model which moderated its eating and maintained a slim and healthy body, in distinction to the working classes, who focused on quantity in eating and regarded the body as being a means to an end and not an end in itself.

Elias argues that a major effect of the civilizing process was the loss of community and the emergence of the character he calls the 'self-steered' individual. While the following quotation is rather long, it is appropriate in summarizing the contrast between the pre-modern person and the modern individual:

One should think of the country roads of a simple warrior society with a barter economy, uneven, unmetalled, exposed to damage from wind and rain. With few exceptions, there is very little traffic; the main danger here which man represents for other men is an attack by soldiers or thieves. When people look around them, scanning the trees and hills

or the road itself, they do so primarily because they must be prepared for armed attack, and only secondarily because they have to avoid collision. Life on the main roads of this society demands a constant readiness to fight, and free play of the emotions in defence of one's life or possessions from physical attack. Traffic on the main roads of a big city in a complex society of our time demands a quite different moulding of the psychological apparatus. Here the danger of physical attack is minimal. Cars are rushing in all directions; pedestrians and cyclists are trying to thread their way through the *mêlée* of cars; policemen stand at the main crossroads to regulate the traffic with varying success. But this external control is founded on the assumption that every individual is himself regulating his behaviour with the utmost exactitude in accordance with the necessities of this network. The chief danger that people here represent for others results from someone in this bustle losing his self-control. A constant and highly differentiated regulation of one's own behaviour is needed for the individual to steer his way through the traffic. If the strain of such constant self-control becomes too much for an individual, this is enough to put himself and others in mortal danger.¹⁷

In pre-modern times, mastery was devoted to one's weapons, since the possibility of having to fight or run was omnipresent. In contrast, the modern traffic system relies on the mastery of the emotions by means of a constant self-policing and control. This illustrates not only the similarities and differences between Elias and Freud but also from some evolutionary psychologists (Cosmides and Tooby, 1989). The evolutionary argument is that the human brain is genetically fitted to life during the Pleistocene period, when one might conjecture that life was similar to the warrior society described by Elias. The explanations are thus similar to the extent that each argues that behaviour appropriate at one point in time became no longer acceptable. However, where the evolutionary explanation emphasizes an inflexible and unyielding personality, Elias stresses the relative plasticity of the human psyche and its ceaseless accommodation to changes in social structure.

Pasi Falk (1996) illustrates, with beautiful economy, the changing topology of the self in the transition from pre-modern to modern society.¹⁸ In pre-modern times, the members of the group are incorporated within the second skin of community, which is constructed by means of the ritual consumption of food. In a manner strongly reminiscent of Freud's description of the consumption of the totem meal by the band of brothers sharing the collective dish, each individual is simultaneously eaten into the community. In [Figure 3.1 \(a\)](#), the inverted C shape represents the person who is held within the group-self of the community. [Figure 3.1 \(b\)](#) illustrates the act of sharing, or communion, by means of which the second skin of the

community is created. The wide band in [Figure 3.1 \(c\)](#), illustrates how this second skin forms a barrier between the community outsiders.

[Figure 3.2](#) illustrates the relations between 'inside' and 'outside' in the eating community and in modern consumer society. [Figure 3.2 \(a\)](#) portrays the child (the inverted C shape) as being contained by and inside the mother. This condition persists into the early post-natal period.

[Figure 3.2 \(b\)](#) depicts the intermediate state when the child becomes partially aware of separateness, of the presence and absence of the mother. This is very similar in topology to [Figure 3.1 \(a\)](#), describing the identity of the person in the tribal eating community. Falk argues that while members of primitive eating communities were undoubtedly individuals to the extent that they developed a sense of autonomy, they did not achieve a sense of identity as is known today. [Figure 3.2 \(c\)](#) illustrates the development of a modern separate identity, where the child is depicted as being fully separate from the mother (and those other close networks of family and community). A hole appears as the centre of the separated individual. This void or gnawing emptiness at the heart of the self represents the lack of the mother

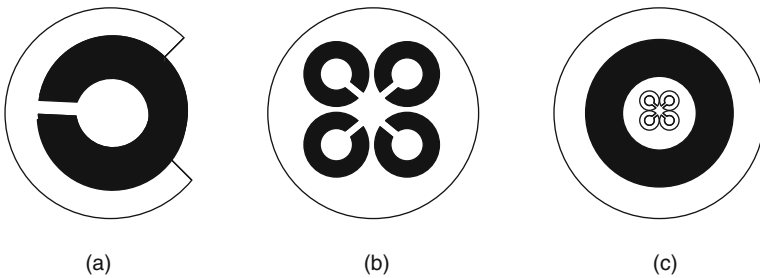


Figure 3.1 The primitive 'eating-community'

Source: Reproduced from Figure 2.3, page 22, of Falk (1994).

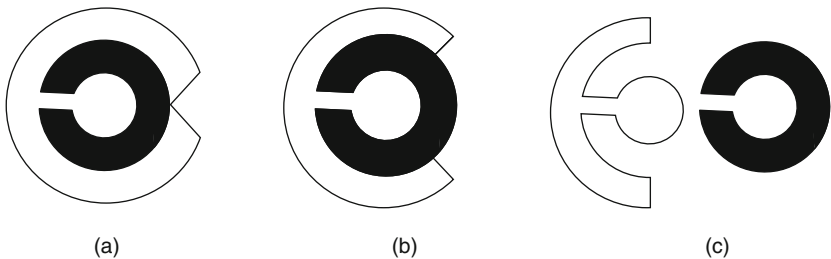


Figure 3.2 The emergence of the modern self¹⁹

Source: Reproduced from Figure 2.2, page 17, of Falk (1994). Original title 'The constitution of inside/outside and subject-object'.

and the withdrawal of the second skin of community. This results in a rootless and ultimately futile desire to be re-joined to that which has been lost. Separation provides freedom to be 'yourself', unconstrained by the ties of community, the price of this freedom being separation.

Foucault: discipline and civilization

Elias connects the emergence of the modern 'self-steered' individual to social processes occurring over centuries. In his view, the discipline of the psyche involved in the process of 'growing up' for the child reflects nothing less than this same civilizing process; changes in self-regulation and control that took centuries are nowadays effected in the child in a few short years. Foucault's perspective is also interesting to discuss here for two reasons. First, his explanation of the rise of the 'normal' individual affords particular influence to the increasing role of psychiatry. Secondly, his later work provides a bridge to understand the intensification represented by the shift from discipline and reform in the nineteenth century to consumer choice in the twentieth.

Foucault argues, in relation to civilization, that two complementary processes got underway during the age of Enlightenment (from the mid-seventeenth century onwards) constituted by the discipline blockade and a general process of disciplinary surveillance. The discipline blockade involved the sequestration and confinement in institutions of beggars, petty criminals, tramps, prostitutes, the old, the lame and lunatics; in short, all those deemed to stand for Unreason as an affront to the bourgeois ideal of rationality.²⁰ The person deemed to be mad was traditionally perceived to have lost mastery of his passions, regressing to 'brute' animality. However, a new understanding developed to argue that madness does not signify a lack of reason but rather incorrect reasoning and so is capable of reform through education. It was this concept of insanity which became central to the therapeutic ethos that emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century, leading in turn to the developing mastery of psychiatry over the territory of those deemed to be mad.²¹

The second process involved the infiltration of disciplinary surveillance within the families of the wealthy bourgeois class.²² This was promoted by medical authors' construction of a 'scientific fabulation' – a story blaming childhood masturbation as the root cause of a fantastic 'total illness' linked to a range of maladies.²³ For around a century parents were implored to distrust intermediaries such as nurses and other household staff, who might encourage this deadly vice. Parents were urged to be vigilant, keeping their children under their direct personal surveillance and, where necessary, sleeping in the same bed as the child, even to the extent of tying the child's hands to theirs or to bells. This was interesting to Foucault because

of the impact that the hunt for masturbation had on the construction of the modern nuclear family.

As a consequence of the attempt to root out masturbation, the older, looser family confederation became closed into the cellular family, comprising parents and their children – a shift that was momentous for two reasons. First, it extended the power of medics and of the state into the life of the family. Parents were asked to train their children so that they could be useful for the state as fitting subjects for public education. Disciplinary surveillance in the home was supplemented by the design of spaces in schools, planned to ensure optimal observation. Secondly, the development of the field of psychiatry took off from the study of children, becoming ‘the study of normal and abnormal behaviour by becoming a science of behavioural and structural infantilism’.²⁴

From 1860 onwards, psychiatrists took childhood as the model to study normative development and abnormality as its primary concern, with illness being viewed as secondary. This effectively extended medical power over de-pathologized objects. What were once considered eccentricities because they did not qualify to be labelled as illnesses were henceforth classified as abnormal syndromes. The identification of such syndromes came thick and fast and included agoraphobia, arson, claustrophobia, kleptomania, exhibitionism and masochism. By means of the focus on the medicalization of the abnormal, entire swathes of human life came under the judgement of psychiatric power.²⁵ As these syndromes or ‘conditions’ were not pathological illness or diseases, this led to the invention of a paradoxical form of medical treatment of those who are not ill but deviate from a norm. Thus, when campaigns against animal cruelty became widespread, Magnan, a notable psychiatrist, in a manner that presaged the more ludicrous suggestions currently pertaining to the DSMV, suggested the existence of ‘anti-vivisection syndrome’.²⁶

By enquiring into such stable and enduring forms of abnormality, psychiatrists came to believe that it was important to understand a wider body than that of the patient. This was the body of the parents, or ancestors, the ‘metasomatic’ body of heredity.²⁷ By dealing with ‘abnormal conditions’ rather than illnesses, psychiatrists dispensed with the need to come up with a cure. In place of this, they assumed the mantle of protecting and maintaining public order. Taking together the focus on the abnormal and the proclaimed aim to protect society, it was not a major step for psychiatry to identify all those within a social group who might constitute a danger to it. Foucault links this psychiatric-led neo-racism of the defence of society against its abnormal individuals to the longstanding general anti-Semitic racism, arguing that both thrived under the Nazis.²⁸ The general notion that psychiatry acts as a social defence remains today. Is the individual dangerous? Are they indictable? Are they curable?

Neo-liberalism and consumer choice

Foucault links the growing power of psychiatry to the time of transition in the organization of power from the court society to the modern nation state. He shares with Elias the belief in the central role played by self-discipline, focusing on the new grid of power established in the management of free citizen-consumers through the combination of disciplinary power and biopower, the monitoring of the productive potential of the population. He illustrates the realization of disciplinary power in the spatial arrangement of behavioural settings such as the home, schools, hospitals, factories and prisons. He also draws attention to the shift in focus from the act to the person – from the crime to the identity of the one who committed it. Where the former might be taken as an occasion for punishment and forgiveness, the latter assumes a coherent and enduring set of characteristics embodied in the idea of a pathological identity.

That is all very well, but one must account for the difference between the nineteenth century and the events of today. The insane asylum is long gone, and those once incarcerated now generally live in the 'community', administered to by the 'chemical cosh' and panoply of experts. The sober self-disciplined character of the nineteenth century yielded long ago to that of the consumer, endlessly flattered as being in the driving seat, 'free to choose' and exhorted to enjoy. Reith argues that this presents a paradox, citing the passage from *Civilization and Its Discontents* where Freud asserts that civilization requires the renunciation of instinct, as the cause of discontent.²⁹ The source of current discontent for consumers is that, on the one hand, they are told to enjoy, to assemble a unique identity from the meanings presented by offerings in the marketplace; on the other, they are warned that they must stifle their desire, constraining their enjoyment within socially sanctioned bounds. This is heightened today in the age of 'sustainability' and 'prosperity without growth'. The consumer walks a tightrope in seeking to ensure they are not wrong footed by desire. The fate for those who cannot maintain their balance is to be labelled a 'disordered' consumer, addicted to any or all of a proliferating number of activities and substances deemed dangerous from alcohol, heroin, gambling, caffeine, the Internet, to shopping and credit.

Reith argues the creation of the addict as an aberrant identity arose during the nineteenth century as part of the general classifications of the insane and the homosexual. The shift in focus from acts of insensibility or drunkenness to the enduring characteristics associated with the 'addictive' personality created a new space of identity for psychiatrists to work on. The addict was deemed to pose a threat to society, perceived to be lacking in the requisite willpower to manage the challenges presented by the era of individual choice and responsibility. Rather than enriching their lives through consumption, addicts were overwhelmed and even destroyed by immoderate desire; rather than *realizing* the self through consumption, the addict is

tied to it; where the consumer *chooses*, the addict cannot do anything *but* consume.³⁰

Reith argues that the difference between addiction in the nineteenth century and in the present day is, first, that it is no longer associated with the peculiar weakness of will believed to be characteristic of particular social groups such as women or the working classes. Instead, it has taken on the character of an individual pathology. Secondly, as defined by the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-IV), the diagnosis of addiction contains several highly subjective elements, including self-reports of feelings and emotions and the degree to which individuals feel able to exercise agency over their conduct.³¹ That this supposedly physical disease is ultimately rooted in subjective evaluations of a person's own emotional state ultimately allows for anyone to be declared an addict. Consequently, Reith argues that the field of addiction becomes potentially infinite, embracing an expanding variety of substances and behaviours 'from shopping and gambling to eating McDonalds and surfing the Internet. It seems as if every aspect of human behaviour can exist in a pathological form!'³² Her prose at this stage reaches rhetorical heights but is not matched by the facts. I could not detect any hint that shopping or eating in McDonalds will be classified as part of the DSM, although at the time of writing, Internet addiction was reserved as a matter for further research. Nevertheless, there is something in Reith's analysis that chimes with the explosion of self-diagnosed help groups and Internet forums on these matters in addition to pressure to have them classified. It summons, too, the lines of a popular ditty in circulation in these doom-laden times: 'Enjoy yourself, it's later than you think!' Nowadays, it seems, 'enjoyment' for many refers to that experienced in the last-chance saloon. Whereas Reith speaks of a dichotomy between the (masterful) consumer and the (disordered) addict, Stiegler – whose views are discussed below – argues that the consumer *is* an addict.

In his later writings, Foucault sought to explain the spread of neo-liberalism. He discussed the role played by otherwise disparate groups such as the German ordo-liberals and American neoliberals who shared a common distrust of state power coupled with a belief in market competition as the sole guarantor of freedom. Importantly and contrary to Adam Smith, they believed competition could not be assumed; rather the right conditions had to be created by manipulating the rules of the game. The ordo-liberal ideal *Gesellschaftspolitik*, originally developed in relation to small enterprise, was extended into the notion that one can envision that each individual citizen-consumer constitutes an enterprise in his own right, as *homo economicus*, possessing a certain amount of human capital on which his wages represent a return. This presumes that all are capable of acting rationally. Against the protest that many people are incapable of full rational judgement, Foucault draws attention to the re-definition of rationality by neoliberal economist Gary Becker as 'any conduct which is sensitive

to modification in environmental variables, which responds to this in a systematic way'.³³ Within this scheme, rational choice is exercised within an environment where the behavioural setting has been manipulated such that consumers 'respond systematically to modifications in variables in the environment'. To the extent that their choices are subject to manipulation by behavioural controls, the 'choices' made by the citizen-consumer are eminently governable using the batteries of subliminal and supraliminal cues discussed in [Chapter 1](#). The consumer is faced with different ways of behaving and must be capable of following his own interest, being free to make a choice. The role of the state or of an agency delegated to act on its behalf is to adjust the rules of the game so as to favour the kinds of choices it wants these free individuals to make. Foucault offers the example where a consumer has the choice of whether or not to steal from a store. The store owner knows this and, in determining how to respond, endeavours to keep such losses to a manageable level by manipulating the level of surveillance and intrusion.

Discussion of choice invites the question of what 'choice' signifies. When I ask my students what 'choice' means to them, they come up with significs such as 'freedom', 'variety', 'discretion' and 'control'. An interesting study conducted back in the 1980s suggests that these should not be taken as read. An advertiser promoting a credit card to small US farmers asked them what the words 'maximum choice' meant to them. They replied with the following statements:

'I do not have a lot of *choice*.'

'When it is dry, you do not have a lot of *choice*, you take a chance.'

'Going to spray behind the planter, that is almost your only *choice*.'³⁴

For this group of farmers the use of the signifier 'choice' signified the reverse of what my students came up with and what the advertisers intended. They used it only in the context of signifying a situation where they are forced to choose between alternatives. For them 'choice' represented the time when farmers 'do not have a whole lot of choice' or when something is 'their only choice'. Like the farmers, most consumers do not have much choice in many aspects of their lives, even when shopping for groceries. In the UK, it is quite likely that they will have to patronize one of the big four or five food retailers. The retailer will have paid careful attention to evaluate every aspect of the setting, seeking to ensure maximum footfall in relation to the probability of making a sale. Each company will have employed experts to craft every aspect of its brand's unique appeal. Such offerings frequently involve manipulation of consumer perceptions so as to make them think, 'What a deal!' Irrespective of the assumptions made by some neoliberal economists, the 'predictable irrationality' exhibited by consumers constitutes a soft target for marketers that is evident in the tendency to be suckered by killer

words such as 'free', 'natural' and 'scientifically proven'; to typically choose the middle option from a choice of three; to arbitrarily select an anchor price that is then rigidly adhered to; to be fooled time and again by half-full packs, believing food '90 per cent fat free' is healthy.³⁵ Given that around 20 per cent of UK consumers are functionally illiterate and that, if anything, numeracy skills are even worse, marketers do not necessarily have to rely on the extremely small print on labels.³⁶ Levels of surveillance and intrusion into the private lives of consumers are unprecedented compared with the time when electronic point of sale systems were first developed in the 1980s. It is now possible to track not only the history of a person's online and retail purchases but his or her every movement. A recent study reported by the BBC found that a visitor to a single website could be monitored by 140 cookies and other trackers.³⁷

'I want a blue-eyed baby!'

Rachel Bowlby (1993) considers the extension of consumer choice into the area of human reproduction.³⁸ She explains that in this respect, the desire for a child in a woman is usually depicted in one of two ways: as being a natural wish, productive of the 'maternal instinct', or as being an active choice. The idea of a 'woman's right to choose' or to 'control one's body' obscures the question of whether ideas such as 'rights' or 'choice' are appropriate to the area of reproduction. Surrogacy, where the egg of one woman is implanted into another who bears the child, has resulted in the breakdown of the age-old identification between child and mother. Changes in the technology of pregnancy mean that it is possible, on the one hand, to make the decision to scan for 'abnormalities' so as to abort the fetus or, on the other hand, to select the fetus that has the requisite bundle of features desired by the parents.

Bowlby feels that the new technologies raise questions of unimaginable difficulty, especially for women, concerning the wish to have or not to have a child. She notes that, in relation to these changes, the triangular 'Oedipal' structure of the nuclear family – mother-father-child – might look very different. But this question has not been broached except in the narrow language of individual rights and natural desires, which, she notes, seem to fall short of the complexity that has to be addressed. She then wonders what the effect on the human psyche will be. At present, the debate centres on two positions. One argument is that the new technologies represent a further advance of the Frankenstein male ambition, to extend the zone of artificial control over nature even into the area of human reproduction. The other position sees new technologies as assisting women in exercising their choice to bear children. Here the woman is regarded as a reasonable creature who knows what she wants and is justified in seeking the means to attain this. In this interpretation, parents, doctors and scientists are seen to be working together in order to remedy a mutually agreed deficiency. Here

the desire to have a child is taken to be so fundamental and compelling as to be unquestioned.

Bowlby notes that in framing the problem, the distinctions made are straightforward: the 'right to choose' versus the rationalization of nature. For Freud, the meaning of the desire for pregnancy and paternity move between the sexes in ways that suggest that these are not natural. To Freud there is nothing automatically given in a woman's desire to have a child or, for that matter, in a man's desire to be a scientific hero. Notoriously, he came to see in the expression of this desire the shadow of that for a penis substitute. Bowlby does not dwell on this but goes on to argue that, just as the process of identifying oneself as a man or a woman is in no way straightforwardly a natural development according to the sex of the body, so identifications as prospective mother or father should be understood, not as the expression of a natural instinct, but as a part of the story that people tell themselves about who they are.

The questions raised within the context of human reproduction are influenced by the scientifically controlled and regulated process within which one must choose what to do if the product is defective. Parents must choose whether to continue with a pregnancy once the embryo has been diagnosed as being likely to suffer from some form of disease. As the techniques for identifying genetic traits become more sophisticated, it becomes more difficult to determine the boundary that separates what action to take.

Money, of course, enters into the equation. In some countries, all forms of commercial transaction involving human bodies are forbidden, but this is not the case everywhere; for instance, there are countries where the idea of 'rent-a-womb' or commercial dealings in surrogacy is legal. Bowlby notes that some discuss this in derogatory terms, arguing that the process of having a child is now made analogous to buying a car – just like a new car, if the child isn't perfect, then you take it back and get a new one! She argues that what is interesting here is that the association of consumerist qualities with the process, as opposed to the more neutral attribution of choice, is taken to be automatically damning. What is even more interesting is the lack of interest in enquiring into the motives that people might have for wishing to have children. The assumption is that the motives are either 'pure' – representing the 'genuine' parents-to-be, whose desire is either natural or rational; or 'impure', as represented by consumerist values. She counters by arguing that we should venture further in order to seek an explanation. Instead of rejecting the consumerist explanation out of hand then, perhaps one could look to the similarities and differences between the new kinds of reproductive choices and the choice of buying a car. She argues that this does not imply a trivialization of reproductive desire but rather that, by means of an exploration of the fantasy structures for each, one might isolate aspects of the wish for children different from those that appear either in the discourse of individual rights or natural desires.

Human mastery: over what?

In *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud argues that civilization developed in order to protect us from the aggression of other human beings. Referring to the Christian injunction to love one's neighbour, he argues that our neighbour may not merely be someone who can help but also,

someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity to work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. *Homo homini lupus*.³⁹

Civilization requires the renunciation of the sexual and aggressive instincts, whose open expression threaten the survival of communal life. Individuals are urged instead to re-direct these destructive energies by developing substitute pleasures through sublimating them by means of cultural expressions, such as art or religion. By quoting the ancient dictum, also repeated by Locke, that 'man is a wolf to man', Freud appears to suggest that at root it is human animality that must be conquered. Primatologist Frans de Waal notes that the proverb is itself wrong on two counts: first, by failing to do justice to canids, which are among the most gregarious and cooperative animals on the planet; secondly and 'even worse', by denying the inherently social nature of humanity (De Waal, 2006: 3). As noted by Elias, although accepting Darwin's theory in *Totem and Taboo* ([1913] 1938) and again in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1922), Freud did not follow this through in relation to his own theory. A casual reader of the *Descent of Man* could not fail to understand Darwin's argument, which clearly recognized that some species of social animals actively sympathize with the plight of others in difficulty, sometimes placing their lives in danger by coming to the aid of their human companions.

The foregoing might lead one to suggest that Freud engages in anthropodenial. He is more or less accused of this by Deleuze and Guattari (2004; Genosko, 1996: 12–13), who say he was naive when it came to animals – for instance, by failing to understand that wolves and rats are social animals. Freud's experience of animals was limited to pets, such as Wolfi, Anna's German shepherd, who regularly patrolled his office, and the succession of chows he encouraged to eat at table, much to Martha's chagrin. Otherwise the menagerie consisted of the phobic fantasies of his analysands. His lack of knowledge of real animals, it is argued, is apparent in his long description of the 'Wolf Man', where he failed to take into account that the 'Wolf Man' would have had many experiences of listening to real wolves and even meeting them. I must admit that whilst reading this case I was struck with the nagging doubt that came from my knowledge of several young children who sensibly feared and recoiled from large dogs. Having said that,

in *Thoughts of War and Death* (published in 1915), Freud sees clearly that primitive man was unique amongst animals, holding deeply contradictory attitudes to death:

The death of the other man he had no objection to; it meant the annihilation of a creature hated, and primitive man had no scruples against bringing it about. He was in truth, a very violent being, more cruel and more malign than other animals. He liked to kill and killed as a matter of course. That instinct which is said to restrain the other animals from killing and devouring their own species we need not attribute to him.⁴⁰

In the foregoing, Freud makes it clear that primitive man exhibited an *excess* of cruelty in being *more cruel and more malign than other animals*. In *Totem and Taboo*, he had noted that this all-too-human creature was also capable of suffering from guilt and remorse at his cruel actions and that human-kind alone is caused great pain and suffering from the death of those they love. Nowadays, given major advances in the understanding of different species, one would not so confidently assert that only humans can mourn, feel remorse, or even be more cruel than other animals.

In *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Freud explained that the growth in human civilization was partly due to human mastery and exploitation of external nature by means of the extermination of wild and dangerous animals and the breeding of domestic species through economic transformation. The crucial action of coupling these developments to those of law and the formation of property rights prevented rule by the strongest. Civilization thus consists of the symbolic set of laws that demarcate human society from nature. Taken together, '[t]his describes a move from animality, corporeality, physicality and arbitrariness towards a supraindividual regularity founded on rules, that is, on words.'⁴¹ Norbert Elias, who elsewhere criticizes Freud for not following Darwin more closely, does not shy away from doing so, arguing that as part of the civilizing process, 'the more animalic human activities are progressively thrust behind the scenes of man's communal social life and invested with feelings of shame' (Elias, 1994: 230).

Technology: poison or cure?

Freud's paradoxical relation of the human to the animal is further deepened in his discussion of technology:

These things that, by his science and technology, man has brought about on this earth, on which he first appeared as a feeble animal organism and on which each individual of his species must once more make its entry (oh inch of nature) as a helpless suckling – these things do not only sound like a fairy tale, they are an actual fulfilment of every – or of almost every – fairy tale wish. All these assets he may lay claim to as

his cultural acquisition. Long ago he acquired an ideal conception of omnipotence and omniscience which he embodied in his gods.... Today he has come very close to the attainment of this ideal, he has almost become a god himself.... Man has, as it were become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times.⁴²

Freud presents a vision of the human as an organism more fragile than other animals who must armour himself against this vulnerability by prosthetics and by banding together in groups. Freud's ambivalence regarding the human relation to the animal and to technology says as much about the complexity of these relations as it does about the limitations of his theory of instincts.

Given his mission to legitimize consumerism, it is unsurprising that Ernest Dichter (1960) argued that products are extensions of the self. To Dichter, a car is not just a functional device but an extension of the owner's personality, representing his or her values and balancing its owner's feelings and well-being.⁴³ Once introjected, any damage to the beloved object such as a scratch or a dent is felt as a wound to the self. The prosthetic is not simply an extension, however; in his view the clothes make the man, with humanity being nothing without them:

We cling to them (possessions) as tangible expressions of our advantage, for they help give us a feeling that our basis for existence is more than the narrow scaffold of our naked self.⁴⁴

This recalls Freud's assertion that without the material, humanity is no more than a 'feeble animal organism' or 'helpless suckling'. Psychoanalytically inspired researchers at the 'Tavi' in London sought to understand the motivations underlying consumer motivations for the choice of products as diverse as ice cream and toilet paper.⁴⁵ They argued that there is a rational element in product choice, also recognizing the importance of ensuring a fit between the brand image and personality of the customer. For instance, their finding that those who regularly drank Guinness did so for 'reparative' reasons (in order to fortify themselves for work) fitted well with the choice of an ad showing a man carrying a girder.⁴⁶ This benign view of product technology was shared by American marketing academics, who later explored the congruence between product and self-image, advancing Dichter's argument of the product as an extension of the self (Sirgy, 1982; Belk, 1988). They also floated the idea that consumers actively engaged in relationships with brands that are functionally equivalent to those used to engage with other humans.⁴⁷

Others are ambivalent about the consumer relation to technology. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg Halton (1981) drew inspiration from Freud

to argue that the human relation to products can be either productive or destructive. The ancient Greek concept for symbol is '*sym-ballein*', signifying 'to throw together' or 'to join'. Many will be familiar with the idea of the 'broken token': two friends or lovers split the token in half, and each keeps one-half of the token when they are parted as a symbol of their love and unity. Where the symbol is an object that draws people together, '*dia-ballein*' means 'to throw apart' or 'to separate', which is the root for what separates the person into conflicting forces and against the cosmos.⁴⁸ Consumption in and for itself is 'terminal materialism', whereas 'instrumental materialism' designates possession of things serving goals independent of greed, having a specified limited scope. What really matters to the consumer is the reason for possessing something, not the mere fact of possession.⁴⁹

Used productively and symbolically, physical objects play a role in cultivating the self in pursuit of further goals. The purchase of a musical instrument, for instance, does not guarantee immediate access to enjoyment, which can be experienced only through hard practice. Ultimately the experience is rewarding because, by investing psychic energy into this goal, one gains a broader conception of oneself and is also linked to others. In contrast, terminal materialism constitutes a form of fever, characteristic of modern industrial modes of thought. These are based on a foundation of the diabolic, which is related to raising individual differentiation and utility to the level of an ultimate goal. When utility, or the expected pleasure yielded by an object, is taken as the ultimate value, this opens the door to fragmentation. The philosophy of utility is based on discrete individual sensations of pleasure, not on the process of continuous cultivation of the purposes that make up a person's life, which integrates these with others in an enduring pattern of meaning:

Thus the earth, the forests, the dwellings and the psychic energy. The energy of people can all be mined for the specific utility of the transaction, regardless of what wider consequences or outcomes these acts might cause.⁵⁰

There are limits to the physical energy necessary to extract, transform, maintain and dispose of the seemingly endless array of products consumed by individuals. The question is how to break the human addiction to material energy without losing the ability to shape our dreams. Humans need to learn how to find meaning in signs that enrich life, offering opportunities and possibilities for growth in ways that do not require great inputs of material energy. In practice, they imagine that this will be as difficult as getting a heroin addict to quit the drug that has chosen him.

Terminal materialism can be linked to the dead end of collecting, when acquisition becomes the end and not the means. What is the key to understanding the fever that provokes it? Baudrillard (1995) likens accumulation

for its own sake to the attempt to stave off death. In another work, he likens the protagonist in John Fowles's *The Collector* to a pervert who seeks to evade the law by constructing his own peculiarly rigid code of rules. The collector, he suggests, is a person who prefers a dead object to the need to love another human being.⁵¹ Belk (1995) spoke to real collectors in seeking to understand the motivations for collecting behaviour. The most general benefit was provided by the sense of mastery, competence and success gained (1995: 87). Belk says we should not be surprised as in a materialist society success in life tends to be measured in terms of the quantity and quality of possessions. By competing for products of rare value, the collector demonstrates superior knowledge, skill and tenacity. He discusses the case of Robert, a fifty-year-old university professor from New Zealand. Robert had a collection of several hundred bottles of New Zealand and Australian wines but has now consumed many of these:

He says he feels a sense of personal diminishment when the collection becomes smaller and he would like to build it back to the point where he has enough to consume a bottle a day for the rest of his life (he expects to live to 80).⁵²

Robert has visited wineries on three continents and has a remarkable memory for details of particular wines and his experiences of drinking them. Although sad about the diminishment of his collection, he enjoys telling stories about the wines he bought cheap which later appreciated in value. Robert has had several other collections, additionally. He shares an interest with his father in ornamental horticulture and is proud of his exotic plants. He also once had a collection of seven racehorses which he bred and raced successfully with friends. The final collection, which Belk notes was his most secretive, consisted of his extramarital affairs. Robert has had almost two dozen affairs in recent years, mostly with Asian women. Belk notes that while this may seem to be 'dehumanizing objectification', Robert speaks lovingly of his wine, his plants, his horses and 'his' women.

One form of terminal materialism that seems to be becoming more prevalent today involves consumers thought to be lacking in self-esteem who are drawn to engage in purchasing goods that provide the transient pleasure of relieving anxiety. It is interesting that the person who engages in this behaviour seems to derive more pleasure from engagement in the purchase process than from possessing the goods themselves, which are usually relegated to some forgotten corner of the household (O'Guinn and Faber 1989). Researchers interpret the behaviour of some shoplifters in the same way, as being enjoyment of the thrill of the process linked to the dangerous possibility of getting caught, coupled with the pleasure of stealing (Katz 1989).

The focus on energy (e.g. Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg Halton, 1981) indicates the influence of Marx and Freud. Marx (1992) was not against

technology as such⁵³ but rather was critical of its role in capitalist organization; he argued, first, that the introduction of machinery plays a role in furthering the alienation of the worker from his product and, secondly, that the market, a human creation, is fetishized as a great god that stands over and above human beings, reducing relationships between people to those between things. Marcuse combines Marx with Freud to argue that technology alienates humanity from its essence. The sexual instinct is desublimated in consumer society, as evidenced by the contrast between the act of making love in a Chevrolet to making love in a meadow. If one is to believe American pulp fiction, a generation of upright citizens was conceived in the back of a Chevrolet – or if they weren't, they certainly believed that they ought to have been! So what exactly is Marcuse's point? His argument is that the sexual act in an automobile, which is an artificial creation, composed of a blend of faux leatherette; fake wood, plastics and metals with sharp angular projections, removes us from our most basic sensibility and thus embodies the desensitizing of what one could have experienced in the meadow, with the feel of the warm sun on one's skin, the sound of birdsong, the hum of insects and perhaps the lulling trickle of a stream. For Marcuse, the substitution of the car for the meadow has resulted in the de-eroticization of life, such that the senses are no longer charged with the sufficiency of energy necessary to preserve a healthy and critical ego. One can control the environment of the car; it will do whatever we ask it to. On the other hand, nature can frustrate us – the birds may dive on us and the insects may bite, but that is the reality of nature. In the car, the rough edges of the ego that had previously been crafted in interaction with nature are smoothed out in the comfort of the artificial environment. Short-term comfort is gained at the expense of the development of an enquiring mind. In the modern mechanized condition, cathexis (or investment of energy) is blocked, and this limits the scope and need for sublimation. While society purportedly operates under a regime of sexual freedom, this is in fact the age of a general repression of genuine sexuality. In the consumer society, false needs are superimposed upon the individual in his repression.

Marcuse does not dwell on the car's lethal potential, nor does he venture so far as McLuhan to argue that just as the medium shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action, so cars are the real populations of our cities.⁵⁴ In McLuhan's view, technology amputates as it extends. The process is as painful as the terms imply, and some people remain stranded like Narcissus, rooted in the past and captured by the vision of the old. One academic of my acquaintance remains entirely dependent on secretarial support, having never succumbed to the lure of the computer. This argument is extended by Donna Haraway (2000) and Jacques Derrida (2008) who discuss human nature as a chimerical hybrid between animal and machine.

Bernard Stiegler's work is voluminous, appearing to synthesize the entire caste of modern social theory in his accounting of the human relation to technology.⁵⁵ His assertion that techno-genesis precedes socio-genesis implies, fundamentally, that human being is nothing outside of its exteriority. Human ontological insufficiency is also a major theme for Lacan, while Stiegler appears to adapt the former's insight that the symbolic order of language and culture, indispensable to the constitution of the human subject, colonizes our being, channelling our desire.

For Stiegler the prosthetic is the non-living materiality that forms what Dichter (op. cit.) refers to as the 'scaffold' for human existence. Language and writing are forms of technical exteriorization that extend the self through memorization and cultural learning (Stiegler, 2010: 152). He borrows from Derrida in likening technology to the *pharmakon*, representing poison and cure. Technology and human culture are always out of kilter, with the former running ahead of the latter, which struggles to incorporate it. Exteriorized technology is at first poisonous but must be integrated into social life and customs in ways that enhance the formation of cultural ideals. Traditionally it was the state and religion that played the crucial role in integrating technical advances into social life. Together, through education, they produced the libidinal economy (a term borrowed from Bernays) to shape the formation of the ideal-ego and superego. However, since the triumph of neoliberal ideas in the late 1970s, this socialization has been delegated to the market, an event that he describes as 'extremely toxic and negative', since for the first time the role of integrating the *pharmakon* has been left to the economy.

Stiegler peppers his more popular works with illustrations, one of which features the plague of disaffected youth exemplified by the Japanese *hikikomori* and *otaku*, indifferent to their parents and possessed 'of a generalized apathy supercharged with menace – of which Gus Van Sant's *Elephant* are the symbols, or rather the dia-boles'.⁵⁶ He distinguishes between disaffection and disaffectation, arguing that the former arises from loss of psychic individuation (related to the formation of an ego-ideal) and the latter to the loss of social individuation. Disaffection springs from the combined effects of cognitive and affective media saturation, which induces a mindless stupidity or congestion similar to that of being stuck in fume-laden urban traffic. Disaffectation describes the loss of social individualization evident in the lack of attentiveness to others in social situations and, in particular, the inability to experience shame. Relating this to the argument advanced by Norbert Elias, one might conjecture that Stiegler links the inability to feel shame and embarrassment in these youths to a concomitant decline in the psychic power of the superego. He argues that the tendency in the United States to pathologize individual behaviours in relation to attention deficits is unreliable, since these pathologies are not private but social creations produced by political economy. Consequently, the American preoccupation

with identifying individual pathologies, such as narcissistic personality disorder and attention deficit disorder, is misguided because it neglects the fact that attention today is a form of merchandise.

In another example, Stiegler recounts the story of Patricia and Emmanuel Cartier and their children, who lived near the Saint Maxim hypermarket, where they spent occasional Saturday afternoons. The family were known as great consumers, with the parents reproached for allowing their children to watch too many video games and drink too much Coca-Cola. Stiegler contends that Patricia and Emmanuel did not decide to kill their children because they no longer loved them but because they sought to preserve this 'exquisite relation'. He elaborates, saying they loved them despite the constant barrage of messages from the hypermarket and other commercial channels that equate 'to love' with 'to buy', implying that one loves only to the extent that one buys, thus reducing the exquisite relation that is love to mere sentiment. The Cartiers were exemplars of the trend whereby the primary identifications of children, which should be through their parents, are nowadays diverted through the marketplace with the aim of adopting behaviour exclusive to consumption. Condemned to serve ten to fifteen years, the Cartiers were as much victims as they were perpetrators, believing that the normal family is the one that consumes. Their plight is best understood within the wider discourse of intoxicification provided by the adrenaline rush (flow!) administered by their constant purchases. They bought into the consumer dream, seeking to make their children happy, and when they were not, they continued to buy until their credit was gone. Stiegler argues that these play an important role in the system of consumption, by likening the media consumer to a heroin addict, so inured to its effects that consumption, which is the supplementary cause of his suffering, provides only a temporary relief.

Stiegler is to be admired for the breadth and depth of his vision and for integrating the ideas of so many others into this. His philosophical discussions of Heidegger and Derrida, among others, are complex and insightful, and there is a danger that the brief description here caricatures his complex position. His reflection on the reality of suffering is a refreshing change from more abstract analyses that can make it seem that discourse is the be-all and end-all. It is also noteworthy that despite the apparently apocalyptic view described above and contrary to the majority of French social theorists, he believes in transformation and change.

Reading Ballard's *Crash*

Having read J. G. Ballard's excellent short stories, I decided with a colleague that we would read *Crash* (Ballard, 2001) and then compare notes. My first reflections were that this short tale is endless, consisting of the repetition of travails on the motorway circuit around London in summer; there are flies and endless traffic jams strangely free from exhaust fumes going from

nowhere to nowhere else in a world full of non-places; modernist high-rises, the urban detritus that surrounds modern airports; endless bizarre flights of the imagination summoning the same hackneyed sometime male view of desire. This apparently futile circuitry is enhanced by endless repetition of the signifiers, 'stylized', 'contours', 'immense', 'binnacle', 'flaring', 'mixture of engine coolant and semen' and so on. Overall, this induces a soporific mood that removes the human or anything that might attach one to someone from the strangely erotic scene. I become hyperaware of the experience of driving, of traffic reports and of references to cars. The impression of 'autogeddon' is suggestive of the endless drifts of cars on the motorways and in other non-places, reminiscent of those elemental forces that drag and push tidal races and surges. Is *Crash* then, as Baudrillard suggests, the first great novel of simulation, the exemplar of a hyperreality that has abolished fiction and reality?

There is a TV programme on car-deaths on the A46 in Lincolnshire on Channel 4 – I had read to around page 110 of *Crash* at the time. Like all compelling television, I could not but be drawn as voyeur to watch the breaches of social convention and manners, of the camera's crude intrusions, poking into raw grief, bewilderment, blankness and the drained expressions of those still tied to death in horrible fascination. A few gruesome details stand out: the carefree youths who are all too often involved in these 'accidents', or the one witness who says, 'it must have been like with the tablecloth and the forks', referring to the fact that the car hit the two girls so hard that their shoes were left standing on the road while their bodies were projected yards away by the force of the impact. My cousin is a paramedic, and I recall at this point her anecdote that many crash victims are missing their bottom lip. The father sitting in the car his late son had owned is filmed (the cameraman must be in the car?!) saying he often comes to sit there to hold the steering wheel that had so often felt the imprint of his son's hands. The other brother, the unwitting witness at the scene of the death of his brother (the father's favourite), is drawn into this amoral spectacle to face his father and his own guilt, in that very car. I switch off at this point – the prodding has gone too far, and I must leave these people to suffer on their own although I cannot but reflect on this marriage of the human to the inhuman: of the son's/brother's inhabitation of this mass-produced and moulded space that has made it sacred for his father and how this awful book *Crash* has opened up this possibility for reflection.

4

Narcissism

A writer meets a friend and talks to him a long time about himself; he then says: 'I have talked so long about myself. Let us now talk about you. How did you like my latest book?'¹

Introduction

In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid relates the tragic tale of Narcissus, son of the river god Cephissus, and of Echo, the nymph, where Narcissus is doomed to an eternity of captation by his mirror image whilst Echo, having been spurned, lingers mournfully by the poolside next to her un-hearing self-absorbed love. The image has entranced a number of great artists, from the dark genius of Caravaggio to the surrealist Salvadore Dalí and John William Waterhouse. The narcissist is, it seems, the personality du jour, and a rash of books has appeared that instruct us not only as to the causes of 'normal' or 'subclinical' narcissism but also how to live with the narcissists in our lives, including self-help manuals for survival.² On the other hand, at the time of writing, there were signs that its clinical counterpart, narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), was to be dropped from the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association.³

Narcissism was introduced to medicine when Havelock Ellis (1898) associated it with autoeroticism. This meaning is not too far off the mark from the colloquial understanding of the term; In my youth one man was cuttingly referred to behind his back as being 'up himself', nicknamed 'Big Eggo', a testament to A. A. Brill's translation of *das ich*, 'the I,' to 'ego'.

The key elements of Freud's 1914 paper are summarized in the first section. The elaboration and development of these ideas are then discussed in relation to Erich Fromm, Melanie Klein and Jacques Lacan, respectively. The final section describes the association of narcissism with consumerism, drawing on contributions from Christopher Lasch, Teresa Brennan and, more recently, those stemming from the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI).

On Narcissism (1914)

Freud's essay on the subject published in 1914 moves through three sections, offering an explanation that my students have found generally readable, at times complex and surprising, and on occasion objectionable and risible. The first section is largely devoted to his justification of theorizing the existence of two forms of libido, corresponding to the ego and sexual instincts. In the second section narcissism is discussed in relation to organic illness and hypochondria, prior to his important discussion of narcissistic and anaclitic object choices. The final section discusses repression and the formation of the ideal-ego and how this term differentiates from sublimation.

Narcissism is a term used

‘to denote the attitude of a person who treats his own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated – who looks at it, that is to say, strokes it and fondles it until he obtains complete satisfaction through these activities.’⁴

From the above one might consider narcissism to be a sexual perversion where the subject is in love with himself rather than with another person. Narcissism is thus linked to megalomania, the sense of mastery and power related to the ego. Freud detects some species of the ‘narcissistic attitude’ in a rather bizarre assemblage of his clients, including homosexuals, beautiful women and hypochondriacs. There is scant mention of the centrality of the body from that point on, nor more generally in the literature on narcissism, although hints of bodily attachment are made with respect to auto-eroticism in infancy and to the (otherwise odd) comment that beautiful women are prone to be narcissists.⁵ His explanation for the latter is that in some women puberty brings about an intensification of their infantile narcissism so that, rather than transfer their libido onto another person, they focus it all on themselves;

Women, especially if they grow up with good looks, develop a certain self-contentment...Strictly speaking, it is only themselves that such women love with an intensity comparable to the man's love for them. Nor does the need lie in the direction of loving, but of being loved.⁶

These female patients, whilst beautiful, believe themselves to be ugly. Freud regards them as particularly fascinating and indeed irresistible to men.

A major part of the paper is given over to the discussion of primary narcissism in infancy. Here Freud asserts that

[t]he charm of a child lies to a great extent on his narcissism, his self-contentment and inaccessibility, just as the charm of certain animals

which seem not to concern themselves about us, such as cats and large beasts of prey. Indeed, even great criminals and humorists, as they are represented in literature, compel our interest by the narcissistic consistency with which they manage to keep away from their ego anything that would diminish it.⁷

Freud's theory is constructed through inference; for example, by asking how older children come to abandon the total self-absorption of the infant. How can self-love become love for another? More fundamentally, what is love? The hydraulic nature of energy transfer is important to Freud's explanation of narcissism. The ego instinct and the sexual instinct each draw upon the reservoir of desire. Energy is invested into the ego in seeking to maintain a healthy self-esteem. Energy is invested in objects, not simply for sexual gratification, but because this is returned to us magnified if they reciprocate our love. A person who is ill becomes less capable of emotional involvement with others because object libido must be transferred to the ego. Neurotics dam up libido that would normally be invested in others by unconsciously repressing knowledge they cannot consciously admit to themselves. Like children, neurotics establish an ideal-ego as part of the process of movement beyond the narcissistic stage. The ideal-ego judges infantile behaviour so repulsive, disgusting and shameful that these impulses are (imperfectly) banished through repression. The flow of sexual energy that is repressed from its normal course flows into the ego, where it is dammed up, and the person falls ill as a consequence. Having said that, in Freud's view there is nothing wrong with the investment of libido into the ego:

A strong egoism is a protection against falling ill, but then in the last resort one must love in order not to fall ill, and we are bound to fall ill if, in consequence of frustration, we are unable to love.⁸

Additionally, Freud notes that a greatly increased quantity of libido in the ego results in a qualitative change, leading to discomfiture. His direct words are noteworthy:

A person may love;

- 1) According to the narcissistic type:
 - a) what he himself is (i.e. himself)
 - b) what he himself was
 - c) what he himself would like to be
 - d) someone who was once part of himself
- 2) According to the anaclitic (attachment) type:
 - a) the woman who feeds him
 - b) the man who protects him,
 and the succession of substitutes who take their place.⁹

Infantile narcissism

The human child has two initial objects: himself (narcissistic object) and the one who nurses him (anaclitic object). Although each individual can opt for either, Freud argues that most men opt for an anaclitic or 'leaning-on' attachment to the one who nurses him. Here ego-libido and object-libido become attached to one another so that, for instance, where one falls in love with another person, this diminishes one's stock of ego-libido. Here love is related to a sexual overvaluation of the object, which to Freud, signifies a transfer of narcissism to that object. As noted above, he then argues that many women make a narcissistic object choice by choosing to continue to love themselves, particularly if they are beautiful. Even narcissistic women have a way out that can lead them to complete object-love. This route can be taken by having a child, 'a part of their own body which confronts them as an extraneous object',¹⁰ to which, starting out from their narcissism, they can give complete object-love.

Parental love is described by Freud as moving but at root childish, since it is nothing but the parents' reborn narcissism. Such parents are likely to overvalue their children, describing them as perfect and concealing their shortcomings. The child fulfils all of the wishful unrealized dreams of the parents: 'the boy shall become a great man and a hero in his father's place, and the girl shall marry a prince as a tardy compensation for her mother.'¹¹

Formation of an ideal-ego

In the third part Freud considers the dampening down of infantile narcissism and megalomania. This results from repression of instinctual impulses which conflict with the emerging subject's cultural and ethical ideas. Individuals differ with respect to similar impressions and desires, with one person being disgusted at what is completely acceptable to another. The infant establishes an ideal-ego to replace the actual ego as the object in which energy is invested. Freud differentiates between the ideal-ego and sublimation. Sublimation is restricted to the redirecting of sexual energy, or libido, towards objects that are remote from sexual satisfaction. In contrast, idealization denotes overvaluation of an object, such as the mother. This occurs in the first instance through discipline and training by parents and other immediate caregivers. Establishment of an ideal-ego does not necessarily lead to sublimation; whereas the ideal-ego demands sublimation, it cannot force it. Freud argues that for neurotics there is a major difference between the ideal-ego and sublimation. The former heightens the possibility for repression as the subject can simply repress sexual impulses, leading to frustration and anxiety. Sublimation offers a route out by redirecting sexual energies towards productive ends; sexual demands can therefore be met without repression. In a brief aside, Freud notes how this 'watchful agency' that is frequently called 'conscience' is grossly heightened in

paranoia, where it is projected outwards by the subject, who believes that its source is external.

Self-regard

Freud finally discusses self-regard, which is composed of three factors: the residues of infantile narcissism, the fulfilment of the ideal-ego and finally, of object love. Self-regard contains everything a person possesses or achieves, every remnant of the primitive feeling of omnipotence related to primary narcissism. If one makes a narcissistic object choice (i.e. if one chooses oneself as the object of one's desire), then one is incapable of loving but aims to be loved. Freud explains that 'libidinal object cathexis', comprising the investment of energy into other objects, does not increase self-regard. Rather, one's dependence on the other person lowers that feeling. People who are in love are humble because they have forfeited part of their narcissism. This lost energy can be replaced only by being loved in return.

The inability to love is another matter entirely. A neurotic woman may say that she is ugly so that no one can love her. She persists in her aversion to sexual matters even though, according to Freud, being more desirable, she is more desired than the average woman. Freud asserts from his experience that the majority of hysterical women are among the most attractive and even beautiful representatives of their sex, noting that ugliness and infirmity do not increase incidences of neurosis.¹² If loving another person decreases self-regard whilst being the object of loving attention increases it, this has an unfortunate effect for the neurotic, resulting from their repression of libido. Repression decreases the amount of energy in the ego, with the consequence that the satisfaction of love is impossible because energy must be drawn from objects back into the ego to maintain it.

At the end of the paper, Freud notes that where no ideal is formed, the adult who reverts to taking himself as the model of his desire will inevitably express his sexual impulses towards pre-genital auto-erotic objects, as found in voyeurism and fetishism, for example.

Discussion

The paper is not about self-love only but features relations between esteem, self-love, love of others and moral action. As self-esteem is regarded by many as a prerequisite to normal functioning, most 'normal' people are narcissistic to an extent. Those ill or indisposed through mourning are necessarily narcissistic due to a depletion of psychic energy. As a consequence they must remove energy from other people and things (object-libido) and withdraw their reserves into themselves (ego-libido). Narcissism may become pathological in hypochondria, where the person believes he is the centre of the endless list of psychosomatic symptoms he expresses; it can also reveal itself in expressions of omnipotence.

Most of the essay describes 'primary narcissism', the state where the infant takes itself as the object of its attention. He explains how infants move beyond this self-immersive trap to form loving anaclitic, or 'leaning-on', attachments to others. Such forms of attachment do not drain the ego as much as the investment of narcissistic attachments.

At the time of writing, Freud considered the ego and sexual instincts to correspond, respectively and loosely, to hunger and love/hate. Although the focus is more on love than on hatred, it is important to remember that he thought of hatred (projection of everything displeasing) as more primitive than love (introjection of elements that are pleasing). Marketing studies paying little heed to Freud fruitfully employ this dichotomy to better understand the self concept; for instance, in relation to the congruity between consumer and product image;¹³ to anti-constellations of brands linked to the 'undesired self';¹⁴ and to the depreciation of sports.¹⁵ Melanie Klein, whose approach is outlined later in this chapter, developed the relations between love and hate in the developing child and maturing adult more fully.

Developing from Freud

It is not unusual to find in psychoanalytically motivated works the description of various kinds of 'characters' who are taken to be representative of their time. In Freud's version primary narcissism is linked to the earliest period of development, characteristic of the 'oral phase', where the infant does not differentiate her 'self' from other aspects of her environment, including the mother. If anything, the other is perceived as an extension of the self. Some explanations arguing that addiction is narcissistic suggest this is based on a form of secondary narcissism where the person's character development regresses, being driven back to the oral phase. For some psychoanalysts the socio-genetic development of the consumer society and its creature the consumer has the effect of creating a character that has regressed to the oral phase of development by the desire to incorporate the whole world.

Erich Fromm: the marketing character

Erich Fromm, whose style is direct and engaging, saw humanity as the freak of the universe, unique in being subject to nature yet simultaneously transcending nature. He argues that narcissism is a passion that can be even more intense for the subject than sex or even life itself. Narcissism is an essential part of development, and a certain amount remains in all normal adults. Fromm pithily observes that saints might be notable for being low in narcissism but do not enjoy a high survival rate.¹⁶ Narcissism is reflected in our attitude to the body; for instance, we like the smell of our own faeces and detest that of others. Normal narcissism is differentiated from malignant narcissism because, in the latter, the object of narcissism is not what

the person *does* but something he *has*, such as wealth, looks, or his body. Those with great power, from the pharaohs to the Roman Caesars, Hitler and Stalin, in trying to be gods, are very close to malignant narcissism; the only thing keeping their feet in the ground of reality is their need to fight challenges to their power from others.

Fromm (1978) follows up on this by positing two fundamental modes of existence. The 'having' mode has associations with the machine, destruction, alienation, mechanization and things. Alternatively, the 'being' mode centres on experience and being at one with and centred on persons. Modern society is critiqued as moulded on the 'having' mode, celebrating death and destruction. In earlier societies one incorporated the symbol of the bravery of a warrior by eating his heart:

The attitude inherent in consumerism is that of swallowing the whole world. The consumer is the eternal suckling crying for the bottle. This is obvious in pathological phenomena such as alcoholism and drug addiction... Modern consumers may identify themselves by the formula: *I am = what I have and what I consume*. (1978: 27)

This 'having' mode is exemplified by the emergence of a new personality, the marketing character. This emergence signalled a shift from the anal retentive 'hoarding' character to a new form:

The aim of the marketing character is complete adaptation so as to be desirable under all conditions of the personality market. The marketing character personalities do not even have egos (as people in the nineteenth century did) to hold onto, that belong to them, that do not change. For they constantly change their egos according to the principle: 'I am as you desire me'.¹⁷

Distinguishing the modern consumer from her parsimonious forebears, Fromm highlights the regressive tendencies in modern society, linking this character to the narcissistic oral phase and a needy superficiality. Fromm's account chimes with that of his contemporaries, such as Riesman et al.'s *The Lonely Crowd* (1961). These researchers noticed changes in the American character during the 1950s, from the 'inner-directedness', (characteristic of the industrial worker) to the 'other-directedness' of those who later came to work in the service industries. The inner-directed characters migrated from traditional rural communities seeking employment in the big industrial towns. Living away from home, they were free of the bonds and restrictions imposed by communal life and free to realize their aspirations. They were often lonely, too, living cheek by jowl with strangers who subscribed to different values. Their upbringing in a secure communal setting lent them a strong sense of self-possession and self-reliance. They gained fulfilment

from labour and did not consider pleasure and consumption to be important except insofar as the display of goods signified prowess. The generation that followed this breed of tough self-reliant manual workers was shallower and more uncertain, lacking in self-confidence. Researchers labelled them 'other-directed' to highlight their belief in the importance of 'people skills', comprising the ability to rub along with others from different cultures and persuasions, in the rapidly developing service sector. The role of the super-ego changed. Parents no longer chided their children for breaking the rules but for failing to live up to a standard of popularity achieved by successfully managing relationship outcomes. As society became more permissive, so the peer group assumed heightened importance relative to parents. The 'other-directed' character not only offered a more promising opportunity for marketers but was himself partly the product of marketing activity. For years mass advertising had cultivated the anxieties and insecurities among the population and had offered packaged solutions in the form of mass-produced goods. What better object for advertising than a character who was constantly anxious and craved social approval?¹⁸

Melanie Klein

While Erich Fromm was influenced by Freud's paper on narcissism, Melanie Klein was more taken by his later work on the death drive. Klein, who started as a therapist in Hungary during the First World War, took on the particularly formidable task of explicating the workings of the psyche of infants aged less than six months. Her reading of the works of the later Freud led her to introduce new elements to the understanding of narcissism which factor in the importance of aggression, criticality and projective identification. Mentored by Karl Abraham, Klein eventually formed her own school of psychoanalysis, which had particular influence in England, where she eventually came to live. She was a pioneer in what came to be known as 'ego psychology', which was greatly extended when analysts moved to the USA.

Klein believed that the infantile course of development, including the Oedipus conflict, occurs at a much earlier age than Freud surmised. Her explanation of infantile development is, if anything, more harrowing and challenging than Freud's. Within the pre-Oedipal child there is no repression, and so this state of consciousness is spatial in nature, with no sense of past or present.¹⁹ Klein posits the existence of two different positions at the beginning of life: the paranoid-schizoid position, which consists of the struggle between the life and death drives, and the subsequent depressive position, when the infant mourns its earlier aggressiveness towards the mother. She describes these as positions, and not stages, that remain throughout life as the two elementary structures of the emotions. Unresolved issues associated with the paranoid-schizoid position can lead to psychosis in later life, whereas melancholic depression in adults is associated with issues related to the depressive position.

The nascent ego of the baby has no concept of a whole object or person. She loves the good aspects of the mother, such as the milk that feeds her, by incorporating its goodness, sustenance and warmth as the first object introjected into her internal world. If what is introjected is a good and dependable object, this strengthens the emerging ego, which subsequently develops around this good object. A strong identification with good aspects of the mother makes it easier for the child to subsequently identify with a good father and later identify other figures as good. This contributes toward a stable personality and makes it possible for the growing child to extend sympathy and friendly feelings towards others.

The baby also experiences pain and frustration at having her needs pass unrecognized and unattended to. Destructive unconscious fantasies²⁰ arise that are linked to a number of factors that arouse a persecutory anxiety in the infant, including 'resentment arising from frustration, hatred stirred up by it, the incapacity to be reconciled and envy of the all-powerful object, the mother, on whom [her] life and well-being depend'.²¹ The paranoid-schizoid position describes the situation when the baby, to cope with anxiety and prevent her entire ego being polluted by badness, splits the object and her ego into two, comprising the 'good' breast, which is infused not only with all of the good things introjected into the ego but also with the life drive; and the 'bad' breast, which represents the frustration experienced by having her needs denied, coupled with the aggression fuelled by the death drive. The good breast is not just good; when hallucinated in unconscious phantasy, it attains the acme of perfection, whilst the bad breast represents evil incarnate.

Projective identification describes the process whereby the ego projects its feelings into the object, which it then identifies with, becoming like the object that it has already imaginatively filled with itself.²² The aim of the ego is for total union with the good object and the annihilation of the bad parts of the self. For example, the infant may project her sadism onto the mother, reacting to her as a persecutor, thereby feeding the fantasy that the mother will respond in kind. Unlike Freud, Klein believed that the infant also expels good parts of the self, and to the extent that these represent the loving parts of the self, this vitally influences object relations as being essential to the development of a healthy ego.

Klein, interpreting this more broadly, argues that the quality of what we project depends on how balanced or persecuted we are. If the baby projects feelings of persecution onto another, then she will also take these in, leading to paranoia. The baby who directs her aggression at the bad breast by biting it or trying to suck it dry thus lives in fear of retaliation. This can lead to the baby seeking to split itself further to remove the pollution of good internal objects by bad objects emanating from outside of the ego. There is a positive aspect to this, which is that by attributing part of our feelings to another person, we step into their shoes, understanding their feelings.

However, there is a delicate balance to strike between introjection and projection. Projection may go so far that the baby may become entirely lost in others, becoming incapable of objective judgement. Alternatively, excessive introjection endangers the strength of the ego, which becomes dominated by the introjected object.

Alongside splitting, scotomization (denial of reality) can be summoned as a defence against bad objects.²³ The baby, through strong feelings of omnipotence, conjures up and hallucinates the good object whilst simultaneously denying the existence of the bad object. This form of defence is a means to recreate the womb as a refuge for an ego that cannot adjust to reality, constituting the inner retreat of a dreamer who is not so much indifferent to the world as refusing unconsciously to make those sacrifices demanded by adult social life.²⁴ Greed and envy are particularly disturbing factors associated with these destructive feelings that are a feature of the paranoid-schizoid position,

With greed goes the urge to empty the mother's breast and to exploit all the sources of satisfaction without consideration for anybody. The very greedy infant may enjoy whatever he receives for the time being; but as soon as the gratification has gone, he becomes dissatisfied and is driven to exploit first the mother and soon everybody in the family who can give him attention, food, or any other gratification. There is no doubt that greed is influenced by anxiety – the anxiety of being deprived, of being robbed, and of not being good enough to be loved. The infant who is so greedy for love and attention is also insecure about his own capacity to love; and all these anxieties reinforce greed. This situation remains in fundamentals unchanged in the greed of the older child and the adult.²⁵

The ambition stimulated by greed has two aspects. In later years, greed can stimulate the person to achievement, but if it becomes the main driving force, it endangers the cooperation of others. The highly ambitious person is dissatisfied, just as the hungry baby is. One feature of such behaviour is the role of envy; the inability to allow others to come to the fore, who are only allowed to play a role subservient to the ambitious person. Klein argues that one reason for their lack of satisfaction is that their prevailing interest is for personal prestige rather than consisting of intrinsic interest in a field of activity for its own sake. Greed and envy are linked to the extent that rivals are seen as people who have deprived one of one's 'rightful' place, whilst simultaneously seen to possess the valuable qualities that induce envy. However, Klein also felt that even ambitious people can find satisfaction in helping others to make their contribution.

By the age of six months, the baby's development has reached the stage where she begins to figure whole objects from what had been part-objects. She thus begins to develop a composite picture of 'mother' and of other

significant objects such as the father and siblings as whole objects (Klein retains the concept of objects to describe 'whole' people). At this stage the baby begins to recognize the disparity between the internal objects she has created and the real person. All children move through this depressive stage where they must reconcile the real person with the love and hate images which they have constructed internally. It is a time of mourning for the good object, which is now lost for good. The baby enters the real social world when it confronts this ambivalence and copes with it by integrating the splits of the paranoid-schizoid position. On the other hand, if the baby experiences trauma or difficulty during this crucial period, then its future development as an adult may be unconsciously preoccupied with the idea of incorporation as a means of gaining access to a sense of identity. There may be a feeling that nothing will be able to fill this overpowering psychical hunger. In close relationships the baby may be experienced as being very emotionally demanding, or 'needy'.

Projective identification plays an important role in the baby's ability to form symbols and create meaning. Symbol formation is key, providing means to dissociate from the mother and to reach outwards to the world. Symbol formation involves a relation between the ego, the object and the symbol. It is an activity where the ego tries to deal with the anxieties that arise in its relations with the object, involving fear of bad objects and the fear of the loss of good objects. The baby's distinction between 'good' and 'bad' objects is a basic form of concrete symbol formation. 'Good' objects are constituted by those things that bring the confident expectation of nourishment and comfort, such as milk or the pleasures attending excretion. 'Bad' objects are also represented concretely; thus a hungry baby is likely to locate the 'bad' object in her tummy.

These early symbols projected by the ego are not felt to be symbols or substitutes for the object but to constitute the object. They are not proper symbols but rather are symbolic equations that exist between original objects and the symbol in the internal and external world. Hanna Segal, a follower of Klein, argued that disturbances in the ego's relation to objects are reflected in disturbances of symbol formation. In particular, disturbances in differentiation between ego and object lead to disturbances in differentiation between the symbol and the object symbolized. In adults this results in the concrete thinking peculiar to psychoses.²⁶ In the normal course of development, symbol formation follows a metonymic chain. The first symbolic equations are made by the baby in order to displace anxiety onto an object; this in turn becomes a focus for anxiety, and new equations are made as anxiety is further displaced onto these objects. In some cases anxiety is so great that the process of symbol development is arrested, whilst in others, adults regress back to primitive forms of symbol formation.

One of Klein's most celebrated cases features 'Little Dick' a four-year-old boy whose symbol formation was arrested, who today would be considered

autistic;²⁷ he did not speak or play and regarded Klein as just another object. Dick exemplified the aggressivity of the early oral-sadistic phase, with its focus on incorporation of the (m)other, devouring her by biting her. When encouraged to play by Klein, Dick was interested only in door handles and the dark space between two doors. On one occasion Dick lifted a little toy man to his mouth and gnashed his teeth, exclaiming, 'Tea daddy', which Klein interpreted as 'Eat daddy'. From this, Klein concluded that Dick had constituted himself as a primitive entity, the primal father who sought to devour his own father. Mary Jacobus illustrates this graphically by likening the primal Dick to Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Children*.²⁸ Klein reasoned that if Dick could conjure up such terrifyingly omnipotent fantasies, he would also be paralysed by anxiety and fear of retaliation. Furthermore, because of his anxiety, he had erected powerful defences against these fantasies about his parents, which had resulted in a paralysis of his fantasy life and symbol formation. Klein resorted to an extraordinary measure in order to instigate the anxiety that would kick-start Dick's engagement with the symbolic realm,

I took a big train and put it beside a smaller one and called them 'Daddy-train and Dick-train'. Thereupon he picked up the train I called 'Dick' and made it roll to the window and said 'station'. I explained: 'The station is mummy: Dick is going into mummy.' He left the train, ran into the space between the outer and inner doors of the room, shut himself in, saying 'Dark' and ran out again directly. He went through this performance several times. I explained to him: 'it is dark inside mummy. Dick is inside dark mummy.'²⁹

Klein tells us that Dick made rapid progress from that point on. In response to her actions he called anxiously for his nurse, which was his first appeal to another person. By means of this, his first verbalized call, Dick became a speaking subject. She explains that his anxiety propelled him to identify with the persecutory penis and breast, which fuelled the development of the symbolic process. In Klein's view symbol formation thus involves a relation between the ego, the object and the symbol. It is an activity whereby the ego attempts to deal with the anxieties stirred up by its relation to the object, involving the fear of bad objects and the fear of the loss or inaccessibility of good objects.

In discussing how adults can revert to using concrete symbolic equations, Segal (1957) describes the situation of Edward, a twenty-year-old Englishman who had been called up to join the armed forces and sent off to India. Once in India, Edward failed to obtain a commission and was derided as a fool. He then enlisted as a private in the army, but his life soon fell apart, and he ended up in Segal's care. Edward found it difficult to separate internal from external reality. Segal appeared to mean no more to Edward than

the furniture in the room. At one point, she believed that he had internalized her as a bad internal object and had displaced anxiety about her onto external objects. He then scotomized these objects, and correspondingly his vocabulary became very poor, and he forbade himself many words that he felt had the power to create hallucinations. Segal pauses in her account to note the similarity between Edward's restriction of speech and that of a Paraguayan tribe called the Abipones, who immediately drop all of the words from their vocabulary that have an affinity with a person who has died. One day Edward brought a canvas stool he made in occupational therapy to his meeting with Segal. 'Embarrassed, as though the stool were no different to a stool of shit, he blushed and stammered.'³⁰ Edward had regressed to the level of making a symbolic equation between the canvas stool and the symbol – the chair *was* shit. Segal described Edward as fearing change, longing to preserve her as the good, loved and unchanging object. But he also dreaded her, lest his dependence made him hate her. Edward recovered sufficiently to be able to visit Segal's consulting room. On one visit he said that a small bottle on her table contained poison and that the little skulls on her mantelpiece were those of patients she had killed. But then in a moment of insight he realized that these observations were not true. Slowly he began to distinguish internal from external reality.³¹

Segal illustrates the difference between psychosis and neurosis and between a symbolic equation and a symbol proper, highlighting the different ways in which the signifier is used in each case. A patient who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, when asked why he had stopped playing the violin since the onset of his illness, replied with some violence, 'Why? Do you expect me to masturbate in public?' Another patient reported that he had dreamt that he and a young girl were playing a violin duet. The associations that he made to fiddling and to masturbation made it clear that the violin represented his masturbation fantasy of his relation to the girl.³² The two patients used the same signifier, a violin, to symbolically represent the male genitals, while the act of playing it represented masturbation. The violin, for the first patient, was so concretely equated with masturbation that he dared not touch it in public. The symbolic meaning of the violin for him was conscious but unconscious for the second man. An additional difference was that although the meaning of his fantasy was made conscious, this did not stop the second man from playing the violin. Thus, for the first man, the violin was symbolically equated to masturbation so that the symbolic substitute was felt *to be* the original object. By contrast, for the second man, the violin served to *represent* the object.

Narcissistic disorders can persist into later life, involving feelings that the subject wants to get inside others in order to merge with them. David Bell describes the case of 'Mr V' as having a very limited life.³³ At the time of analysis Mr V had a girlfriend but felt simultaneously guilty and contemptuous towards her. He was always late for his appointments with Bell. One

day he recounted to Bell that, when driving, he had noticed the car in his rear-view mirror had the same configuration of headlamps as his own. He became preoccupied to know if this was Bell's car; Mr V had bought the exact same make and model of car as Bell. He acknowledged that he really wanted to take a good look inside the analyst to see if he was different from himself. This was typical of Mr V. When he met someone who seemed to possess qualities that he didn't, Mr V would feel an immediate need to merge with or get inside that person through a process he called 'colonization'. According to Bell, Mr V projected his neediness onto his girlfriend and his analyst. Progress was made when on one occasion Mr V told Bell that he had suddenly realized that the analyst was a different person and that this precipitated an experience of profound desire for the object he no longer possessed. He felt an acute sense of isolation and a desperate need to wipe out the separation and close the gap by merging with his analyst. However, he managed to resist this urge at the cost of considerable pain.³⁴

Bronstein's description of the case of Emma illustrates the frightening nature of narcissistic identification.³⁵ Emma was an adolescent tormented by persecutory nightmares where she was trapped in a room full of mirrors that reflected her image at different ages, some of which could not be differentiated from the image of her mother. Emma had attempted suicide several times and once attacked her mother with a knife. She sought relief by cutting herself, explaining her self-harm as the only solution to her predicament. This 'solution' was brought on by self-hatred in terms of Emma's identification with her mother. Instead of appeasing her internal sense of 'badness', it merely served to increase Emma's guilt and despair.³⁶ Emma's story is strongly suggestive of the frightening world of mirrors, blurred identity and violence portrayed in Aranofsky's film *Black Swan* (2010), where the protagonist's mother treats her as an extension of herself and 'bad' internal objects projected by the protagonist become concrete, returning as if from outside to persecute their originator.

The hell of mirrors: narcissism in Lacan

Similar to Melanie Klein, Lacan describes a subject who is split by narcissistic identification. Lacan was such a fan of Klein that he offered to translate one of her works into French; a promise that to Klein's chagrin he failed to keep.³⁷ Admiration did not prevent him from attacking Klein.³⁸ Lacan's theory has three key dimensions or orders: the real, consisting of embodied sensations that are beyond representation; the imaginary, relating to the body image; and the symbolic realm of language and law. These inform each other to provide a sense of order for the subject. In his earlier work, Lacan placed the destructive power of the image at the heart of his theory of identity. The fusion of the infant with her ideal-ego inaugurates her narcissism.

Humans are born prematurely, lacking the coordination and control so apparent in the early life of social animals. The infant enclosed in the order of

the real shares a blissful union with the mother, being especially attuned to her excitations. The infant has no sense of containment, but is an '(h)omme-lette' (who spills out all over the place). The mother is all-powerful in the infant's early existence, likened to a huge crocodile who holds her young in her jaws.³⁹ The honeymoon between mother and infant cannot last forever, and the infant soon becomes aware of her mother's absences. This leads to acute anxiety, which the infant tries to master by representing it, as, for instance, is described by Freud in recounting his observation of the '*fort-da*' game.

Lacan argues that the infant, motivated by anxiety and fear of fragmentation at the loss of the mother, identifies with the image of a model. This is either the result of her being treated as an individual by caregivers or, perhaps literally, of gazing at her reflection in a mirror and concluding, 'That's me!' In so doing, she (mis)identifies with the masterful image. By identifying with an image that promises self-sufficiency, she equates her 'self' with self-containment, enclosed within the boundary of her skin,⁴⁰ despite the fact, as Lacan pithily observes, that she cannot ever see the back of her head. This is a misidentification because, rather than achieving the mastery offered by the image, she is propelled into a realm that Lacan in some passages describes as a stadium of mirrors and in others a 'see-saw' of desire. Both images signify conflict; the first envisaging a hall of mirrors where the subject has no external point of reference to provide a stable perspective beyond the mirror image; the second, indexing the oscillation experienced by the subject as she alternates from one side of the see-saw, at one moment ridiculing the self by taking the position of the grandiose, self-sufficient, controlling image that sees the other as weak and pathetic; to the other side, recoiling in horror from what is perceived to be a powerful and threatening force.⁴¹ The infant is haunted by two dreadful images; on one side, that of persecution, represented by the *corps morcelé*, the fragmented body, exemplified in Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, which propels her towards identification with the alienating image; on the other side, the grandiose paranoid image of misanthropic self-possession.

One may perhaps gain a better grasp of the foregoing by considering the milieu in which Lacan developed his ideas. As a young man he associated with the Dada (the name, influenced by Freud) movement of French artists and intellectuals, troubled by the enormous power of images in influencing human conduct. During the First World War, recruitment posters portrayed images of duty, gallantry and honour, that lured millions of young men into the armed forces and many to their deaths. The idea that images of glory and honour wrapped up in the flag of national sentiment would be realized as cruel fictions to hide misery, mayhem, death and destruction had a profound resonance for these intellectuals. Roger Caillois, a biologist and respected member of the Dada group, looked to nature in support of the thesis of the destructive power of the mimetic image. Caillois's research focused on the mimetic, or imitative, strategy of the preying mantis, which

seeks to perfectly adapt itself to the image of its environment. He argued this strategy to be maladaptive as on some occasions the insect is mistakenly eaten by one of its own kind and it cannot be recognized by members of its own kind during the mating season. He thus argued that the mimicry of the mantis amounts to a kind of insectoid psychosis. That Dalí's painting *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* closely represents Lacan's conception of narcissism is no accident, as each reputedly learned much from the other. Close inspection of the background of the right-hand side of Dalí's painting shows a mantis appearing over the top of a mountain.

Lacan, like Caillois, was convinced that humans form their body image on the basis of a fundamentally destructive model. His doctoral thesis, which was very influential among the Surrealists, was based on the case of Marguerite Pantaine, whom he described under the pseudonym Aimée. On 10 April 1931, Marguerite, then aged 38, attacked the actress Huguette Duflos, whom she had never previously met. Duflos grappled with the blade of the knife, injuring her right hand. Confined in the Sainte-Anne asylum in a state of delusion, Marguerite repeated how much she hated the actress. She wrote to reporters, the manager of her hotel and to the prince of Wales complaining about the actresses and authors who persecuted her. When the delusions ceased, her symptoms disappeared. Lacan argued that Duflos and Aimée's other persecutors were identical to the images of her ideal-ego, representing the freedom and power she craved but could not attain. In this view the *moi* that is linked to the Imaginary ideal image is essentially paranoid. Once the alienating ideal-image was destroyed, she became entirely normal. Lacan further developed the diagnosis of self-punishment paranoia to describe the horrific and much discussed murder of a woman and her daughter by the Papin sisters.

From the above, it is through mimesis, (identification with the mirror image) that one gains a sense of unity, self-containment and mastery over the body. If that was all that there was to it, humanity would be condemned to dwell forever entombed in the hell of mirrors. However, the identification with an Other in the mirror opens out the possibility for symbolic thought. Symbolic development is spurred by the absence of the mother, as exemplified by the '*fort-da*' game described by Freud. It is only fully developed when the child abandons the attempt to be the sole object of the mother's desire (in the double sense that the child can complete the lack of the mother whilst being the object desired by her) in the Name of the Father. The meaning of this term, obvious to those educated by Jesuits, refers not to the real father but to the symbolic power attributed to the father (God the Father). The powerful maternal bond that retains the infant within the jaws of the powerful mother crocodile can be attenuated only if the child identifies with the more powerful presence of the phallus.

It is this symbolic recognition of the power and prestige of the father that provides the third term enabling the infant to escape the immediacy of the

dual relation with the mother. Lacan's account of the Oedipal position is thus more cultural than Freud's in that the child does not have to experience the dread of castration by the real father. By identifying with the Name of the Father, which represents cultural institutions and the law founded on the prohibition of the incest, we renounce the power of the mother. We are all castrated by entry into the symbolic realm of language in that we can no longer access the bliss of union with the mother in the real. Something vital has been lost – but something is gained, too. As Lacan puts it, the phallus is the stone bar rolled between the jaws of the crocodile that stops it from crushing us.⁴²

The process of symbolization starts during the mirror phase when the infant begins to merge with symbols equated with the body. These primordial images form the beginning of the symbolization of unconscious desire. The body is taken as a gestalt, forming an 'Ur-identity'.⁴³ Such images form the basis for the formation of the *corps morcelé*. In a process similar to the symbolic equations described by Segal (1957), children become interested in their surroundings, equating these with bodily functions: a hole in the wall with a mouth, the dripping tap with the penis. Over and above the formation of these imaginary symbolic equations, The Name of the Father forms a master signifier, or organizing template, inaugurating language as a system of signifiers in the unconscious. Through this identification, the baby moves beyond fusion and dependence on the mother, accepting the prohibitions and limits that are necessary for her to function in society. The process of symbolization includes the lengthy process of parental training ('No, you can't do that!'), draining excitation, or *jouissance*, from the body. This drainage 'clips' the body of the infant, who is more docile than before and thus makes the world liveable. Woven together by the Name of the Father, the symbolic system of language floats free of the primitive symbolic equations tied to the body because, in language proper, the meaning of any one signifier is determined not by its referent but by its differences from other signs within the total language system. This enables the play of metaphor and metonymy to take place, which crucially enables movement beyond the literal meanings provided by symbolic equations.

When the process of entry into the symbolic fails, the subject experiences not only major difficulties with respect to symbolization and language expression but also a different and frightening relationship to his or her body and the world of everyday objects. Where the neurotic represses the Name of the Father and the pervert disavows it, the psychotic forecloses (*Vewerfung*) it by denying it and casting it out from the self. Lacking the master signifier of the Name of the Father, there is a hole in language itself, with no possibility of a fixed relation to exist between the signifier and signified. Foreclosure, where unbearable frustration and hatred are projected outwards and return in the form of another's wish to harm us or even to kill, is not repressed as in neurosis but pervasively attached to every aspect

of that person's reality. Meanings do not change according to their context, and instead everything means just one thing. If the body is not colonized and re-organized by language, then the world, now reduced to a symbolic equation, appears terrifying. All meaning is reduced to one meaning; 'the world would just be one immense body and the hole in the wall might threaten to swallow up the child.'⁴⁴ Reality would seem to happen outside of the body; the body and the world would remain in a continuum marked by primitive symbolic equations where there is shit or holes everywhere. Leader describes the critic Van Wyck Brooks, for whom everyday objects endlessly communicated one meaning: 'every knife became something with which to cut one's throat; every building, something to jump off, every belt a garrotte; the top of every door a bracket for a rope to hang from, every bottle something to be swallowed in splinters.'⁴⁵

Discussion of Klein and Lacan

Klein and Lacan share much in common, especially with respect to the latter's early work. They are concerned with a much earlier formation than Freud in seeking the origins of human subjectivity. Each focuses on a split subject for whom narcissism is an essential position, or stage, that remains in force throughout the life of the subject; each, particularly Klein, displaces attention from the father to focus on the overwhelming influence of the mother in the early life of the infant. Freud's ideas about introjection and projection are reworked to construct an insight into the world of the psychotic who remains problematically attached to the body and to the mother, for whom what was once inside the psyche appears as if it is outside in the 'real'.

From Lacan, if we tend to believe in harmony and completeness, the legacy of the mirror stage is that we should know better. Evidence from a wide range of studies confirms that the better looking you are, the more others will take you to be healthy, smart and trustworthy⁴⁶. One can choose to believe psychologists who argue this to be actually true, the reasoning being that because handsome men and beautiful women are treated better by others than their ugly counterparts, this will translate into their behaviour such that they really *are* nicer than their ugly counterparts. Alternatively, one can follow the reasoning advanced by Malcolm Gladwell, who called this the 'Warren Harding Error'.⁴⁷ Harding was an imposing hunk of a man – tall, dark, tanned and handsome, equipped with calm grey eyes and a well-proportioned and supple body. When lawyer and lobbyist Harry Daugherty spied Harding, he at once thought, 'He looks like a Senator, wouldn't he make a great President!' Harding and Daugherty were soon in cahoots, and soon Harding was on his way up the greasy pole of politics, eventually rising to be President. He proved one of the worst Presidents in American history, being pompous, ambivalent not particularly bright and a man who counted drinking and the pursuit of women

amongst his favourite hobbies – in light of relatively recent incumbents to that high office who said that he wasn't cut out to be President! On the other hand, Robin Cook – an exceedingly able British politician and statesman – was never felt to be in the running for the ultimate job of Prime Minister because of his gnome-like appearance.

Authors use Lacan's theory as the basis to critique consumer society, particularly the media and advertising industries. They contend that the media bombard consumers with idealized and unattainable images of control, mastery, beauty, perfection and youth, which are gobbled up eagerly by consumers, who use them to shore up their fragile and battered egos. The ultimate aim of the entire enterprise, to almost literally climb back into the womb of the mother, is impossible. The quest for wholeness and identity is thus revealed to be illusory and a sham, with modern-day Don Quixote's armouring themselves with an assemblage of brand names in a futile bid to be 'themselves'. The question of the power of images to seduce unwitting consumers continues to be debated within the social sciences. Some authors focus on the symbolic interpretation of images; for example, by asking women their opinion of the portrayal of advertising images.⁴⁸ Others focus on exploring the existence of links between images of attractive models, body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

Klein and Lacan indicate the role played by primordial objects to operate as symbolic equations between aspects of the body and the world. For adults who succumb to psychosis, everyday objects take on a frightening aspect as proper symbols are reduced to these primitive equations. This calls to mind the importance of a body schema: that what we take to be 'direct physical experience' does not consist of some core of immediate experience which is then interpreted by us but rather that experience is itself constituted within a vast network of cultural presuppositions. That we consider ourselves self-contained and separate from the world is not a given but requires Imaginary identification. The equation of oneself as contained within one's body image leads to the development of further equations linked to containment – such as 'I am in the kitchen' or 'I am in the house' – and to more abstract concepts, such as 'I am in the team'.⁴⁹

The figure of the psychotic emerges most clearly from the discussion of narcissism. The erotomania suffered by Aimée may still serve as the basis of an explanation of the behaviour of extreme fans who become celebrity stalkers. Robert Hoskins, who was convinced that Madonna was in love with him and wanted to marry him, broke into her secure apartment twice and was wounded on one occasion. The rather daring paper by Wohlfeil and Whelan (2012) captures part of the process by which a character can identify with and fixate on a celebrity, in this case, Jena Malone⁵⁰. The authors describe successive cycles of approach-avoidance for the protagonist, whose flights into the Imaginary world of union with Jena follow closely on the heels of

real-life disappointments. At one point he suffers a major disappointment, when he believes he has bungled a date with a nice girl. Following this episode he has a series of romantic dreams about Jena. In one he is of Prussian descent, living in eighteenth century England, where he meets Jena (in the form of Lydia Bennet, one of her screen roles) and asks for her hand but then wakes before receiving her answer. He is tempted to fly to visit her in New York, when real life intervenes once more in the form of a very nice attractive and intelligent young woman.

On a superficial reading, Mark Chapman who murdered John Lennon, could easily substitute for Marguerite Pantaine, the woman Lacan renamed Aimée, as the central protagonist in his thesis and heroine for the Surrealists. The following excerpt from Chapman seems scripted as an exemplary case of 'self-punishment paranoia'.

John Lennon was real and he was a hero. He was the hero of my childhood. But I wasn't real to myself. I was just a hulk of hurt and rejection, a confused, unfeeling defense mechanism. A cyborg. A conglomerate of adult mannerisms and jobs, but a child's heart. That was the conflict that came crashing down. That's why I could never do anything. My child was always conflicting with my fake adult, my phony adult that I had erected around it. All that rage came spilling out and I killed the hero of my childhood. All the rage at the world and in myself and in my disappointments and disillusion. All those feelings I kept pent up, feelings that the child couldn't handle. Feelings that the adult was supposed to handle but couldn't. The child got confused and angered. And since he's so specially linked to the phony adult that I was, the phony adult that the child had created, something had to happen.⁵¹

Chapman's ego was constructed with all sorts of residues: the father he hated, the Wizard of Oz, Captain Nemo, Todd Lundgren and Holden Caulfield to name a few. One psychiatrist believed Chapman to be schizophrenic and suffering from Narcissistic Personality Disorder, arguing that he had effectively committed a surrogate suicide by killing Lennon. The idea that Chapman believed himself to be the real John Lennon gained ground when it was found that he, too, had married an older Japanese woman and had also offered to stay at home and 'keep house' (Jones, 1992: 102). Such an alignment, although tempting, would be too easy and too crude a judgement to make. The first psychiatrist to speak to Chapman said she interviewed hundreds of patients but that he was unique; he seemed to have every psychiatric malady going. In Chapman's case the coincidences multiplied; when he saw reports that President Reagan had been shot because his attacker believed Jodie Foster would want him to, Chapman said, 'He got that from me', or words to that effect.⁵²

The image of the psychotic held considerable appeal for the Surrealists, who made an ideal out of suicide and who took psychosis as a model for a rebellious, creative and subversive potential for madness. They celebrated the literary creativity of Aimée (Marguerite Pantaine who had attacked the actress Duflos) and paid homage to fellow homicides such as the notorious Papin sisters, addressing themselves generally to 'a rebellious, criminal, paranoid or homosexual woman who was no longer the impoverished laundry maid of former times, the slave of her symptoms, but the heroine of a new modernity' (Roudinesco, 1986: 21).

Darian Leader recalls us from reflection on exotic and dangerous psychotic characters such as Aimée and Chapman to remind us that Schreber, Freud's correspondent, functioned perfectly well as a senior judge despite his delusions; the two defining characteristics of 'true' paranoia according to Kraepelin are 'delusional thought and a striking conservation of all mental capacities and intelligence'. Moreover, recent studies indicate that between 2 per cent and 30 per cent of the general population claim to hear voices (Leader, 2012: 19).

Klein and Lacan can be seen to offer insight into the world of the psychotic, who is reduced to concrete symbolization and language. Psychosis is a state of being more vividly in tune with others than those who have acquired full access to the Symbolic. A person in a psychotic state feels dispossessed of his or her body, regarding other human beings the same way as objects. On the other hand, it can be argued that these authors provide ingeniously contrived but misplaced explanations conveniently in line with the observed behaviour of schizophrenics, including the poverty and concreteness of language, blurring of self and other and paranoia. In particular, their theories focus attention on the mother. It is the relationship with her that is at fault and she, the great crocodile, who is the site of blame, withholding access to the symbolic law of the father. Alexander McCall Smith makes some tellingly serious points in his hilarious 44 Scotland St. series (see McCall Smith, 2008), describing the plight of Bertie, the six-year-old hero, who is at the mercy of his ridiculous mother and the dreadful psychotherapist Dr Fairburn. Psychoanalysts would no doubt be unsurprised to learn that the ordinary man and woman in the street greet their ideas with incredulity, no doubt asserting that this proves the very point made by psychoanalysis! On the other hand reading McCall Smith or watching Sophie Robert's *The Wall* (2011), one might expect a more robust and convincing response.

The narcissistic consumer

Whilst various aspects of consumption feature to a large extent in the foregoing, this part specifically explores the contention that the narcissistic character is typical of consumerism today.

Christopher Lasch

Christopher Lasch (1980) constructs his account of narcissism from Melanie Klein's description of infantile narcissism (ibid.). For Lasch, the narcissist is an image-conscious hypochondriac experiencing violent oscillations in esteem, who is chaotic and impulse ridden; who describes vague feelings of emptiness and depression; and who, although often ingratiating, cultivates a protective shallowness in emotional relations. In *Anger Management* (2003) a psychiatrist named Buddy Rydell, played by Jack Nicholson, is assigned to deal with the supposed 'anger management issues' of the initially placid David Buznik (Adam Sandler), whom Rydell claims is a narcissist, bottling up an intense rage. Rydell's approach is consistent with that of Lasch, who argues that because it is no longer socially permissible to openly express anger, a bottled-up rage lies at the core of the narcissistic personality. As Lasch finds the repression of rage to be a bad thing, he gives full vent to his own rage against Erich Fromm, whom he describes as a narcissist who acts to 'sermonize about brotherly love'.⁵³

Unlike Fromm, who looks for narcissism originating in self-love, Lasch focuses on anger and aggression; the roots of narcissism lie in defences against aggression. Narcissists lack the capacity to mourn because the intensity of their rage against love objects, particularly their parents, prevents them from having happy experiences. They tend to avoid close relationships because these might release overpoweringly aggressive impulses. Their personalities consist largely of defences against this rage and against feelings of oral deprivation, which originate in the pre-Oedipal stage of development. Lasch argues that these patients suffer from a pervasive form of emptiness and a deep disturbance of self-esteem and are transfixed by images. The narcissist perceives the world as a mirror of himself and has no interest in external events other than the manner by which these reflect back on his own image. He is perfectly in tune with a world made up of the continuous transmission of images and behaves as if he were constantly 'on air', engaged in continuous self-surveillance, fronted by a fixed smile. Narcissists buy into the therapeutic ideology of the current age by constantly monitoring themselves for signs of ageing and ill health, which they seek to forestall. Lasch provides a list of factors to explain why the narcissist was the dominant character of the 1970s, including the stimulation of infantile cravings through advertising, the usurpation of parental authority by the media, schools' and the rationalization of inner life.

Lasch contends that narcissism in the workplace has been promoted by the move away from traditional modes of authority and towards the promulgation of therapeutic forms of control coupled with notions of 'interdependence'.⁵⁴ The advocacy of therapeutic forms of control, advanced by Abraham Maslow, acted to soften and even eliminate the presence of adversarial relations between subordinates and their superiors, with the

result that it became much more difficult for citizens to defend themselves against the state or for workers to defend themselves against management in this 'we're all in this together' climate. The new style bureaucrat no longer ordered his inferiors around but discovered subtler forms of control. In such an undertaking success lay, not in the accumulation of money, but in 'winning' and by possessing a winning personality through manipulation of relationships.

Lasch argues that the consumerist ideology plays on the malaise of industrial civilization. Consumption is peddled as the answer to the age-old discontents of loneliness, weariness and lack of sexual satisfaction, itself providing new forms of discontent. Where the workplace is boring and meaningless and life is perceived to be largely futile, consumption promises to fill the void. The propaganda of commodities serves a double function. First, it stands in as an alternative to protest or rebellion. Rather than seek to change conditions of work, people are encouraged to brighten their immediate surroundings through the consumption of goods and services. Secondly, the spiritual desolation produced in rationalized modern society is itself commodified as consumption, which is offered as a panacea for everything from one's personal appearance to that of one's car. Where labour in the workplace was promoted as being a person's duty, it is now seen to be necessary in order to fuel a life of consumption and leisure. Advertising allies consumption with the ideals of narcissism by appealing directly to the self of the consumer and by offering the promise of instant gratification. Commodities are portrayed as offering sustenance to all irrespective of class, colour or creed. They are used by the young to rebel against their elders and by women as forms of 'pseudo-emancipation'. They have played a role, too, in undermining the traditional basis of authority. Furthermore, advertising has undermined the belief in truth, which is reduced to a matter of credibility linked to authoritative statements, as is particularly to be observed in the political arena.

Teresa Brennan: consumer society is psychotic

Teresa Brennan (1993) develops a complex critique of consumer society based on her joint reading of Klein and Lacan. She makes a direct analogy between the mother and 'mother' Earth, likening the consumer society to the infantile desire to control mother Earth and to cut her up. Modern aggressiveness is thus to be understood as the expression, not of some underlying immutable force, but of a developing tension between human culture and what is other to it that it seeks to mould to its image. Brennan turns to Lacan to argue that late modern capitalist society is psychotic:

[H]is theory suggests that the ego can only make the world over in its own image by reducing the lively heterogeneity of living nature and diverse cultural orders to a grey mirror of sameness. And it can only do this by

consuming living nature in producing a proliferation of goods and services whose possession becomes the *sine qua non* of the good life. Of course if nature is endlessly consumed in the pursuit of a totalizing course, then that course is dangerous for living; it constitutes a danger to one's own survival as well as that of others. That, approximately is the technical, legal definition of psychosis.⁵⁵

Brennan seeks to describe the underlying mentality of the aggressive territorializing ambitions of European conquest and colonization. While Darwinists might posit territorializing ambition to be natural, Brennan argues that the modern psyche, captured within the illusory stadium of the Imaginary, is caught in a delusional escalating cycle of spatial mastery and feelings of constriction. The imaginary ego that 'recognizes' itself in the mirror closes itself off to the otherness of nature that is cast outwards beyond itself, only to return as a persecutor. The aggression involved in seeking to turn this other (nature) into a slave leads to territorial expansion. The illusory fact of fixing the self and nature by establishing a spatial boundary leads to the fear that the other (nature) will retaliate, which heightens the subject's fear of spatial constriction. This exacerbates the perception that the boundaries of the self are being further threatened and the resultant fear redoubles the need to control the object. Brennan links the origins of the psychosis to the Victorian era in Britain, the time when imperialism gathered steam. A continually escalating cycle of aggressiveness motivates the current drive to dominate not only the earth's surface but also outer space.

Brennan argues that the consumer is a fundamentally envious creature. Such aspirations are not for the goods themselves but are rather a cover for envy of the creativeness of those who make goods because the consumer doesn't actually do anything. The consumer is passive but imagines himself as the centre of the action, believing that true agency is mental, as in the fantasy of the infant in Freud's '*fort-da*' story who makes his mother into a dependent creature whom he can make appear and disappear apparently at will. Just as the infant is totally dependent on the mother but denies this fact, so consumers deny their dependence on the producer who provides the goods they consume.

The abolition of time is important to this explanation. Marketers promise the abolition of waiting time through instant gratification; the passive consumer is waited upon. The service promise wrapped in the marketing concept appeals to the infantile desire for domination and control. The car is in this respect an exemplar of control in that the driver is fully in control yet passive.⁵⁶ In order to sustain the consumer fantasy, time must be denied by imagining there is no delay between what is desired and its presence. History must be denied, especially generational time, the time it takes for resources to form and regenerate, from the thousands of years taken in the formation of 'non-renewable' sources of energy and minerals to the

reproduction of animal species. Brennan argues that the destructive nature of consumer society has been masked because capitalism is extremely adept at displacement, by progressively substituting new sources for materials that have been destroyed.

Brennan provides a startling and arresting vision of the consumer society. Critics would no doubt focus on her own totalizing fantasy evident in her monolithic treatment of capitalism and the consumer, which thus fails to recognize the existence of a variety of forms of each. It can reasonably be argued that capitalism does not exist in a 'pure' form, where it is entirely unregulated – except perhaps in a war of 'all against all' – and that, consequently, there are a variety of more or less constrained 'capitalisms'. There is, however, little doubt that marketing discourse has surpassed itself in recent years by arguing that consumers are not only active but 'co-producers', even 'co-creators' of the services they consume. The 'stuff', or material, that embodies the generational time that Brennan refers to counts for nothing in this topsy-turvy world, save for the role it plays in conferring 'value' to the customer.⁵⁷

Narcissism moves West

The general direction taken in the USA since the 1970s has been to abandon explanations based on the understanding of internal mental processes and to focus instead on measurable behavioural attributes listed in the DSM (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 1994), compiled by the American Psychiatric Association. This, in parallel with the move towards a more behaviourally oriented therapeutic approach, has led to American therapists being treated as the quintessential 'bad object' by psychoanalytical authors.

The extremely pragmatic American therapists enthusiastically took hold of Freudian ideas. But they straightaway sought to measure sexual energy, to prove the efficacy of analyses by producing endless statistics and conducting surveys to find out whether the concepts could be applied empirically to the concrete problems of individuals.⁵⁸

The DSM was first developed in 1952 in seeking to reach a common classification of mental disorders and since then has been updated several times. Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) was first classified and introduced into the DSM-III in 1981, where it came to be associated with nine behavioural traits, including grandiosity; arrogance or haughtiness; fantasies of great success, beauty or ideal love; a sense that one is unique; a sense of entitlement; the need to exaggerate achievements and to demand praise; a belief that one is envied by others or that one envies others; and finally, a lack of empathy towards, and exploitation of, others. In addition to the drive towards measurement that was once peculiar to America

but has since been exported, the focus on overt behavioural traits sought to address the anxiety that too much can be read into a person's actions and speech. Moulded according to scientific principles, knowledge of narcissism would henceforth be nothing if not indubitable. As the solidity of the scientific edifice is crucially dependent on the construction of an objective and robust measurement instrument, a survey questionnaire, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, (NPI; see Raskin and Terry, 1988) is favoured by most researchers, being used in almost 80 per cent of studies.⁵⁹ For convenience's sake I will focus on the book by Twenge and Campbell (2009), who draw extensively from NPI-based research, in illustrating this approach to narcissism.

Twenge and Campbell are keen to assert their scientific credentials, which are emblazoned on the book cover. The bulk of their argument is based on data harvested from empirical surveys obtained by the subjection of US youth to the tribulations of the NPI, in the well worn game of 'data for course credit'. Their thesis to a large extent reprises that of Christopher Lasch (op. cit.), although they distance themselves from his work. True to the style of NPI-related research, they eschew a psychodynamic explanation based on internal processes. They disagree with what they call the 'Freudian' explanation (probably Lasch), which explains narcissism as a form of defence against an 'empty' or 'enraged' self low in self-esteem.⁶⁰ However, it is worth pointing out that the NPI scale was inspired by the psychoanalytic definition of narcissism offered by Kernberg (1975).

Twenge and Campbell's explanation of the origins of narcissism accords quite well with that of Lasch. American individualism originally focused on freedom from tyranny and on equality, as enshrined in the Bill of Rights. The prevailing concern with independence was reflected in strict rational self-control coupled to an ethic of hard work and independence associated with the Puritan Protestant work ethic. They explain that the shift to narcissism began in the 1960s, when self-centredness became linked to unprecedented economic growth and material prosperity. This was exacerbated by the rise of powerful social movements such as the Human Potential Movement and Erhard Seminar Training (EST), which argued the importance of building self-esteem. Unlike Lasch, they argue that a change in the character of narcissism took place in the 1980s with the appearance of a new extraverted, shallow and materialistic form of narcissism based around images of youth promoted to the 'yuppies' of 'Generation X'. Nowadays narcissism has reached epidemic levels, being fuelled by a culture where parents and advertisements routinely overpraise children by telling them how special they are and where the media feeds on the promotion of narcissistic celebrity models. This is exacerbated by reality TV shows that foster the belief that one can achieve fame without having to work for it; for instance 31 per cent of American high school children expect to become famous someday.⁶¹ The Internet has made the situation much worse because each

individual can live at the centre of an imaginary bubble, collecting 'friends' in the same way that their predecessors might have collected stamps.

The authors draw upon peer-reviewed articles in quality journals to argue that narcissists have little compunction in aggressing against others who block their goals, starting fights in the belief that they will win.⁶² Furthermore, narcissists are also more likely to use coercion against a romantic other, even to the extent of rape.⁶³ This is because, given their sense of entitlement, narcissistic men are more likely than others to believe they will be offered sex and that no woman will refuse them.

Discussion

Given the scientific credentials of NPI researchers, one might imagine that by now a clear picture of narcissism has emerged. In fact there remains disagreement regarding the fundamentals. Twenge and Campbell's claim, based on NPI data, that 'subclinical' or 'normal' narcissism has reached epidemic proportions in the USA, is disputed on methodological grounds, specifically their use of convenience samples of college students. An alternative study based on probability and not convenience samples found no increase in self-esteem in high school seniors between 1976 and 2004, a claim which is refuted by Twenge.⁶⁴

The question of esteem is very important to the understanding of narcissism. The DSM-IV defines vulnerability in self-esteem as one of the key criteria for narcissism (APA, 2000: 715). Research using the NPI contends that narcissists' self-esteem is, if anything, sky-high.⁶⁵ Could this be an artefact produced by the research instrument? Research comparing the NPI with the Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire (PDQ-4) suggests that where the latter constructs an emotionally unstable, negative-affect-laden and introverted variant of narcissism, the NPI constructs an emotionally resilient and extraverted form.⁶⁶ Additionally, given the popularity of the NPI in studying 'subclinical' or 'normal' levels of narcissism, one might have thought that this has also been used in the diagnosis of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). This is apparently not so.⁶⁷

Recent scholarship has questioned the conceptual basis for narcissism being a personality disorder. The heterogeneity of the constructs underlying the definition of NPD in DSM-IV is questioned; for example, category membership is based on a person scoring highly on five out of nine criteria, so that two cases could share no more than one feature. Additionally, diagnosis is based on subjective judgements, with an arbitrary cut-off point, and there is a doubt about its distinctiveness given high co-morbidity, with overlaps between measures of subclinical narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy.⁶⁸ The debate continues in the run-up to the introduction of the DSM-V, with some calling for the implementation of a dimensional model such as the Five Factor Model (FFM).⁶⁹

Twenge and Campbell are selective in discussing incivility. For instance, although castigating drivers of Hummers as narcissists, they fail to mention

narcissism in relation to road rage, although given their sense of entitlement, one might imagine such behaviour to be made for the narcissist. A study of road rage found most drivers considering their driving second to none and considering others imbeciles who ought to be taught a lesson.⁷⁰ Those who use mobile phones, who eat and drink whilst driving or who are otherwise acting without due care and attention are considered by 'responsible drivers' to be self-absorbed narcissists. Katz doesn't mention drivers of Hummers specifically, but one can imagine them becoming the target of the self-righteous driver. He notes an irony at work here, in that 'the better you are as a driver, in the sense of being dutifully attentive to the movements of other cars, the more you are aware of how circumscribed are the attentions of others.' He continues, 'Your courtly efforts to accommodate the less competent run up against their failure to see, much less appreciate what you are trying to do.'⁷¹

The angry conscientious driver feels duty-bound to teach the narcissistic reprobate a lesson. Consider the plight of Ralph, driving along a narrow road with his girlfriend and two other passengers whilst being tailgated by a van with its high beams on. The road narrows so that the van cannot overtake Ralph. Ralph is annoyed by the van driver's behaviour and slows deliberately. The van dangerously overtakes Ralph, its driver giving him the finger, and then slams on the brakes, forcing Ralph to brake sharply. Incensed, Ralph set his high beams onto the van and accelerates to overtake in a tit-for-tat reprisal. There are few drivers who have not had a similar experience to the above. Who is the narcissist? Where is the narcissism? This tit-for-tat escalation involving rapid mood swings, from anger to exuberance to fear, in what culminates in a deadly battle for prestige, follows the course of the classic mimetic cycle, discussed further in the chapter on hysteria.

Twenge and Campbell (ibid.) are in good company in arguing that Americans are ruder and more uncivil than ever before. Putnam makes a similar point in *Bowling Alone* (2000), citing evidence from a particular road junction, where the proportion of motorists who came to a full stop, as they should have, was 37 per cent in 1979, whilst 97 per cent made no stop at all at the same junction by 1996.⁷² Whilst it is not easy to locate alternative arguments, Kasson (2010) cites Norbert Elias to mildly observe that in medieval times humans behaved in a much more brutal and boorish manner than today. Herbst (2010), too, is rather sceptical of what we might call the 'incivility' hypothesis, arguing that it has now become fashionable to assume a drift towards incivility. A recent Australian study found little evidence to support the 'incivility' hypothesis, finding most incidents of rudeness and incivility accidental.⁷³

Against narcissism

What can one make of the above? Are there any resemblances at all to be made between the narcissists described by Freud, Fromm, Klein, Lacan, Lasch, Brennan and Twenge and Campbell? One might suggest a common

theme in the focus on infantilism related to a decline in parental authority. Many of the noted arguments about narcissism can seem antiquated in an age where sexual reproduction is decoupled from gender. The woman who nowadays wishes to conceive a child has no more need of a man than a gardener has of a plant; choice is a matter of browsing through a seed catalogue. The psychoanalytic discussion foreshadowed this by removing Oedipus and the father from centre stage and directing the spotlight of attention onto the immense power held by the mother. Authors lament the declining power of the male in society, a trend that was noted by Freud, for whom the male constitutes the site of vital, symbolic authority. Their arguments for the reassertion of authority and family values in the face of an advancing 'culture of narcissism' can be argued simply to stoke the fires of social conservatism. Psychoanalysts might counter this to argue that real dangers are presented by allowing the decline in paternal authority to go unchecked; in a society where the symbolic potency of maleness fades towards oblivion, so the very idea of society itself comes under threat from the drift towards an imaginary hell of mirrors.

Some might suggest that what unites the otherwise disparate settings that range from the Neapolitan vendetta to the cycle of gang violence engulfing the hoods of Los Angeles is the breakdown of judicial authority, coupled to the ceaseless demand for revenge. This is not a matter of the existence of law but of its recognition as a symbolic authority existing at a higher level than that of the protagonists; without this, it is argued, the cycle of revenge will proliferate; as Girard says, 'it is because they detest violence that men make a duty of vengeance'.⁷⁴

On the other side of the argument lies concern at the equation of the male with the privileged space of the signifier. Writers wonder why it is assumed that the realm of culture and language should be reserved for the male sign of the phallus? Why is the female considered to be fundamentally lacking the phallus, and why can she enter this realm only as a token of exchange in this masculine economy? Such questioning has led Kristeva to pose the existence of a pre-symbolic space of the semiotic, consisting of the protolanguage shared between mother and infant. There is also the angry gaze of the mother, of real mothers who feel wrongly targeted and condemned by psychoanalysis.

Freud's selection of homosexuals and beautiful women as exemplars of narcissism appears antiquated today, when the focus has shifted to the metrosexual, who appeared in the 1990s alongside his icon, David Beckham. Metrosexuals are described as the new narcissists, being exhibitionists with money to spend, whose sexual orientation is entirely immaterial, having taken themselves as their own love objects.⁷⁵ Heightened male angst arising as a backlash to this androgynous figure found an outlet in the books and films of the time, from *Iron John* (Bly, 1990) to

Fight Club, *American Psycho* and *American Beauty*. *Fight Club* features Brad Pitt, smooth Calvin Klein model turned Hollywood pretty boy and one of Hollywood's most famous metrosexual males, who incongruously leads an all-boys-together rebellion against Calvin Klein, or rather, emasculating consumerism.

Baudrillard picks up on Freud's mention of the narcissism of beautiful women who hate themselves, arguing that Freud should have mentioned three forms of narcissism. The first two stages arise from conventional readings of Freud and Lacan, equating to primary or fusional narcissism and to secondary narcissism, as in the mirror stage. Baudrillard then argues there is also a tertiary narcissism today reflecting life in a capitalist consumer society, where body parts function in the same way as capital does in the system of exchange. Unlike the natural narcissism Freud observed in cats, this is a symbolic, disciplinary process where the body is made to conform to an ideal 'with no other alternative but to love itself, to invent itself and invest itself in accordance with socially imposed rules'.⁷⁶ René Girard (1987) focuses on Freud's mention of the narcissism of women to argue, in contrast to Freud, that surely the 'narcissism' revealed by these beautiful women, explaining this as a mimetic strategy pursued by the 'narcissist' who knows very well that nothing arouses the attention of a subject more than the apparent self-absorption of a model, a matter discussed further in the chapter on hysteria.

To conclude, there is a certain vagueness and all-encompassing quality about narcissism. Is narcissism a set of traits as suggested by the DSM? A dimensional construct? Or is it malleable to the extent that 'an individual can take on a narcissistic style of thinking'?⁷⁷ Narcissism can simply be a dustbin to which we consign anyone we don't like who is not 'us'. We and, more importantly, these otherwise weighty authors tend to label as narcissists anyone who in their opinion is dressed inappropriately (exhibitionism); who drives a car that they do not like, such as a Hummer (omnipotence); or who eats their food greedily. Fine (1986) argues that 'narcissism' has for centuries been used as a term of opprobrium or stigma in contemporary culture. Narcissism was not tolerated in ancient Greece, being equated with an extreme form of individualism that conflicted with the demands of the state for docile and obedient citizens. Ironically, a succession of rulers from the Roman emperor Nero onwards used the word 'narcissistic' as a means of labelling those whom they considered to be enemies of the state, whilst allowing themselves to be as narcissistic as they liked in terms of their own lifestyles. Fine argues that nowadays a kind of social panic has arisen around narcissism because what was once the sole province of the ruling-class, has now become that of the common man. Where some describe narcissism as a social pathology or virus, which, if left unchecked, could destroy all adult and civilized values, Fine links this to a form of popular and potentially

uncontrollable individualism that presents a potent threat to control by ruling elites.

Finally, Javanbakht (2006) has the audacity to argue that Freud got it wrong in the first place and presents a different psychoanalytic explanation of the myth. Rather than portraying Narcissus as the symbol of a self-absorbed person, he views him as a symbol of a youth who seeks the image of *anima*, a feminine mental image, in interpersonal love relationships, an image that can never be found in the real external world. He concludes that this quest is doomed and can result only in solitude. A fine time to tell us!

5

Death

Although the question of death features in Freud's earliest writings, this moves centre-stage in the two key papers discussed in this chapter: *Mourning and Melancholia* (Freud, [1917] 1991) and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, [1920] [1991]). Today, when the almost inevitable response to depression is medication, it is some comfort that Freud's insights have been revived (e.g. Leader, 2009) for an audience in search of movement beyond numbness.

Freud's discussion of mourning as a process involving a sudden loss and then a very gradual recovery of libido is akin to his earlier discussion of sexuality in that he extensively widens the meaning of the concept from its everyday context. Mourning is 'the loss of a loved person, or the loss of some abstraction, which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal and so on'.¹ Melancholia shares with mourning the sense of profound dejection, loss of interest in the outside world and a loss of the capacity to love. There are, however, differences between the two states which are explicable due to the role played by identification in the latter. In this paper Freud develops the role attributed to the 'watchful agency' described in his earlier paper on narcissism (Freud, 1991, [1914]), which is here cast as the villain of the piece in targeting aggression onto the ego of the melancholic.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* he substantively revises his account of the instincts by substituting a dualistic relation of the life and death instincts for his earlier work on the pleasure principle. Death was constantly in the air during the course of the First World War and its aftermath. Freud's life was by no means easy. In his analysis of Irma's dream in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he mentions his rheumatic shoulder. Long an inveterate smoker, he was diagnosed with cancer of the mouth in 1923 and suffered radiation treatment in addition to more than thirty operations, including one to fit an artificial palate and jaw. Freud continued to smoke although he knew that it was killing him. Looking at Freud's addiction from a 'Freudian' point of view, this stimulation of the membranes of the mouth, which was

ostensibly pleasurable, was somehow also beyond pleasure, being more important to him than his own life.

Mourning and Melancholia (1917)

In this paper, Freud distinguishes between two forms of relating to the loss of an object. He was particularly interested to discover that although a person is depressed when mourning for the lost object, there is no loss of self-esteem, whereas the situation is quite different with respect to melancholia.

Mourning: recovery of self

Love, which in the narcissistic stage represents the incorporation of all those things that provide satisfaction to the self, becomes transformed as a flowing over of ego-libido onto the object.² When the loved object dies or is lost, the energy which has been invested cannot be recovered at once but must be retrieved slowly and painfully through calling to mind each memory that binds libido to the lost object until the ties begin to lose their force.³ The person who mourns is beset by memories of the loved one, and it is by means of this commemoration that he comes gradually to be able adjust to the loss. Over time he learns to relive his relation to the lost object by recollecting the good and perhaps also some of the bad times, recognizing that this is the new way of relating to the loved one. When the work of mourning is complete the ego becomes free once more. Alternatively, Freud thought that the person can effectively deny reality and regress to an infantile state whereby he tries to cling to the lost object by hallucinating its existence through a wishful psychosis.

We mourn what we love. Giving cognizance to the view that we love what we need, we mourn the loss of the needed object that is now no more. Although Freud's paper focuses on the private aspects of mourning, this is a social process. When we lose a loved one or something that is of great value to us, the impact is immediate, experienced as a physical sensation in the body, as the world withdraws and darkens. The experience of grief can alternate between the rawest of emotions and an aloof and disembodied numbness. We lack an internal gauge to measure the gravity of the impact of our loss. The social world passes judgement on this through our interactions with others in the intimate contexts provided by family, friendship, peer group and the wider social context of funeral services and commemorations. Our grief may be policed in arbitrary and sometimes cruel ways by these others, whose judgement we take as our measure. I recall, for instance, the reaction of my schoolmates when I told them of the death of my grandfather; he was 'only a grandfather', and at our school you only got so many points for a grandfather. Parents were something else entirely; the child whose parents were killed in a car crash achieved brief celebrity status. There are the ritual questions and comments: 'Did they have children?'; 'It's

for the best'; 'They're in a better place now'; there is the politeness and the simmering anger. Policing of grief varies from one cultural context to the next; what is deemed to be aberrant behaviour in one place is in line with social expectations in another; for instance, in Bali women are discouraged from crying, whereas in Egypt, the opposite is the case.⁴

Given death is a social process, it is also symbolic. The person is unequivocally physically dead, but he must also be symbolically laid to rest so that he dwells in a place apart from the living. The complex rules prescribed by all of the great religions surrounding funeral rites and mourning rituals allow the potentially paralysing grip of the dead to be progressively loosened and let go so that those who are left behind can carry on living. Religions from Buddhism to Hinduism and Christianity prescribe complex rules for the exclusion and commemoration of the dead. The nature of mourning is sensitive to cultural context: some insist on cremation; others on burial; some that the body be absolutely intact; others that it be ritually fed to vultures. Culture dictates what is appropriate in terms of the nature and period of mourning. In India, for example, the now outlawed practice of sati insisted that the widow be immolated on the funeral pyre of her husband. The extensive mourning entered into by Queen Victoria for her beloved Albert had a major effect on the prescription of mourning for the British population. Albert died suddenly in 1861 from typhoid fever, precipitating a forty-year period of mourning for the queen, who insisted that his rooms be kept in exactly the same order as they had been when he was alive, with hot water and shaving equipment conveyed daily to his dressing room. While death was no stranger to those who lived under Victoria's rule, she made mourning fashionable. On notification of death, clocks in the household were stopped and mirrors covered in black drapes. Given the high mortality rates of the time, a main aspiration for the poor was to afford a 'decent' funeral for the deceased, something made affordable by payment on a monthly instalment plan. The rich could afford lavish funerals, the bier of the dead being laid on an elegant carriage, ferried to the expansive mausoleum that would be the journey's end by a team of prancing, plumed horses. The mourning industry provided the necessary accessories, including jet jewellery, black parasols, lace handkerchiefs, armbands and mourning cards. Time periods and appropriate dress for these were also specified. A woman in full mourning would be expected to wear a mourning bodice and skirt, mourning gloves and a crepe veil. The second stage of mourning, which could last from six months to life, entailed wearing less crepe, whereas the third stage, 'ordinary' mourning, required the complete removal of crepe.⁵ Mass media journalism did much to unsettle this state of affairs. One account notes that every time a new article appeared in the press specifying a variation in mourning procedures, mass hysteria would break out, and confused women would inundate the press with hundreds of letters as to what the correct state of affairs should be.

Sequestration of death

There is a strong line of argument which insists that death has been sequestered in the modern age (Mellor and Shilling, 1993), being denied in public life and pushed behind the scene (Willmott, 2000). Several authors portray this process as ongoing in the West for hundreds of years (Ariès, 1981; Elias, 1985; Baudrillard, 1994). Gorer (1965) remarks on the decline of mourning rituals in modern society; Elias that the civilizing process has cast a veil over ageing and death, which today are intensely lonely experiences. In this view the elderly are driven progressively to despair, being accorded little or no social worth, dying symbolically through retirement years before their physical death, consigned as nobodies to an infernal zombie existence in what are euphemistically called 'retirement communities' and 'care-homes'. Bauman (1996) argues that where primitive societies sought to incorporate their enemies by eating them, modern society spews out its elderly and the dead, beyond care.

Of all of these commentators on the fear of death thesis, Baudrillard (1995) offers the grandest vision. His ambition is to trace the genealogy of the process by which death was sequestered in modern life.⁶ He disagrees with the argument made above, that even in traditional societies the dead must be symbolically killed and kept apart from the living. Instead the dead remained a vital part of the life of early humans, constantly making their presence felt in ritual gift exchange with the living; for instance, by playing a role in initiation rites. In ancient times a gift relation existed, constituted by the reversibility of give and take between the social realms of the living and the dead. Engagement in this cycle of exchange was driven by the fear that what could not be exchanged constituted a mortal danger to the group, which would otherwise be plagued by 'unreconciled, unexpiated, sorcerous and hostile forces that prowl around soul and body'.⁷ Ancient societies were 'psychotic', embodying what by today's standards would be thought of as a 'gentle madness'. However, paradoxically, they were also symbolic. Given that the foreclosure of the symbolic order constitutes the classic psychoanalytic explanation for psychosis, then surely such an assertion is impossible? Baudrillard retorts that he is not referring to a symbolic order secured by a chief or father, as image of the signifier, but rather that the symbolic consists of, 'precisely this cycle of exchanges, the cycle of giving and returning', characteristic of primitive societies.⁸

It is the relation to exchange that constitutes the vital difference between death as it was experienced in pre-modern times and how it is now. The extradition of the dead from social life began with the inauguration, in Egypt, of the concept of the individual soul. First, it was only those of high rank such as royalty who were argued to possess the privilege of immortality. Christianity then universalized this idea by arguing that all are equal before death. Rather than consisting of a two-way exchange, death slowly but surely became regarded as a one-way ticket to individual immortality. Baudrillard allows that some form of cyclical exchange with the dead

occurred in Europe up until around AD 1600 but that this came to an end with the modern development of individualism. Death in the modern world is de-socialized; where the ancients had their doubles amongst the dead who acted as their exchange partners, we have nobody. The symbolic exchange with death persists, but the price that we moderns pay is to live with a crushing anxiety and anguish about death, which we must face alone. The great modern enterprise is one of seeking to abolish death or at least trying to stave it off by means of material production and accumulation, which is the labour referred to by Weber as embodying the 'spirit' of capitalism. This is the fundamental motor of political economy, where time as value is accumulated in the phantasm of death deferred.

Others argue along similar although less grandiose lines to assert that death poses considerable problems today. It is argued that modernist developments of science and consumer individualism have led to the decline of religious observance. Death has become a shameful act, moving behind the scenes to be dealt with by experts (Bauman 1996). Ros Coward notes the particular difficulties posed today by the decline of traditional religion.⁹ Those who attend religious funeral services are often not believers, and consequently, religious services can lack meaning and depth because those who attend find it difficult to follow the religious rites and do not know the clergy involved in administering them. The decline of formal religion has resulted in a great increase in 'DIY' funerals, which in Coward's view have the feel of parties where the main guest is absent. She bemoans the fact that the focus on the celebration of the life of the deceased has all but shut out the main fact: grief. By contrast, she asserts that traditional religious settings allow for mourning; for example, Islam has a six-week mourning period, and Christian rites include grief as well as celebration. Commenting on the funeral of the British Queen Mother, she notes how commentators had focused on how 'dignified' this was by comparison to that of Diana, Princess of Wales. However, she cautions that in all such public outpourings of grief, those who are grieving are mourning themselves and their own.

Baudrillard has some strange bedfellows amongst the consumer research fraternity, for whom the realm of social theory would be as foreign a territory as their method would be to him. The modern consumer is depicted as striving to deny and repress death (Greenberg et al., 1990), of which unconscious awareness leads to intense feelings of vulnerability, which have the potential to create an overwhelming terror. Terror management theory posits that cultural conceptions of reality act as buffers against the anxiety and dread that is ultimately related to the fear of death. Such fear is scarcely new. Freud (1918) expresses beautifully the stasis this engenders, borne out in modern anxieties about flying, 'hidden diseases' and so forth.

Life becomes impoverished and loses its interest when life itself, the highest stake in the game of living, must not be risked. It becomes as hollow and empty as an American flirtation in which it is understood from

the beginning that nothing is to happen, in contrast to a continental love affair in which both partners must always bear in mind the serious consequences.¹⁰

The above can also be read to suggest the paradox that, although we may live in mortal terror of death, life without some prospect of death is not worth the candle. In this vein one can understand why westerners who engage in dark tourism, or thanatourism,¹¹ are motivated by a craving for authenticity, as a reaction against the 'hollow and empty' life described by Freud (op. cit.). Some argue that this quest has had the perverse effect of commodifying funerary rituals in the countries frequented by these tourists, which are re-modelled according to tourist needs and preferences.¹² Butcher (2010) describes a darker motive for his visit to Liberia in the footsteps of Graham Greene as a direct attempt to understand the 'pure evil witnessed here between the wars'. This raises the unsettling possibility that exotic experiences of spirituality and of the evil surrounding death can arouse obscene excitement and enjoyment.¹³

Seale (1998) accepts many of the arguments made above in relation to sequestration, including the imposition of social death, management of dying by experts and the decline in formal rituals. However, he disputes the extent to which this has become a taboo and argues instead that death is not accepted as being 'natural' to tribes either. Advances in medical science have led to the growing perception that death is perceived to be a natural event tended by a large group of experts.¹⁴ In modern society great efforts are made to construct most deaths as being 'natural' by controlling premature death and reducing physical suffering. Death is actively managed in modernity and can be seen as 'the result of a characteristically modern, full-square and unflinching facing of death at the personal level'.¹⁵ Seale laments that many of those who write about death are ignorant of what actually happens in modern health care settings, where there is stress on values of emotional accompaniment and support for families in helping people to die more visibly in the community. Social movements have arisen to challenge the dominance of professionals at funerals.¹⁶ Embalming, which is often equated with the denial of the harsh physical reality of death, can alternatively be understood as a symbolic affirmation of the value of a natural death occurring at the end of a long life, akin to falling asleep.¹⁷ Parsons argues that acceptance of death is such that there is a suicidal component in a very large component of ordinary deaths since many people reach a point where they consciously or unconsciously will themselves to die.¹⁸

Closure?

From Freud's argument, one might conclude that eventually, when all of the painful memories of the loved one have been lived through, one can simply 'let go' of the dead and bring the process of mourning to 'closure'.¹⁹ In my

reading of this paper, Freud is making a crucially different point, which is that by the end of the process of mourning one has managed to construct a frame within which to locate the beloved as separable from the self, so that one is no longer held with them in the potentially annihilating grip of death but is sufficiently recovered so as to be able to reach outwards and to invest in new relations. The dead remain with us, but the quality of the relationship is changed, and we are able to take up our own lives again once more.²⁰ Nevertheless, Freud's paper has been read in a way to suggest that the mourner should strive to put death behind him and move on. Klass et al. (1996) provide a useful corrective to this by arguing that the relationship with the dead continues, yet changes over time. The relationship with the dead persists through ritual practices of remembrance and persists in material culture. O'Donohoe and Turley have explored the use of a particular practice in Ireland, which is to insert memoriam notices in local newspapers on the anniversary or birthday of the deceased.²¹

Discussion

While the relatively few studies conducted by consumer researchers to date are welcome, they differ hugely in terms of their focus and in socio-cultural context, ranging from Africa²² to the USA, a London street²³ and Ireland.²⁴ With the exception of the last, these are cross-sectional snapshots. Yet there exist enormous differences in attitudes towards death and in practices towards the dead within cultures. I recognize that it is 'unscientific' to reflect on one's own experience; nevertheless, in my tradition perceptions of death have changed immeasurably over the years. Religion in my town held a much stronger sway in the 1960s. What are regarded today as superstitions, such as belief in ghosts, were then fervently attested to by adults, and in the countryside people walked warily around fairy trees and mounds. We believed that a woman in my mother's family was warned of an impending death by the *bean sidh*, the companion family spirit. Today, all of that has more or less vanished. Yet we still hold a traditional wake, where the body of the deceased is displayed in a coffin in the house prior to the funeral, which is often attended by hundreds. There is another collective ceremony one month later and thereafter an annual commemoration. We distribute memorial cards of the dead person, but unlike O'Donohoe and Turley's respondents (*ibid.*), we do not post memorials in the newspapers, although other families do. Dealing with death couldn't have been more different for my wife, whose family practice differs in almost every respect from what is described above. Yet we share a very similar cultural milieu.

Melancholia

Although melancholia shares aspects in common with mourning, Freud noticed several aspects that were quite different. People suffering melancholic

depression often failed to recognize the source of their malady. They were prone to engage in public bouts of self-criticism, describing themselves as, 'petty, egoistic, dishonest, lacking in independence' and so on.²⁵ This puzzled Freud because, although capable of lambasting themselves in such terms, they showed virtually no sign of shame. Rather the opposite seemed true; they found satisfaction in insistently communicating these messages to others.

These symptoms led Freud to conjecture that the explanation for melancholia is ultimately connected to the loss of an object which has been withdrawn from consciousness. But why also the complete lack of self-regard, insistence on self-abnegation, abasement, and lack of shame? Freud felt that the similarity between mourning and melancholia is that the ego has invested libido into an object which has been lost, but this has not been occasioned by its death but rather by means of rejection, a slight or disappointment that has shattered the object relation. Instead of the normal process of mourning, which involves the process of commemoration, withdrawal of libido from the object and its transfer onto something else, in melancholia libido is withdrawn directly into the subject's ego, where it forms an *identification*. The person has invested ego-libido into an object which either rejects him by means of a slight or which otherwise disappoints him. The person who has been slighted tries to incorporate the object into the ego in order to contain and thus to master it. But the self is split into two aspects. The ego is the psychic agency associated with mastery and authority that, by regressing to a primitive oral state, seeks to cope with the effects of the rejection by swallowing it up or incorporating it into itself. But the ego is constantly watched over by another agency, which has been formed on the basis of the ego-ideal and represents that part of the ego that sets itself up over the ego and judges it critically. The person can view himself from one of two subject positions; the ego or the watchful agency – later to be referred to as the superego. The superego position is that of the accuser, or judge; as in 'I'm useless', even to the extent of referring to the self as you, 'You idiot!'. Freud noticed the role of the accuser to be dominant in the melancholics he listened to. In contradistinction to those who mourned, melancholics were low in self-esteem. Listening to their self-criticisms, he came to the remarkable understanding that these criticisms did not so much fit the person himself but someone else. He concluded that these self-reproaches were in fact reproaches against the loved object who had slighted the melancholic and which had been shifted to the melancholic person's own ego.

Thus, melancholic depression is the outcome of unconscious self-criticism. The person can be full of shame and self-loathing, deriving a grim pleasure in unleashing the full force of its aggression onto their own ego. Freud thought that this overwhelming of the ego by the object explains the tendency to suicide in melancholics. If this does not happen, then the road

to recovery follows the same broad path as that for mourning, with the exception that melancholia can quickly swing towards mania. In mania the ego must get over the mourning for the loss of the object so that the energy which bound itself to the ego becomes available. The manic subject demonstrates his liberation from the object which was the cause of his suffering by seeking, like a ravenously hungry man, new objects such as hobbies.

The most common experience must surely be when one has been spurned by a loved one or when the loved one or you have moved on. The emigrant loses his entire habitus,²⁶ that variegated nexus of the familiar, including smells, colours, landscapes, sounds, rituals, temporal rhythms, people and pets. In Ireland during that period of emigration from the 1840s to the 1960s, an 'American wake' would be held to mourn the living who ventured westwards, in all probability, never to see their homeland again. Such profound dejection blooms readily into art; Andy Irvine's *West Coast of Clare* conveys an air of plaintive desolation over and above the loss of a person, to the spirit of the landscape. What then for those whose habitus is destroyed by conquest of war, natural disaster or a combination of both?

Some may find Freud's assertion that the melancholic is not conscious of his loss difficult to fathom. This does not seem to square with the above examples, where those who suffer know very well what is troubling them; although one could argue that at another level they do not recognize that their pain evokes a more primal painful separation. Jonathon Lear provides a good example of the operation of melancholic identification. A patient tells him that he (the patient) is unkind and ungenerous and wants Lear to help him to identify the steps he should take to remedy this situation. Lear surmises that the difficulty, which the patient is not aware of, is that this supposedly ethical examination of the patient's unkindness covers over his rage at the fact that his father has been unkind to him. The anger that should have been directed at the father (the object) is instead directed at the self. Lear concludes that, as a result, the person is utterly confused in his attempts to understand himself and to live with others.²⁷

Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920)

In his early work Freud wrote of Eros, the life force comprising the ego and sexual instincts. The role of the ego instinct within this scheme lies in self-preservation, in seeking to master the world and adjusting to the demands of reality. Freud was never really satisfied with this explanation. He was particularly struck by the experiences of soldiers returning from the First World War who were plagued by horrific hallucinations. These were different to dreams and more like cinematic films, replaying real-life experiences time and again in horrific detail. Such dreams could not be explained by the

pleasure principle, where the role of the ego acts primarily in the interests of self-preservation, because of the acute distress and discomfort caused to the dreamer.

In part two of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud describes his observation of the superficially innocuous game the infant played with his cotton reel (known as the 'fort-da' game (described in [Chapter Three](#) of this text). By means of his observation Freud thought that this simple game held the key to the question of what happens to those who are traumatized by war or indeed by any event that is beyond the subject's capacity to absorb it. The game involved the child taking a cotton reel and throwing it away (saying 'fort', or 'gone') and then retrieving it (saying 'da', or 'back'), this action representing his way of trying to come to terms with the absence of his mother. By means of the symbolic representation of the real loss, through substituting the cotton reel for his real mother, the child learns, through repetition, to overcome and so to master this 'narcissistic scar'. Freud crucially recognized the symbolic nature of the activity. The ability to symbolize enables the creation of a representation, an objectification that can literally be turned over in the mind. For the child this process is symbolized through the utilization of the prosthesis of the cotton reel whereby he masters the original trauma by means of repetition, turning it over again and again.

The 'fort-da' game enabled Freud to recognize two characteristics exhibited by his patients. First, they found it exceedingly difficult to remember what they had repressed. Secondly, they had 'an unwished for exactitude' in repeating the nature of the trauma they first experienced. If a person was scorned as a child, he would continue to make himself scorned in adult life; if abused as a child, he would continue to seek abasement as an adult. He thought the compulsion to repeat to have nothing to do with the unconscious which always strives to repress disturbing experiences. Rather, he thought this must relate to the unconscious part of the ego. The majority of what is repeated brings distress because it causes the ego displeasure. Freud's explanation for this trauma is that the ego, by means of its engagement with the external world, comes gradually to erect a protective shield against it. In severely traumatic circumstances this shield is penetrated by some powerful external force. External stimuli that penetrate the protective shield disable the pleasure principle. Consequently, the mind is flooded by stimuli, leaving the problem of how to master these. Freud conjectured the existence of a process even more primitive than the pleasure principle. For those traumatized by war, the pleasure principle is placed in suspense until the ego has mastered the traumatic events by creating them as word representations, thereby allowing the subject to experience the anxiety relating to them and so 'live them off'. This line of reasoning led him to speculatively recast his theory of the instincts into a distinctly dualist explanation, where two kinds of processes are at once at work in the subject: one constructive and assimilative; the other destructive and dissimulative.

Freud conjectured that the most fundamental and ancient instinct represents the urge inherent in organic life, which is to return to an earlier state. He felt compelled to craft a general theory that could accommodate all forms of life, from the simplest organisms to the most complex. Left to themselves, without external stimulation, the simplest organisms would merely repeat the same course of life. Humans, too, in company with every other living thing, are stimulated to action and growth only by external circumstances. The ultimate aim for all life is death, which returns it to its original inanimate state. He speculated that self-preservation instincts are merely components whose task is to ensure that the organism follows its own road to death and these instincts fend off threats that seek to bring this about prematurely. Organisms, including humans, seek to die in their own fashion. This explains why the organism struggles energetically against events that seek to help to end its life before it thinks its own time has come. Shortly after this he paints a picture of his new formulation in vivid prose:

It is as though the life of the organism moved with a vacillating rhythm. One group of instincts rushes forward so as to reach the final aim of life as quickly as possible; but when a particular stage in the advance has been reached, the other group jerks back to a certain point to make a fresh start and so prolong the journey.²⁸

This dualism relates to the life instincts and the death instincts.

The life process of the individual leads for internal reasons to an abolition of chemical tensions, that is to say, to death, whereas union with the living substance of a different individual increases those tensions, introducing what may be described as fresh vital differences which must then be 'lived off'.²⁹

the fundamental desire is that to restore an earlier state of things in Aristophanes' tale in the *Symposium* (Plato, 1999), where the humans sliced in half by Zeus, pine for their original.³⁰

Beyond Freud

As might be expected, Freud's followers each followed their own unique trajectories. Erik Erikson developed an eight-stage scheme of the crises that a person can expect to encounter during his life course. The earliest stages map onto the challenges that Freud had already outlined in relation to the oral, anal and phallic stages of development. Erikson argued in line with this that the first challenges involve the infant in learning to trust caregivers, then learning a sense of autonomy and how to cope with shame. In adolescence the identity crisis is the pivot around which the subsequent

development of identity swings. Later in life the maturing adult may start to think of his legacy in relation to initiatives that will help and support his family or future generations. Finally, the aging adult confronts the question of whether it was all worth it, either succeeding in integrating life's disappointments and coming to terms with death or succumbing to despair.

If death makes an appearance later on in the life of the subject in Erikson's scheme, it arrives much earlier in the theories of Jacques Lacan. Lacan argues that the person is poisoned by death at the very moment that they become inaugurated as subjects 'barred' by language; 'The drive that circles round the excavated centre of being, is pulled outwards towards the objects that promise gratification, but inwards too towards the completest form of a loss that it already knows.'³¹ Lacan returns time and again in his writing to Freud's account of the '*fort-da*'. In his view this represents several things at once. He agrees with Freud, that through the game the child is trying to master the mother's absence. The game also involves the substitution of the symbol for the real thing and so indicates that the child has by now been inaugurated into the Symbolic order by using words to signify what he means. More profoundly, the '*fort-da*' game represents a fundamental loss or hole in the child's subjectivity.

By means of his use of language, the boy has managed the passage from the bliss of union with his mother into another place entirely. This is the realm of culture, where one is assigned a role, where one can never be everything or the sole object of desire for another. It is the movement from Imaginary union with the mother to the Symbolic that thus injects the child with a sense of death. The resultant hole in the self provides the motor for a rootless desire which constantly reaches outwards in the (vain) search for gratification and fulfilment; however, desire is also pulled 'inwards' towards the gap itself. This means that our desires often appear to be contradictory; what is 'life-affirming' is often simultaneously related to loss. Such a view prompts the researcher to explore the nature of 'perverse' pleasures, such as smoking, to investigate the nature of the ecstasy in agony, the preoccupation with images of death in youth culture and other instances where Eros and the nirvana principle work hand in glove. In this explanation addiction may be viewed in a number of ways: as an unrealizable bid to 'get back to the garden' of the pre-imaginary real or as part of the oscillation in the subject between the imaginary and symbolic realms.

Selling death

In understanding Freud's later work, it is useful to consider the context in which this developed. In his earlier career he had written jubilantly of cocaine's 'benign' effects and enthusiastically prescribed it to his patients. However, throughout his life he struggled with cigarette addiction, which provoked several cancers and eventually led to his death. Sadie Plant argues that Freud's cigarette addiction played a role in the controversial revision

to his theory, which he made in later life. Given that Freud was a cigarette addict, it is perhaps appropriate to illustrate his change of position using the example of cigarettes. Stephen Klein (1993) notes that:

[s]ince the early nineteenth century, it has been recognized that the alkaloid of nicotine, administered to rats in pure form in minute doses, instantly produces death. No one who smokes fails eventually to get the signals that the body, with increasing urgency, sends as it ages; in fact every smoker probably intuits the poison from the instant of experiencing the first violent effects of lighting up, and probably confirms his understanding every day with the first puffs of the first cigarette. But understanding the noxious effects of cigarettes is not usually sufficient reason to cause anyone to stop smoking or resist starting; rather, knowing it is bad seems an absolute precondition of acquiring and confirming the cigarette habit.³²

The above rings true from my adolescent experience of painful introduction to the noxious weed. We can actively desire and experience a negative pleasure in the unwholesome, courting the possibility of pain and thrilling to its attendant dangers. Moral opprobrium in this context merely adds zest to the experience. In this light one can view Freud's conceptualization of the nirvana principle as a complement to that of Eros. In this more complex view the human organism is continually pulled in two directions, with the sexual instinct striving for life, growth and development and the nirvana principle working to restore this to an earlier state.

It is understandable that Alastair McIntosh (1996), who dedicates his paper to memory of his father who died from lung cancer, is no fan of the tobacco industry. He finds its actions particularly insidious due to its use of death imagery to market its products. There is no doubt that from the 1950s onwards, the tobacco industry behaved despicably towards its customers, whom its products maimed and killed in the millions. Not only did the tobacco producers tell a pack of lies to conceal their knowledge about the risks of smoking, they also compromised and corrupted scientists, academics and politicians. The development and marketing of 'lite' cigarettes is a case in point, effectively associating the noxious weed, which one had to draw on harder to get a 'hit', with the images of airiness, fun and happiness associated with 'light'. The ultimate implication is 'Lighten up, life's too short, you may as well enjoy yourself!' Lacan, who, like Freud, was a cigar man, would no doubt have enjoyed that idea as an illustration of the deadly power of jouissance beyond the limits of pleasure, the possession of which makes life worth living. Alastair McIntosh isn't bothered about the perversity of jouissance but rather with that of Big Tobacco, who brought death into our living rooms in a series of wonderfully crafted advertisements in the 1980s and 1990s. The mandatory introduction in 1971 of

the strapline 'WARNING by H.M. Government, SMOKING CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH', which was updated in 1991 to say 'SERIOUSLY DAMAGE', was taken seriously by the industry. In conventional terms the ads for Silk Cut and Benson and Hedges were insane; there was no copy nor any sign of the company name, the product, brand name or logo. The ads used surrealist imagery that appeared nonsensical. In fact, the only way that the viewer could be certain that this was a cigarette advertisement was by noting the government health warning emblazoned at the bottom. Very clever! By means of this strategy the 'warning' changed its meaning, from alerting the viewer to the dangers of smoking to affirming that, yes, this really is a cigarette ad. Working out what the brand is then becomes a simple matter of abduction. McIntosh compiled and decoded a collection of these ads. Those for *Silk Cut*, frequently featured silk slashed by a knife or shown alongside knives or scissors. One iconic advertisement closely resembled the famous shower scene from *Psycho*. The advertisements were not all like that. One poster from 1995 shows a row of people lined up outside a toilet. They are standing or crouched, dressed in purple silk with chess pawns on their heads. A knife hangs on the door. When McIntosh described this to an M&C Saatchi staff member as 'dying for a fag', he was corrected; the intended meaning was 'dying for a slash'. McIntosh argues that the role played by these advertisements was to unconsciously prime consumers with images of death. The consumer is portrayed as having no real choice but to accept the brand; like a rape fantasy, she might just lie back and take it. Astonishingly, when he discussed these advertisements with advertising creatives, they said that they genuinely had not intended to use images of death. As proof of this he tells the reader that when he 'pointed out' his interpretation of the latent meaning of the ads to a creative involved in their production, the man quit his job. McIntosh's analysis isn't entirely one-way. He appreciates that the destructive aspect of drugs constitutes a powerful appeal for the young. However, he interprets the ads as reinforcing a spiritual vacuum where religion has largely failed in its role of providing emotional expression for matters of ultimate concern. In this light he asks whether modern cigarette advertising

is one of the most malevolent missionary endeavours of all time. Might the companies, nationally and transnationally, be seen as veritable Molochs: fiery tombs that consume the children for nothing but their own balance sheet salvation.³³

In terms of their dark genius, the *Silk Cut* and *Benson and Hedges* campaigns have only possibly been bettered by that for *DEATH*TM cigarettes, which was also devised in the 1990s. Rather than hiding death behind images of yellowed teeth, sharp objects, or predatory killers, juxtaposed in a variety of surreal settings, this brand stated the truth that is obvious to all: cigarettes

kill; the campaign thus anticipated government health warnings by several years. The starkness and naivety of the ads were disarming. Better still was the guarantee to donate a proportion of the price to a cancer charity. One might also say that *DEATH*TM promotion campaigns contained the ultimate lie about advertising; by saying that they are totally honest and totally transparent, they invite the readers to believe that they, too, are acting transparently and authentically in buying *DEATH*TM. They are thus asking us to believe that their appeal is beyond imagery or, in other words, that these are not advertisements. But of course, they are.

The tobacco industry continues to fight tooth and nail against those minnows, such as McIntosh, who inveigh against it. True to form, a large tobacco company (Philip Morris) tried to get its hands on the confidential data compiled by social marketers at Stirling University.³⁴ The Centre for Tobacco Control in its various guises has long been a thorn in the side of the tobacco industry; a lone David that conducts social marketing research to alert an otherwise unsuspecting public to the various forms of skulduggery that Goliath engages in. Which raises the question, *is the public unsuspecting?* This is the rock that the millions of pounds being currently poured into social marketing campaigns may founder on. The truth is that since the late 1950s and despite the best attempts of Big Tobacco to make it look as if smoking was just another risk amongst many, consumers have been made well aware of the dangers of smoking. What McIntosh and the Centre for Tobacco Control are saying may well be true, but there is an even darker truth lying in wait behind the door of one's own house, which is that maybe McIntosh's father and my own, to an extent preferred *jouissance* to their own survival – and that is maybe what Alastair is really angry about.

Addiction: administration of *jouissance*

The foregoing calls us back to the consumer experience, specifically that of the addict. To what extent is addiction related to the death drive? Toxicomania, or addiction to a drug, is never simply about the drugs. One early account (Rado, 1933) links the appeal of drugs to the desire for return to an oceanic feeling of oneness between self and other in an original narcissistic state. This desire is prompted by the ego, which is threatened not only by the challenges presented by the environment but also by the death drive, which threatens to annihilate it. Drugs thus function in helping to bolster the ego in its battle against the death drive. The problem is that the feeling of inflation is only temporary, and when the drugs wear off, the feelings of guilt and depression return. Loose (2000; 2002) fundamentally disagrees with the foregoing idea that presents an ego that is under siege from the death drive, arguing that it is a misunderstanding of both terms. Arguing from a Lacanian perspective, he considers the ego as itself sick, consisting of no more than a pile of identifications, one of which is with death, in an attempt to dissolve itself so that it can return to its original state. In

this view, death and aggression do not threaten the ego from outside but are instead a fundamental part of its constitution.

Loose's argument, that toxicomania concerns the organization of *jouissance* in relation to the constitution of the subject in the field of the Other, requires explanation. This is based on Lacan's later formulations of the relation between the subject and the body, where he reversed his earlier theory regarding the relation of the body to the Symbolic. In his earlier work Lacan conceived of the body as being fragmented and organized by language. In a second round of theorizing, he reversed this position to argue that the body is originally cohesive but is then torn apart by the signifiers of the desires and the demands of the Other. The body that is invaded by language (the Other) cannot be our own because its reality is based on what comes from outside, from identification in the mirror and the Symbolic,

For the enjoyment of the pleasure zones the subject can only borrow parts of this body from the Other, but can no longer be united with it. The incorporation of the signifier leads to a cutting out of these pleasure zones from the body. This brings them outside the body where they soak up its *jouissance* and where they can be sexually and only partially enjoyed in a movement of build-up, climax and come-down. Sex has a beginning and an end which is why it is never completely satisfactory and makes us long for another *jouissance*, a *plus-de-jouir*. (Loose, 2002)

One explanation for addiction lies in the pursuit of this *plus-de-jouir* towards a total enjoyment that is beyond pleasure. In Lacan's explanation there remains a part of the body which is not conquered by the signifier and provides *jouissance* that is experienced as tension and anxiety that demands to be drowned out if it is not kept at a sufficient distance. Loose quotes from the bible of toxicomania, Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*, particularly the part where he argues that junk doesn't just relieve tension but rather the whole life process (2002: 41). There are thus two roads to addiction: the first, in the search for a *jouissance* that is beyond pleasure as the only thing worth living for; the second, in seeking relief from a *jouissance* that is a constant source of pain. The challenge for the analyst in addressing this kernel of resistance to the Symbolic is to enable the addiction to be translated into discourse.

Denying death

In contrast to Alistair McIntosh and sharing something with Lacan, Ernest Becker argues that humans have a profound fear, extending to a terror of death against which culture acts as a carapace, or shield. His influential book *The Denial of Death* (1973) owes much to the reformulation of Freud's work by Otto Rank and Norman O. Brown. Control is central to this work, particularly the fear of loss of control, of being torn apart. For Rank the

root of the problem lies in the dualistic perception of self into mind and body. Becker quotes Erich Fromm in noting that at the heart of the human condition is the insane conjunction of a symbolic self that seems to be of infinite worth and promise tied to a body worth 98 cents.³⁵ The child cannot handle either end of this dualism, growing up so quickly that he can master neither body nor mind. From the start the child takes himself as his project in seeking to master the world, but he develops too quickly. He does not understand the need for rules that seem to serve the purpose only of distracting him from his pleasures. When he seeks to master his body by turning to symbolism;(one might here recall Segal's [1957] idea of the symbolic equation), the body overwhelms him and 'submerges him in vomit or excrement'.³⁶ The body is used, too, by the child to assert himself in protest against symbolic rules: the child deliberately soils himself or wets the bed in protest against their imposition. According to Becker, the child seems to be saying that the body is his primary reality and that he wants to remain in this simpler physical Eden and not be thrown into the world of 'right and wrong'. The two dimensions of human existence, the body and the mind, can never be reconciled seamlessly. In this respect Becker argues that psychoanalysis reveals to us that the existential truth of the human condition is that we pretend not to be mad, that evil lies in the toll that the pretence of sanity takes as humankind tries to deny its true condition.³⁷

Analinity and dualism

For Becker, analinity crystallizes the dualism of the human condition that divides the self from the body. Analinity and its problems arise in childhood because it is then when the child makes the alarming discovery that his body is strange and fallible. Try as he might to fly from this realization in fantasy, the child must always return to the reality that is his body. Most degrading of all is the hole that is to his lower rear and out of sight, the source of stinking smells and an even more disagreeable substance. At first the child is amused by his anus and faeces and gaily inserts his finger into the orifice, smearing shit on whatever surface is to hand. This is a universal form of play that helps the infant to master strangeness and to control aspects of his world. Nature's values are bodily, and human values are mental; the difficulty is that although such 'human' values take the loftiest flights of fancy, they are built on excrement, impossible without it, being always brought back to it. He quotes Montaigne: 'On the highest throne in the world man sits on his arse', adding the tag 'underneath this, is a warm and fuming pile of their own excrement'.³⁸ This, for Becker, is the tragedy of human dualism; the anus and its repulsive product represent not only physical determinism and boundedness but also the fate of all that is physical – namely, decay and death. In this respect the 'anal' character, who has grown to develop reaction formations to this early analinity, tries especially hard to protect himself against the accidents of life and death in seeking

to use the symbols of culture to triumph over embodiment, trying to pass himself off as anything but an animal.

For Becker the child trains himself by trying to shape himself into the controller of his destiny.³⁹ From the beginning of his auto-erotic life, the narcissistic infant seeks to make his body into the engine of his control. Believing himself to be the centre of the universe, he believes, too, that he can control the world by controlling the mother. Through the anal phase he seeks to achieve mastery over the release of faeces. During the Oedipal phase children of both genders turn away from the sheer physicality of the mother. Becker describes in visceral terms the shock and horror of the discovery of sexual difference. In contradistinction to Freud, for Becker this shock leads, not to the contemplation of castration, but to the realization by the child that the attempt to make the body one's project is doomed because no body is whole. From this point onward the child begins to envelop himself in a protective skin that shields him from the reality of his mortality and helps him cope with this primeval fear.

The fundamental lie at the centre of human character is premised on the child's flight from the existential terror posed by the reality of existence in the world. Human cultures have evolved means for living with terror that could otherwise threaten to overwhelm the self by employing means that principally involve its repression. This blunting of the true nature of experience is double-edged. On the one hand, the majesty and beauty of the world is diminished; on the other, culture acts as a buffer that enables one to live a relatively equable existence. The denial of anxiety represented by repression leads to human existence as a lie in that the reality of the world is falsified in the course of the establishment of defences against it. This is true in the most fundamental sense that people conceive themselves to 'be' somebody, as free, self-determining agents. In this light Becker explains that an essential part of this is composed of a fear of self-knowledge. Humans seek to protect their self-esteem and are scared of any knowledge that might lead them to despise themselves. They construct a carapace, a fantasy or illusion made up of their glib everyday conversations and roles, while underneath lies the fear that is the true authentic self.

In this view anxiety is the spur that motivates human action. We forge symbolic relationships with others in order that we might receive some relief from being alone and helpless. On the other hand, such ties are perceived to be binding and enslaving and so we strain against them in order to become free once more. However, in so doing and unconscious of our motives, we are thereby straining against the armour based on those very relationships we initially clung to for fear of the abyss. Life becomes a play of seeking to live within limits and then seeking to transcend these. Becker is insistent that when one plays with such limits, one is playing with a screen and not the reality. The screen is human made – the stock market, a

career move, or even engagement in 'extreme' experiences, such as white-water rafting or mountain climbing. Against the reality of despair, asserts Becker, we play with toys that represent the real world in the playpen of our fantasies (Becker, 1973: 57).

Becker's work invites us to consider the sway that the fear of death has over us. This can be discussed in two ways. First, it may help us to gain a purchase on the desire for immortality. Alternatively, one can explore how the fear of death relates to consumption.

Fear of death: spice of life?

Freud's description of the 'vacillating rhythm' of life accords with experiences such as sailing, and walking in high places, that provide a compulsive blend of anxiety, dread, relief and elation and occasionally, scare one to death. The question is, how far to go? Lacan retells the scenario presented by the philosopher Kant in the *Critique of Practical Reason*: 'Suppose, says Kant, that in order to control the excesses of a sensualist, one produces the following situation. There is in a bedroom the woman he currently lusts after. He is granted the freedom to enter that room to satisfy his desire or his need, but next to the door through which he will leave there stands the gallows on which he will be hanged' (1975: 108). Kant takes the outcome for granted, arguing that, by weighing up the benefits and costs, it is clear that the man will conclude that it is better to live another day. Lacan turns Kant's example on its head; in psychoanalysis one regularly encounters subjects who can fully 'enjoy' a night of passion only if they are threatened with some form of 'gallows'. Might the answer to the question of how far one would go be 'all the way'?

Baudrillard enlists the arguments of George Bataille to argue that Freud simply does not go far enough to recognize the radical potential of death. He cites *Civilization and Its Discontents*, the last of Freud's major texts, where Eros consists of an enormous detour towards death (Baudrillard, 1995: 149), to support his argument that death reigns supreme. In this view death is not at all a breakdown of life but is actively willed by life itself. He asks the same question as Lacan: Would life be worth living if we could not risk death? For Baudrillard, Bataille offers an, 'excessive and luxuriant vision of death that removes it from psychoanalysis and its individual and physical domain', a vision that threatens to shatter the mirrors of political economy and repression (1995: 158). How does this square with the operation of political economy as a means of staving off death through accumulation? Baudrillard argues that political economy results in a kind of nirvana. By engaging in the accumulation of dead value over time, prompted by the desire to forestall death, it becomes an economy of death. Counterposed to this is the death drive itself, the ultimate finality, which holds up a mirror before pointless consuming accumulation.

Desire for immortality

If fear of death is salient, then what routes are followed by those who seek to deny the worms their supper? There are means by which humanity has learned to symbolically challenge, if not surmount, the fear of death. Most religious systems offer consolation to the living for those who have died, that they have not died in vain. Perhaps more so, they offer them the prospect of immortal bliss, provided of course that one has led a good and upright life. Through aeons the rulers of great empires have sought to evade God's judgement by means of the expedient of having themselves declared gods.

In the *Symposium* (Plato, 1999) Socrates argues that the ultimate desire is for immortality, which can be achieved through procreation of the body or of the mind. Procreation of the body can be a poor surrogate in that it contributes towards the immortality of the genes and not of the individual self (cf. Becker, 1973: 163). The contents of a beautiful and fertile mind are more beautiful than those of the body. Immortality of a kind can be achieved only by those of true outstanding genius. The fact that one could continue to fill the list indefinitely can induce a sense of vertigo when one realizes that the great names of our day, save maybe for one or two – Einstein? Mandela? – will be lost to posterity with the passing of one or two generations. Consequently, a greater and more lasting nobility is achieved when one who is pregnant in mind produces offspring. Rachel Bowlby (1993) relates the fascinating tale of the birth of psychoanalysis, a story that in addition to Freud's pregnancy, which leads to the irruption of psychoanalysis into the world, involves two phantom pregnancies; one physical, the other mental.

Consumer goods have played a role in immortality since the ancients dressed the dead in their finery to equip them for their new life beyond the grave. They play an obvious symbolic function in their role as props to sustain socially appropriate funeral rites and rituals. The death business is especially lucrative. The excess of a person's death must be matched by that of the funeral, and so it is rare for the bereaved to challenge the undertaker's price.

Near the beginning of *The Winter Market* (Gibson, 1995), the narrator learns that Lise is dead – but that she'd phone him in the morning. Lise, whose human life consists of being wired up into a battery-powered exoskeleton to enable her to walk and is also 'wired on wiz' to enable her to cope with the vicissitudes of life, has become the latest pop personality, a real hot property. Lise made a fortune when the narrator edited and released her single 'Kings of Sleep', and Lise has since used her royalties from the hit to fund the expensive encoding of her mind onto the digital realm. The news that she has done so comes as a shock to the narrator, but he comes to terms with it slowly:

I could have believed what Rubin believes, that she was truly past it, our hi-tech St. Joan burning for union with that hardwired godhead in

Hollywood, that nothing mattered to her save the hour of her departure. That she threw away that poor sad body with a cry of release, free of the bonds of polycarbon and hated flesh. Well maybe after all she did. Maybe it was that way. I'm sure it was the way she expected it to be. (ibid.: 164)

Lise's life was not all roses. In the tale she was driven to merge with the digital realm because she found her human life to be intolerable. But did she really achieve immortality in the matrix? The narrator raises doubts as to whether the elaborate program that simulates her thought processes is really 'her' at all or whether it is instead a separate species. By the end of the tale it becomes clear that this is indeed a precarious form of immortality in that Lise must rely on the narrator to edit her next release so as to make her another fortune; otherwise her 'personality' will be dropped from the matrix because she will not be able to afford the astronomical fees required to keep 'herself' online. Perhaps her anxiety is no bad thing but necessary to avoid a worse outcome. One vision of hell is surely one where the person is condemned to an eternity of monotonous regularity and safety.

Desire for the obsolete body

Lise's choice prompts us to consider the temptation to retain one's god-like mind and dispose of the animal body. Early on in its development, humanity spotted the usefulness of tools in achieving its ends. Nowadays we take for granted those tools developed and refined over thousands of years, regarding them not as extensions or even prosthetics but as essential parts of ourselves. What would we be without shoes, cars or the Internet? These are quite literally extensions of the self.

The idea that the human body changes and adapts differently to its environment through the development of new prosthetic devices is not original. It forms the basis, for example, of many of the speculations by media guru Marshall McLuhan. What some would regard as an extension of Christian desire to negate the body and others would argue is entirely new is the desire to be rid of the body itself. In the late 1980's and early 1990's the body began to be labelled as 'meat' in the work of new wave science fiction writers, such as William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, and in features in digital-age magazines, such as *Wired*. In the 'wired' universe, the argument goes, humanity will no longer require the 'meat' of the body. The body is vulnerable and slow and constitutes a drag on the power of the mind. This is the vision shared by Stelarc, a performance artist who desires to take the body to its limits, to push it to the state where it is no longer a body as we recognize it:

Stelarc's manifesto

It is time to question whether a bipedal, breathing body with binocular vision and a 1400cc brain is an adequate biological form. It cannot cope with the quantity,

complexity and quality of information it has accumulated; it is intimidated by the precision, speed and power of technology and it is biologically ill-equipped to cope with its new extraterrestrial environment.

The body is neither a very efficient nor very durable structure. It malfunctions often and fatigues quickly; its performance is determined by its age. It is susceptible to disease and is doomed to a certain and early death. Its survival parameters are very slim – it can survive only weeks without food, days without water and minutes without oxygen.

The body's LACK OF MODULAR DESIGN and its overactive immunological system make it difficult to replace malfunctioning organs. It might be the height of technological folly to consider the body obsolete in form and function, yet it might be the height of human realisations. For it is only when the body becomes aware of its present position that it can map its post-evolutionary strategies.

It is no longer a matter of perpetuating the human species by REPRODUCTION, but of enhancing male-female intercourse by human-machine interface. THE BODY IS OBSOLETE. We are at the end of philosophy and human physiology. Human thought recedes into the human past.⁴⁰

Like many others who share his vision of a trans-human or post-human condition, Stelarc wants to transform the body fundamentally so that humans can survive in interstellar space:

Off the Earth, the body's complexity, softness and wetness would be difficult to sustain. The strategy should be to HOLLOW, HARDEN and DEHYDRATE the body to make it more durable and less vulnerable.

In seeking to live out his theory, Stelarc has allowed his own body to become colonized by and a container for technology. Stelarc has had a 'sculpture' inserted into his stomach, as he explains it, not as a prosthetic device but as an aesthetic device. Stelarc shares his vision of the future with other groups; for example, the Extropians, whose president Max More includes the following statement as part of the Extropian Principles.⁴¹

We challenge the inevitability of ageing and death, and we seek continuing enhancements to our intellectual abilities, our physical capacities, and our emotional development. We see humanity as a transitory stage in the evolutionary development of intelligence. We advocate using science to accelerate our move from human to a transhuman or posthuman condition.

While the sentiments expressed by Stelarc and the Extropians might seem to be rather extreme, even mainstream medics now suggest a 'new dawn' for the body. It is hard to believe that only twenty years ago academics expressed disquiet about the extent to which expectations are created via relatively modest innovations such as *Viagra* and the 'orgasm' pill for women, that seventy-year-olds are beginning to believe that they should be

like and perform like twenty-year-olds.⁴² Today we are told – by high-end tabloid journalists – that within two decades the first person to live to one thousand years will be born.⁴³ Although such claims are preposterous, it is striking how attitudes toward the body have changed. During the 1990s I conducted occasional surveys to gauge my students' sense of their body image. I was impressed at the time by their general fatalistic acceptance of their appearance and shortcomings and how, in particular, they were resistant to radical forms of body modification, such as plastic surgery. I cannot assert the same confident belief today. Some will question the sanity of those who seek to justify the massive expenditures on bodily improvements during an era where the increase in global population is such that humanity is beginning to threaten global ecology. Others fear that the two developments are linked, that the dream for some is ultimately escape from an overpopulated, polluted, lawless planet to live forever in seeking their destiny among the stars. A related explanation is that the sentiments expressed by Stelarc, the Extropians and, increasingly, 'mainstream' corporations and medics are premised on a Western mind-body dualism taken to its very extremes. To this extent they reflect on the fact that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, for some people at least, even the 'armoured body' is no longer sufficient.

Terror management

If Becker's ideas (and here one should also acknowledge Baudrillard) can encourage one to think of the drive towards the obsolescence of the body as an extreme form of mind-body dualism, the work by terror management theory has a narrower compass. Psychologists have operationalized Becker's theory in seeking to understand the relation between the unconscious fear of mortality and the extent to which one clings to one's cultural beliefs and values. We can seek to escape the fear by burying ourselves in the busyness of everyday life. Here 'hurry sickness', one of the by-products of the time-starved lifestyle experienced by many in consumer societies, can be interpreted as a means for warding off the fear of death. So can any form of busyness, such as that concerned with building a career. Alternatively, one can consider the ways by which a person can strive for immortality.

One curious phenomenon is that a person who lives in a society where materialism is celebrated as a value will tend to overvalue consumption when reminded of death. This variant of Becker's work, known as terror management theory (TMT) (Greenberg, Pszycynski and Solomon, 1986), derives from a rather reductive and mechanistic reading of Ernest Becker (1973), whose work is described above. According to Becker, human awareness of death leads to the further awareness of one's vulnerability, which in turn has the potential to create an overwhelming terror. Human cultural world views have thus always had to accommodate to this reality in order to provide a means for managing this terror. The world view expressed by any

culture must form an anxiety buffer that helps protect the individual from the anxiety that results from his or her vulnerability and mortality. TMT suggests that people will seek to cling to their faith in cultural conceptions of reality to which they subscribe and to defend these conceptions against threats.

TMT posits that cultural conceptions of reality operate as buffers against anxiety and the dread that is ultimately related to the fear of death. Consequently, people are highly motivated to defend these cultural conceptions against threats. Protection from anxiety requires that one should achieve a sense of value or self-esteem within the cultural context. This is because cultures promise security only to those who live up to the cultural standards of value. Cultures provide this security in two ways; first, through conceptions that the world is a just place and that in a truly just world bad things would not happen to good people. Second, cultures promise real and symbolic immortality to those who live up to the standards of value, real immortality via religious concepts and symbolic immortality via permanent contributions to the death-transcending culture (Rosenblatt, Greenberg et al., 1989). The cultural world view thus provides the context within which an individual can conceive of himself as a valuable participant in a meaningful world and can thus function with equanimity in the face of his ultimate mortality. In proving this, the authors constructed a number of hypotheses and devised experiments to test them.

Rosenblatt et al. (*ibid.*) recruited 78 college students, who completed the task in one of their research methods classes. The authors selected those with the most negative attitudes towards prostitution. Students were asked to act as judges and were given the case brief for a prostitute and a bond-assessment form. Half of the students were given the Mortality Attitudes Personality Survey, a new form of projective personality assessment. Subjects were asked to write about (a) what will happen to them as they physically die and (b) the emotions that the thought of their own death arouses in them. Control subjects were not given the questionnaire. The case brief stated the arresting charge, prostitution, and the defendant's address, employment record and length of residency. The prosecutor noted that he could not verify any of the above given the defendant's lack of community ties and recommended against releasing the prostitute. Subjects were also presented with a citation giving basic arrest information and were asked to set bond on this information. This form explained that the defendant had a prior prostitution conviction six months previously. Analysis indicated that judges in the mortality-salient condition assigned a much higher bond to the defendant than those who were not. In other words, reminding the subjects of their mortality led them to recommend a higher bond for the accused prostitute. According to terror management theory moral principles are part of the cultural anxiety buffer that protects individuals from anxiety concerning their

vulnerability to mortality. Transgressions against these standards implicitly threaten the integrity of the anxiety buffer and thus engender negative reactions towards the transgressor.

From six experiments conducted, Rosenblatt et al. (*ibid.*) concluded that the evidence supported the view that mortality salience increases rejection of moral transgressors. They conducted a series of studies to confirm aspects of their general hypothesis and to understand the processes at work in the subjects they examined. When first introduced to terror management theory, most people's reaction is that they rarely think about death and that when they do, this causes them little discomfort (Arndt, Greenberg et al., 1997). This can be explained by means of the 'cultural anxiety buffer' that operates to enable us to live with relative equanimity in the light of our mortality. They found that world view defence occurs when thoughts of death are highly accessible but are outside of conscious awareness. If I am conscious that I am scared by death, this will not trigger the defence; however, if I am unconscious of it, then I am. 'Similarly MS (mortality salience) may activate worldview defense, after mortality is, ironically, no longer salient' (*ibid.*: 6). The authors conclude that,

[a]lthough the claim that behaviour is driven by unconscious fears and desires has been the subject of a great deal of controversy and scepticism, the growing body of evidence documenting the processes underlying defensive responses to MS provides what we believe is compelling evidence that variations in the accessibility of the individual's awareness of his or her mortality do indeed influence behaviour far removed from this problem in the semantic sense. (*ibid.*: 16)

Further research (McGregor, Lieberman et al., 1998) indicates that MS leads to subjects behaving aggressively towards those who are perceived to threaten their world view. The theory has also been extended to account for the consumer of consumer goods (Arndt, Solomon et al., 2004). Researchers have explored the extent to which human awareness of death affects materialism and conspicuous consumption (Arndt, Solomon et al., 2004). Underlying this explanation is the view that in a culture such as the USA, where the values of material consumption are deeply woven into the overall cultural frame, many are likely to respond acquisitively in order to mitigate the deleterious effects of existential terror. In such a society money and the acquisition of material possessions serve as indicators of self-worth and are seen as prerequisites for those who seek to lead happy and meaningful lives. This is a message that people will buy into because it will protect them from existential fear. One famous anecdote relates to George Bush, who after the 9/11 terrorist attack of 2001 urged the US populace to defy the terrorists by going shopping. In line with this thinking the authors hypothesized that

the pursuit of wealth and commodities would reinforce those beliefs that function to protect people from existential anxieties:

Cash, and the fantastic appeal of what money can buy – for example, the spa-tanned and gym fit, cosmetically and surgically enhanced, dressed and jewelled ‘to kill’, perpetually young, sexually alluring thinner-than-a-piece-of-linguini woman; the buff swashbuckling ‘player’ with the sculpted hair and personally tailored Armani suit fondling the keys to his Mercedes with one hand and the aforementioned woman with the other – provide a way for humans to distance themselves from the disturbing realization that they are animals destined to die. (Arndt et al., 2004: 203)

The authors cite research by Bonsu and Belk (2003), who found that among the Asante in Ghana, bereaved relatives will spend outlandish amounts in ostentatious displays of mourning for the dead. They also cite a number of studies that appear to support the view that materialism is increased by mortality salience. In one study (Mandel and Heine, 1999), the authors found that participants who were reminded of their death gave higher rankings to high-status objects such as a *Lexus* car and a *Rolex* watch than did the control group. Another related line of research is with respect to the proposition that those who are reminded of their mortality should be more concerned with their image and attractiveness as a means of maintaining their self-esteem. For example, they hypothesized that women, on being reminded of their mortality, should be especially likely to avoid those products that are not conducive to a slim figure (Goldenberg, Arndt et al., 2005).

Rindfleisch and Burroughs (2004) focus their response to Arndt et al. (ibid.) on two key issues; first, the link between death anxiety and materialism and, secondly, the link between materialism and well-being. With respect to the first, they note that Arndt et al. argue that people lean on materialism as a means of coping with the ultimate fear of death. However, materialism is only one of a number of potential coping mechanisms, including religion and nationalism. They suggest that it is important to know why people might opt for such a transient value such as materialism against alternatives. Additionally, they note that Arndt et al. mention that the terminally ill often question their need for material possessions and turn instead towards relationships and religion. Thus, it could be the case that materialism may be merely an initial and temporary manifestation of a more complex coping process. They thus suggest the need to supplement experimental research by means of more qualitative enquiry in order to investigate these complex relations. Related to this the authors cite research findings that materialism is negatively related to age in that as one gets older, so the possession of luxury goods becomes less important to self-image. Clearly as one gets older, mortality salience increases, which, according to TMT precepts, should

result in higher levels of materialism. According to Arndt, marketers and advertising in particular are responsible for the maintenance of materialism as a value. However, Rindfleisch and Burroughs argue that this explanation posits the consumer as a passive receiver of television messages. Finally, they note that materialism is an extrinsically oriented value and that materialism as a value is incapable of providing the true and deep connections to one's core being. As a result, it is incapable of satisfying higher-order intrinsic needs such as love and belonging.

Death everywhere

Baudrillard's observation that, today, death is ambient rings true. Violent death is a regular feature in art, literature, music, fiction, children's games, and 'family' entertainment in film, television and advertising (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2000). There are soliloquies, too, on wasted lives from intellectuals who live full ones, such as Barnes's melancholic *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) and Roth's *Everyman* (2006), who mourns for lost values of craftsmanship and production in the age of marketing. The intellectualization of death, while interesting, does little to address our grief. Occasionally brilliant stories of death, such as Joyce's *The Dead* and the recent television adaptation of Sebastian Faulks's *Birdsong* (Faulks, 1993), may get under the skin to aid vicarious mourning. As Darian Leader (2009) points out, no end of fluoxetine (rarely of use compared to placebo)⁴⁴ can make up for human engagement to help a person navigate the troubled waters caused by broken relationships, dead loved ones, thwarted ambitions and loss of respect.

6

Lack

Introduction

The equation of desire to lack is linked indissolubly to Jacques Lacan, dubbed the 'French Freud' from his professed desire to recover the true Freud from the clutches of ego psychology – and ironically, considering the extent to which, in rewriting Freud, he informed his own fantasy. While it is frowned upon to reflect on the person, Lacan is irresistible. His life course to a large extent replays his scholarly preoccupations, particularly with 'The Purloined Letter',¹ where he analyses Poe's story of a trail of badly concealed secrets and fractured social relations. This smart alec Parisian intellectual sprang from a long line of drapers, vinegar merchants and grocery salesmen, all of whom he disavowed. Obsessed by image in his writings, he effected the grandiose style and sartorial elegance of an aristocratic dandy. Outraging his peers by mass-producing therapeutic clones of himself, he amassed considerable wealth, much of which was devoted to a passion for collecting art and fine objects. A notorious tightwad, he would always allow someone else to pick up the tab. Yet, despite all of this, he was celebrated as an icon of the Left. He had a child by a parallel relationship to his marriage which he hid from his legitimate children for many years.

Lacan's destiny was in remarkably coincidental ways bound up with that of Margueritte Anzieu (Paintaine), the woman whose case projected him from relative obscurity when he diagnosed her with self-punishment paranoia. This was the 'Aimée' whose identity he stole, in addition to her notes, photos and novels, which he never returned; who, in later life, castigated the avarice and hypocrisy she found amongst the Lacans. The man who, according to Heidegger, 'murdered' a text of his by translating it into French while managing to do even worse, if that were possible, to a text by Melanie Klein that he failed to translate; and who appropriated the concept of the 'mirror-stage' as his own unique creation, failing to acknowledge Wallon's prior work on this important concept and, finally, driven towards madness, trying to unravel the very knots he had earlier declared could not be untied.²

In venturing into this slippery terrain, I sought some purchase by fastening on to James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The Lacan described here is the one who took Joyce as his model, from when, as a youth, he had attended Joyce's celebrated first reading of *Ulysses* to his celebration of Joyce's work towards the end of his life (Lacan, 1987).³ Lacan too, came from the aspiring middle-classes and was educated by Jesuits. Clues in *Portrait* suggest commonalities of experience and outlook that may have led Lacan to strongly identify with Joyce; each had a weak father and powerful grandparents; each knew the fear, dread and guilt induced in the pubescent mind by a religion that works to subdue desire 'in the name of the father'; each was captivated by images of wholeness that one tries and fails to live up to; each shared the experience of *jouissance* as an ecstatic admixture of joy and pain of transgression; it is all there.

This chapter emphasizes three major points. First, if Freud's insight into human subjectivity is unsettling, then Lacan's is doubly so. Roudinesco gets straight to the heart of the matter; Lacan 'sought to bring plague, subversion, and disorder to the moderate Freudianism of his time'. It became well known in psychoanalytic circles that Freud remarked to Jung and Adler, when standing by the guard rail on their cruise ship as it entered New York harbour, 'Don't they know, we're bringing them the plague?', referring of course to the plague of psychoanalysis. It is unsurprising that Lacan took most seriously Freud's likening of psychoanalysis to the plague, since he is likely to have invented the story in the first place!⁴ In the heyday of modernity and rationality, the notion of the psychoanalytic plague affords a glimpse of the abyss that fuels the dreams and fancies of the supposedly rational citizen-consumer. Roudinesco's book tells the story of Lacan the man:

But it is also the history of a doctrine that, following on from Freud's, tried to rescue humanity from the universe of religion, dreams, and the occult, even if this meant the inability of reason, knowledge, and truth to bring about such a deliverance.⁵

Which opens another paradox. Contrary to the above and informed by my reading of Joyce, Lacan's work is religious, even profoundly so, albeit pointing to a religion with no prospect for salvation. Lacan would no doubt have scoffed at the claim, yet his younger brother, himself a priest, had little trouble in believing this to be true.⁶ Lacan argued that the prevailing desire in human nature for harmony and oneness, indicated by stories such as Aristophanes' tale of the eggmen in the *Symposium*, indicates a tear, or fatal flaw, in human nature. The ensuing Imaginary relation to the self and others is discussed in more detail below. The source of Lacan's religion points eastward, towards the notion of the void. The philosopher Hegel wrote about negation in a positive sense, as did his interpreter Kojève.

But for Lacan negativity is not to be recruited into anything so dangerously harmonious. For him nothingness itself can become the source of desire, as something concrete to aim for, that metonymically stands for the void at the centre of being.

Lacan stresses the intersubjective nature of desire; how in ‘recognizing’ ourselves, we ‘recognize’ another. His intersubjective and interhuman account is fundamentally different from the individualistic Cartesian understanding of the self – the ‘I’, who ‘thinks, therefore I am’. This is particularly so with respect to desire, for in Lacan’s account, desire does not simply spring from the unique position of the person who desires but always involves another desire. The intersubjective nature of desire was opened by Freud in his discussion of the hysterical identification of the butcher’s wife with her rival, which was discussed in [Chapter One](#). The interhuman perspective is expanded below in discussing the power of suggestion.

Third, in contriving his negative explanation of human subjectivity, Lacan draws extensively upon the works of ancient and contemporary philosophy, from Plato to Hegel, Heidegger, Sartre and Althusser. The aim of the chapter is, where possible, to provide the reader with a sense of this philosophical underpinning that is often latent in Freud’s explanation.

Three orders

Lacan’s account of human subjectivity comprises the three orders illustrated in [Figure 6.1](#): the Real order, which refers to phenomenal, not physical,

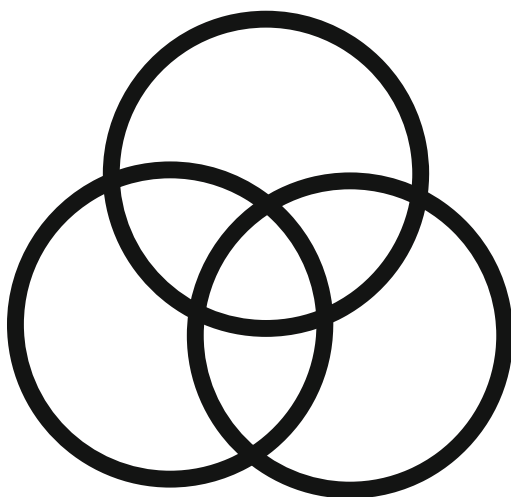


Figure 6.1 Three interdependent orders: real, imaginary and symbolic

reality; the Imaginary order, comprising the infant's identification with an ideal-ego, introduced in the chapter on narcissism; finally, the Symbolic order of language and culture. Lack is central, desire as lack, or want-to-be that which the other desires. Lack is thus constitutive of the human subject, woven into our very being, the pulse that drives forward our desire. The three orders do not stand alone independently of one another.

This chapter is anchored by three topics: the Imaginary, the Symbolic and Jouissance, which loosely follow the shifting pattern of Lacan's preoccupations during his life. During the earlier part of his career he focused on the Imaginary, changing in his middle years to focus on the Symbolic and then finally to jouissance. These changes can be confusing for any reader. For example, the concept of the Real, in his early work, is equated with a pre-Symbolic realm that is beyond signification, whereas later, it comes to represent the fissures and gaps that are produced within the Symbolic. The symptom, which in his early work is understood to be a repressed signifier, is in his later work linked to the jouissance afforded to a drive.

Imaginary

The ability to fantasize, taking the self as an object, entails the origination of a new order, the Imaginary, for the growing infant. In the Real, the infant, immersed in nature, does not reflect upon it. Pleasures and pains experienced in the Real, from the trauma of birth to the fumbling attempts by caregivers to diagnose its needs, are felt, but are not represented. Up until roughly the age of six months, the infant is an (h)omelette. Lacan greatly enjoyed the use of such puns, believing that they reflect the language of the unconscious. 'Hommelette' is a metaphor for the self in the Real, enabling one to envisage an entity that has no sense of containment, that spills over into others, including loved external objects, such as the breast of the mother. The process of weaning creates severe anxiety in the infant, recalling the earlier trauma of separation from the womb at birth. To cope with this anxiety, the infant hallucinates an *imago* of the mother's breast.⁷ This provides the platform for the subsequent crucial scene of human development that takes place during '*stade du miroir*'. Propelled by anxiety arising out of a sense of fragmentation and lack of motor control between the age six and eighteen months, the infant does something extraordinary (which Lacan argues a chimpanzee does not), which is to belie its sense of fragmentation by prematurely identifying its 'self' with its bodily image as contained within its skin.⁸ This masterful image perceived either literally or as if in a mirror holds a fatal attraction for the infant, offering a vision of wholeness, containment and fusion that persists throughout its life.

Identification with the image in the *stade du miroir* constitutes the fundamental fantasy that lies at the heart of *méconnaissance*, the failure to recognize the true state of affairs, which is that the infant, lacking motor control,

cannot see behind his head yet identifies with a masterful and alienating image. The reference to *stade*, or stadium, signifies a conflict, perhaps a gladiatorial contest. Lacan was influenced by Kojève's understanding of the philosophy of Hegel, which is briefly outlined below.

The 'master-slave' tale

Where the *Phenomenology of Spirit*⁹ is contrived as a progression of different states of awareness leading the harmonious return of self to itself, Kojève introduces a discordant tone. Imagine what it might be like to be completely immersed in nature. In this situation you have no identity in that you are not different from nature but are integrated within it, at one with it. This is the point at which Hegel began his exploration of the unfolding of self-consciousness. For consciousness to reflect on nature, it must separate itself from nature. In constructing an identity, it must therefore split itself from nature so that it can stand out from it and reflect upon it. However, one key aspect of self-consciousness and identity is that human consciousness desires recognition. Although one can subdue nature, one cannot gain recognition from it. Because nature cannot recognize itself, it cannot therefore recognize another. In order to gain recognition, consciousness must therefore seek to be recognized by another self-consciousness. In Hegel's account the demand for recognition leads to a struggle to the death between the two self-consciousnesses. The battle for recognition is to the death because, in the struggle for recognition, each self-consciousness would seek to prove to the other that it could totally remove itself from nature. The struggle ends when one of the two self-consciousnesses decides to prefer life (and nature) to death (and consciousness) and capitulates to the other. One consciousness becomes master, the other a slave.

In Kojève's explanation, this is an unsatisfactory and paradoxical situation for both self-consciousnesses. The self which has capitulated is now in the position of a slave, being close to nature and enthralled by the other, who is master. The slave has no self, no identity but that of a slave and can recognize no point of view other than that of the master. The master has gained power over the slave. He has also gained recognition, but this is not the recognition of a free spirit but only that of a slave. The slave's dominated nature is close to that nature which the master has superseded. As they are now outside the boundaries of the 'self' of the master, both the slave and nature pose a threat to the identity of the master and can thus become the source of a persecutory anxiety for him.

The master's position is ambivalent as the act of separating from nature which has brought forth this identity is experienced as an acute sense of lack, resulting in nostalgia for the lost sense of wholeness coupled with an intense desire for reintegration. The master has several coping strategies for this state of affairs. One means is to seek to neutralize the threat posed by an untamed nature that stands outside the self, simulating it by remaking

nature in the master's likeness. The position of the slave is also ambivalent. Fixed in position by a master who does not recognize his worth, the slave is close to nature but has no sense of identity. The slave's motive is an overwhelming desire to be free to assume an identity. To counteract the feeling of being invisible (a nobody), the desire to be recognized, to be somebody and thus to construct his own narrative is paramount. However, as the master's discourse fills the horizon, the slave's attempts to create his own discourse does nothing more than mimic the discourse (or mirror the gaze) of the master. The position of the slave is authentic in that he is close to nature and fixed into position. The slave desires freedom; the master, authenticity.

Kojève's interpretation of Hegel provides the overall frame for Lacan's theory of the origin of the *moi*, the self in the Imaginary. A dual self emerges from the *stade du miroir*, arising from the rivalry between the masterful image which sits on one side of the see-saw and the lacking and fragmented self that sits on the other side. Fragmentation of the self is disavowed by the subject who succumbs to *méconnaissance*, (misrecognition), refusing to believe what is before its eyes. In denying its lack and reaching for the gestalt of the image, this *belle âme*, (beautiful soul) is subjected to an anamorphic stain, representing a kind of original sin.

The holy whole

Humanity is marked by a form of original sin in that there is 'something originally, inaugurally, profoundly wounded' that persists in the relation of the subject to the world. Always a snappy dresser, Lacan used analogies to fabric in order to illustrate his points. The wound in the human subject is likened to a *béance*, or sense of yawningness, that is woven into the fabric of human nature.¹⁰ This is not a hole in the fabric but is rather woven through the warp and weft, constitutive of its very nature. Elsewhere, Lacan uses a botanical analogy to argue that human subjectivity is constituted by a vital dehiscence, a term which, by referring to the splitting open of seed pods, emphasizes his belief that the splitting of human subjectivity is as natural and as unavoidable as the propagation of plants (Bowie, 1991). Returning to the religious analogy, 'original' sin is not the yawningness of the fabric of self that gives rise to the wounded relation to the world per se but rather that humans cannot but fail to recognize this fundamental flaw, replacing it in infancy with a fundamental fantasy, which is to envision themselves as whole, harmonious and complete subjects. This traumatic loss propels them towards further identification with the masterful image of the other.

I recall once, while in the lobby of Crieff-Hydro Hotel, noticing a very young child who tottered excitedly past a mirrored column, which she fleetingly glanced at, then skidded to a halt and, to the delight of her parents, turned to gaze at the image of 'herself'. Reading Freud into this scene, the Imaginary identification corresponds to the formation in the little girl of an ideal-ego, which Freud describes in relation to secondary narcissism.

This agency must be differentiated from later identification with the prohibition issued 'in the name of the father', which is associated with formation of the ego-ideal and superego, at the resolution of the Oedipus complex.¹¹ When the infant prematurely recognizes its bodily form in the mirror as being 'me', its subjectivity irrupts from the seamless web of being that is the Real. Given that one cannot see the back of one's head, how does one grasp the idea that one is a container? One cannot identify with the unity of one's body merely by touch or feel alone; rather this is grasped in relation to a form, or image, which is often represented as being a 'mirror' image. This image appears to combine a mastery, coherence and order that are entirely lacking in the infant. This jubilant identification with the masterful image is premature. Given poor motor coordination, the child remains in a profound state of dependency on others. Identification is accompanied by profound loss; what is gained in conceptualizing one's existence ('That is me!') signals, too, that one is now removed from the flow of experience and henceforth is subject to the mediation of concepts, or language.

See-sawing desire

It is within this see-saw movement of exchange in relation to the other that the child comes to know the limits of her body.¹² In this Imaginary relation, because desire is alienated in the other, it has no aim other than to destroy the other. The ideal-ego is a *méconnaissance* because the image that is identified with is patently not the subject but is rather her introjection of the masterful image of another, her mother, or caregiver. Oscillating between two positions, the subject can adopt that of the controlling other and abjure, despise and seek to squash the life from the pathetically weak and lacking self that sits on the other side; from the other side, she can hate the bullying masterful image with a vengeance. There is my (m)other, to whom I desire to fuse my being but whom, equally, I hate and detest when she has abandoned me and is absent. There is the other who competes for my mother's attention, whom I hate with the hatred of my entire being. Lacan refers to the; 'all-consuming and uncontrollable jealousy which the small child feels for his fellow being, usually when the latter is clinging to his mother's breast, that is to say to the object of desire which is for him essential.'¹³

The little girl I mentioned earlier, who wasn't particularly awful, found refuge in a country garden, where she became very peaceably absorbed, at an age when she was scarcely walking on her feet, in the application of a good-sized stone to the skull of a little playmate from next door, who was the person around whom she constructed her first identifications...She had no sense of guilt – 'Me break Francis head'. She spoke that with assurance and peace of mind. Nonetheless I still don't project a criminal future for her. She simply displayed the most fundamental

structure of the human being on the imaginary plane – to destroy the person who is the site of alienation. (Lacan, 1988b: 172)

The see-saw of desire is a potent image fastening onto the fundamentally intersubjective nature of self-hood. Some clues to this are provided by the difficulty with which the infant learns the distinction between the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you', which reminds one that the 'I' is constituted as a linguistic experience in relation to the signifier 'you'.¹⁴ One can observe this in moments of transitivity as, for example, when one child, Joe, hits another, Jimmy, simultaneously exclaiming 'Jimmy hit me!' and bursting into tears or even evincing the same reaction on seeing a third child fall over and start to cry. Clearly there is an unstable mirror between the child and his fellow being, and jealous rage, such as that described above, is entirely normal for the infant.

While the Imaginary constitutes an important stage in development, it persists into adulthood. In the chapter on narcissism I describe how Lacan in his early work became interested in explaining extreme behaviours, such as the erotomania exhibited by Aimée, as instances of regression to an infantile Imaginary state. 'Bovaryism', as it is sometimes known in homage to the famous novel that depicts it, was a hot topic at the time when Lacan was a young researcher, describing the illusion where one person believes another to be madly in love with him. Although comparatively rare, erotomania persists in our era of celebrity culture.

Belle âme

The *belle âme*¹⁵ (beautiful soul) is the misguided and imaginary formation of the self, first described by Hegel in *Phenomenology*. This unappealing character exemplifies the Imaginary self, describing a person who believes himself to be self-contained, revolted by the disorder that he finds in the world, but unaware that this is the projection of his own internal disorder. The misplaced belief in self-containment coupled to the failure to recognize the disorder as one's own are at the heart of the false identification that is the basis of *méconnaissance*.¹⁶ This is not just misrecognition, in the sense that one sees something that is not there, but rather signifies the opposite, that one refuses to notice something. Lacan likens this to the situation where a person who is told that a close friend has died refuses to believe it. There is knowledge on one level, which is denied at another, presumably in order to maintain the unity that precedes it.¹⁷ The knowledge that is denied in *méconnaissance* is that of the *béance*, the yawningness, openness, or gap in the wounded self that is denied by the imaginary fixation with the image.¹⁸ This description of the subject is at odds with the idea of the assured self-contained rational agent described by *homo economicus*. Instead Lacan presents us with a split and ambivalent subject who projects the discord that it experiences as 'other', which is actually part of its own self.

Most importantly, the subject desires to be whole, or rounded off, which forms the explanation for the perpetual human desire for knowledge. The traffic is not all one way; the masterful image may come to be seen as a tyrant that must be destroyed. The ideal-ego originally arises in the mother or in the parents. But over the life of the subject the ego engages in a number of identifications, becoming a composite which Lacan at one point likens to a collection of old coats.¹⁹ For those accustomed to the view of the self as a container, these identifications come as a challenge because they call one to a conception of the subject that is profoundly intersubjective. When one expresses the need to be X or Y, one is expressing another's desire or, more accurately, demand; for as Lacan enigmatically puts it, desire is always for nothing. This alerts one to distrust reliance on direct accounts of 'personal' experiences in research as, in Lacan's view, the language that is spoken is the 'empty' speech of the *belle âme*. This is the site of the most profound alienation of the subject that we encounter when the subject begins to talk to us about himself. Like Molière's misanthropic subject Alceste,²⁰ the narcissistic 'beautiful soul' believes himself to be self-possessed and autonomous and denies that his selfhood lies in the other and so cannot recognize his own disorder in that which he denounces in the world. This is the image of the modern consumer developed by Teresa Brennan (1993) and discussed further in the chapter on narcissism. In reading Lacan with Melanie Klein and Karl Marx, she contends that Western consumer consciousness is psychotic – living in the present, erasing history and, although passive and producing nothing, subscribing to the illusion that it is in control. The consumer's relation to the natural world is to objectify it, to make it over into its own image, the better to control it. The imperative governing the entire capitalist endeavour is to abolish waiting time, to live for now, to think only of the present and not of future generations. Growing demand and constantly evolving technologies for the exploitation of nature lead to the extinction of one species and its replacement by another in an apparently endless chain of substitution. The problem for humanity is that there really is an end to this chain.

Anamorphosis

The anamorphic tendency towards mastery, wholeness and containment is as illusory as it is pressing. It is anamorphic because the subject identifies with its 'image' as equating to its 'self' from a conventional point of view. Anamorphosis consists of an image which, when viewed conventionally, appears mostly to make sense to the eye, excepting one part of it, which appears deformed or stained. Viewed unconventionally, perhaps obliquely, it reveals the opposite condition: what in the conventional case appeared clear is now blurred; what appeared as a stain is revealed.

The infant seizes on its masterful image by means of a 'gestalt'. This refers to the German school which more or less created the field of study of visual

perception linked to the ability to perceive wholes where there are none; for example, by filling in the imaginary 'lines' of a 'triangle' on the basis of the perception of three dots. The first instance of this tendency is when the human infant grasps the self-contained image. This is premature, given its lack of coordination, which is anticipated in the image. From this point onwards, the infant is slave to the masterful image. Lacan argues provocatively that this is characteristic of human rather than animal nature, where the chimpanzee has the good sense to glance at its reflection in a mirror, as it would at any number of objects that are 'out there', the human child is captivated by its image.

When viewed conventionally, with the viewer in front, looking at the painting straight on, Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533) appears harmonious and balanced, representing the power structure of its time. Two men are prominently displayed, one dressed in religious robes, the other in secular. Each faces the viewer from either end of a piece of furniture, each with one arm draped partly over its top shelf. On this and on the lower shelf are scattered a lute, two globes (one celestial the other terrestrial) and a number of books or scrolls. A predominant reading of the image is that it conveys religious and secular power. The different modes of dress lead one to speculate on the accommodation made between the religious and the secular. One part of the image beneath the piece of furniture appears to be blurred or stained. If one shifts perspective to the oblique, at the painting's edge the two figures become blurred, and what had been the 'stain' is revealed as a skull.²¹ *The Ambassadors* operates as an exemplar of the anxiety linked to the Real that haunts every moment of perception. The Real is not hidden but is present in the painting. It is there for all to see but defies comprehension from a conventional perspective. In this sense the Real is what is disavowed by anamorphosis, when one gazes upon an object, comprising its lack.²²

Anamorphosis is so much part and parcel of our everyday understanding of the world that we rarely stop to consider its pervasiveness. The quest for harmony is fundamental. A room can look somehow wrong because a picture has been hung slightly askew. This is called the 'Diderot Effect', named by Grant McCracken (1990) in honour of Diderot's short piece 'Regrets on Parting with My Old Dressing Gown', where he noticed that by substituting the old item with a new one, everything else in his room suddenly seemed shabby. The gestalt principles are well known to marketing practitioners, who employ them in a wide range of contexts from the design of retail spaces to the provision of advertising cues. Recent work by marketing academics has extended these ideas. Ariely et al. (2003) coined the term 'arbitrary coherence' to describe how, when asked to benchmark a price to a product based on the last two digits of their social security number, subjects tended to anchor subsequent prices to this arbitrary figure.

The tendency to value harmony significantly affects our perceptions of people. For instance, the idea was prevalent in Victorian times that physiognomy, embodied in facial appearance, determined one's character. The person considered to be attractive would also be thought to be kind, noble and generous. More recently it is argued that prettier people really are morally better because that is how they are viewed by others;²³ that more attractive children are also more intelligent than others because their teachers presume them to be so;²⁴ and that more attractive candidates will be better managers because they tend to be more favoured at interviews.²⁵ Faces rated as being more attractive are also considered to be more harmonious in that they approximate more closely to the statistical average.²⁶ The downside for those considered unattractive is that not only may they be discriminated against at school and in the workplace but they are also likely to be treated more aggressively by others.²⁷

While advertisers will usually deploy attractive faces in promoting their products, others have been concerned to alert citizens and consumers to the dangers of such stereotypes. This was particularly true of the Dada school of painters, including Max Ernst and Phillipe Soupault. Soupault's *Portrait d'un imbécile* is the most economical; you can make your own faithful copy by writing the words on a card in your language and pasting it just below the mirror you gaze into every morning. Ernst's invitation to his 1935 Paris exhibition, entitled *Dernières Oeuvres*, was a photomontage based on a photograph taken by Man Ray, which is regarded as an allusion to the mirror stage described by Lacan. The glass plate of Man Ray's photo has been smashed and the glass splinters stuck together with tape, which is written on with India ink, and the result exposed so that the light-coloured tape has come out black and the writing white. As a result, the face of the artist appears as if in a fractured mirror, and a text which gives out the name of the exhibition and some of its details fill its cracks. Here Ernst is parodying the traditional function of photography as a mimetic reading of reality by shattering representation and forming a new reality which, with its splintered pieces, challenges the view of photography as self-presence. Instead, as in Lacan, identity is presented as the construction of a split subject, whose fragments are held together by the symbolic dimension of writing.

The Imaginary alerts us to the transitive nature of identity and the role of the model and desire of the other's desire in forming the subject. Given that Lacan likens identity to a pile of old coats, as we shall see below, it is important to understand who, out of all of the identifications that the subject has made, is speaking at a given time; Is this the voice of certainty and control of one who formed a model, perhaps even a punitive model? Or is it the voice of the person who is on the other side of the see-saw of desire? We are all bipolar in that we oscillate from the position of the masterful image to that of the insubstantial other. This invites the further question, if we

find these images to be alienating, do we seek to destroy them? Which also has important implications for desire. To the extent that we desire not only what the other desires but as the other desires, we cannot take our desires to be our own autonomous creation.

Symbolic

Lacan's openness to the power of language is unsurprising given the importance of philology in France. The infant's transition from the Real to the Imaginary, prises open the space for full entry into the Symbolic. Lacan argues it is only with the ability to represent her world that one can speak of the subject as being truly human. To the extent that the Imaginary relation remains the basis for the subject's identifications and dual fusional relations, the Symbolic offers a respite where the subject can gain recognition from others. However, the Symbolic offers no comfort, providing a hammer blow to the notion that humans are authors of their destiny; Lacan turns upside down the conventional view that humans constitute language. Instead he argues that language, which is foreign to us and which always imperfectly expresses what we mean to say, constitutes us. On entry into the Symbolic system of language, we become enmeshed in a total network of symbols that formed a coherent system long before we were borne into it. Language not only gives us the words we use, it comes to dwell within us as the law that resides in our unconscious.

Lacan's concept of the Imaginary corresponds to Freud's primary identification, whilst the Symbolic corresponds to the resolution of the Oedipus complex. The Symbolic is aptly named because Lacan deliteralizes Freud's corporeal reliance on real fathers and the possession, or lack, of a penis in favour of a cultural explanation of the Oedipal phase. I find it useful in understanding Lacan's explanation to recall Aristophanes' story in *The Symposium* (Plato, 1999), where the eggmen, being split, are forever in search of their lost halves. Freud develops the concept of the death drive from this by arguing that ultimately an organism will seek to return to an earlier state of existence. Lacan, on the other hand, reads the story as an allegory of lack. The mother and infant form a whole that is first split when the infant makes its first alienating identification with its mirror image. The '(h)omelette' that spills beyond its boundaries is no more, having identified prematurely with the self-contained image which it takes to be itself. No longer immersed in pure being, the infant can reflect on being through the formation of its self-concept. Subjected to the see-saw of desire, the child seeks desperately to return to the blissful union with the other. The phrase *désir de la mère* means both desire *of* the mother and desire *for* the mother.²⁸ The infant seeks to be the sole object of the mother's interest and also wishes to be the sole object that fulfils her desire. Lacan names this object the phallus, which is patently not a penis but is what stands for the infant's desire

to fill the gap that has opened between itself and the mother. The scene for the Oedipal stage is set when a fissure opens up between the child and mother, as the former comes to realize that the battle to be the sole object of the mother's desire is lost, given the presence in reality or symbolically of others, not least of the father.

The '*fort-da*' story related by Freud and described here in [Chapter Three](#) is captivating for Lacan because it illustrates a young child in the throes of the attempt to symbolically master the traumatic event of maternal absence. Freud is staying with his daughter and grandson and observes the child's behaviour during the mother's absence. The child repeatedly throws away, then recovers a cotton reel, which Freud interprets as a symbolic vengeful fantasy that stages the mother's disappearance and reappearance. Using the reel, the child symbolically represents the mother's absence, or lack, expressed in the primordial binary semiotic system: *fort!* (gone!); *da!* (back!). Lacan adds to Freud's explanation by pointing out that language can develop only in relation to the (m)other's absence and dispossession. The boy, who is now subject to language, is poisoned by death. His drive to re-establish the pre-Symbolic union with his mother, if successful, would result in his extinction as a separate being. Language is marked by death because words signify the absence of the thing they refer to. However, by acting out this representation, which recalls the 'see-saw' of desire, the boy is afforded some degree of imaginary mastery that he lacks in reality. Despite his mother's absence, he derives a bittersweet enjoyment, which Lacan calls *jouissance*, in commissioning the act.

By invoking the symbolic as opposed to the real father, Lacan dismisses the latter as being rather unimportant in his scheme of things. The '*fort-da*' story is illustrative. When visiting his nephew one year after the first event, Freud noticed that the boy's language skills had improved and he was playing with toys. In an echo of what had previously occurred, the boy would throw away disliked toys, exclaiming 'Go to the fwont!' The boy's father was at that time fighting on the frontline during the First World War, which is evidently where his son wanted him to remain! There is no room for a third party such as a father in an Imaginary union between mother and son. But this hated third party persists in language, even if the real father is fighting at the war front. One can imagine the mother and others telling the boy how much he resembles this hated absence: 'Isn't he the spit of his daddy!', or perhaps threateningly, by invoking the father as a bogeyman, 'Be a good boy and eat your dinner, you know what your daddy would say!', or 'Just wait till your daddy gets home!' The symbolic father does not have to be based on the real father. Roudinesco tells us that Lacan felt his own father to be a rather inconsequential character when set against his forceful maternal grandfather. James Joyce's father was even more of a let-down, his failure in business leading to the removal of his son from Clongowes Wood College

because the family could no longer afford to keep him there. This proved to be a blessing for Joyce, who no longer had to fear the arbitrary justice dispensed by the terrible Father Dolan and his dreaded, stinging pandybat.²⁹

In Lacan's formulation, the child, whether male or female (possession of a penis is irrelevant in this respect), comes to recognize in the figure of this third party, the father, that it can never be the exclusive focus of the mother's desire and consequently can never be the phallus that will make the mother whole again. In giving up the phallus, the child acknowledges its symbolic castration. At the point of identification with the father, the phallic signifier, comprising the child's desire to be the phallus for the mother, is repressed into the inaccessible unconscious to be replaced by the paternal signifier, or *nom du père*. Henceforth, the true nature of desire, though ever present, will remain unknown. The '*nom*' in *nom du père*, signifies both the father's name and his *non*, his prohibition. By identifying with the name of the father, the child accepts his or her position as subject to the Symbolic order. Henceforth, the child is a subject in several senses of the term: being subject to the lure of Imaginary identifications with others; subjected to the law governing incest; a subject of culture, being placed in order of precedence within a family setting ('Daddy, Mummy, Me'); and a gendered subject who is placed in a particular social place depending on the social standing of his or her birth.

As one door closes, when the infant is dispossessed of fusion with the (m)other, another door opens outwards towards the world of language and culture. The Symbolic extends the prospect for the subject to move beyond the duel relation of the Imaginary. In the Symbolic one has a place, being subject to hierarchy and the law, where one can become recognized by others for one's achievements. The relation to the other is mediated through the symbol rather than being fusional, being social rather than narcissistic. The symbolic function of the law is currently an important issue in the regulation of virtual worlds. The American creators of the first virtual worlds, such as *LambdaMOO* and *PMCWorld* (known as wizards), shared a freewheeling egalitarian hippy ethos that emphasized individual freedom in terms of politics and the market. In the formation of these virtual societies, it quickly became apparent that the principles of trust and harmony that the wizards had sought to embed in the world they had created were not working, as evidenced by the storming of the 'Hot Tub' in *LambdaMOO* and the revolt against the Wizards in *PMCWorld*. Since those early days the number of virtual worlds has grown massively. Among them, *World of Warcraft*, *uWorld*, *Lineage* and *Second Life* have tens of millions of subscribers. An emerging problem has been the conduct of avatars in virtual worlds, particularly those based on war games. For example, in *Lineage* it was reported that high-level avatars preyed on their virtual neighbours, robbing them, sexually molesting them, even killing them. Sometimes internal conflicts for an item that attained hypervalue in the virtual world,

such as a magic cloak or dagger, would spill over into real-life fights with real weapons. The dual-duel nature of these Imaginary spaces presented problems for the wizards. Left to their own devices, these worlds seemed capable of descending into chaos. Wizards who decided to intervene against their principles by deleting the identities of avatars risked full-scale revolt, as occurred in *PMCMOO* and, more recently, on *Lineage*. Other wizards are considering introducing a court system and forms of political regulation, such as a parliament, in order to regulate behaviour.³⁰

Symbolic recognition, although important, provides cold comfort for the subject. Desire is linked to a process of impossible recovery. Instead of Descartes's self-present subject 'I think, therefore I am', Lacan offers us a subject defined in the future anterior, 'I am whom I will have been', who seeks to recover a past in the Real that can no longer be represented through a future which, of necessity, prohibits it. The subject *is* frustration, being symbolically tied up in knots because the prohibition of the phallic signifier that constitutes desire is precisely what precludes its final satisfaction. Desire thus constantly runs up against the limit point of access to the primordial union of the other that produces its satisfaction. Even at the end of analysis the subject is faced with the impossibility of following the signifying chain back to an accessible and irreducible reality. The symptom and the absolute and final truth are cut off from one another. What severs them is the subject itself. Psychoanalysis cannot undo this inevitable frustration; it can only bring the individual the understanding that 'something missing' is at the very core of being. Lacan recognizes this in the third order – that is, beyond the symbolic realm of language and imaginary construction, in the reality we can never know.

Lacan uses the term *objet petit a* or *objet a* to describe the cause of desire for the subject. This is a scrap that reminds them that they were once whole, described as a feeling at the back of one's head, the curve of a breast, or shit. It is difficult to evoke the idea of the *objet petit a*, which has a resonance with the part objects described above. For example, money has similar properties to the process of excretion in that it can be spent or lost or retained (as in the adage 'spending a penny').

In contrast to the *objet a*, the Thing refers more directly to the raw trauma of loss. Whilst Lacan argues this to be beyond representation, Joyce may get close to evoking its ghost in his haunting description of the melancholy that seizes on him in the early autumn when he is alone, his summer playmates having returned to school. He knows that he will not return to Clongowes and has only a vague knowledge that his father is in trouble. His boyish view of the world is troubled by premonitions of loss and decay when he returns to an old childhood image:

He returned to Mercedes and, as he brooded upon her image, a strange unrest crept into his blood. Sometimes a fever gathered within him and

led him to rove alone in the evening along the quiet avenue. The peace of the gardens and the kindly lights of the windows poured a tender influence into his restless heart. The noise of children at play annoyed him and their silly voices made him feel, even more keenly than he had felt at Clongowes that he was different from others. He did not want to play. He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. He did not know where to seek it or how: but a premonition which led him on told him that this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him. They would meet quietly as if they had known each other and had made their tryst, perhaps at the gates or in some secret place. They would be alone, surrounded by darkness and silence and in that moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured. He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and then in a moment, he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment.³¹

Alternatively, the image of Mercedes might be said to act as an *objet a* which summons Joyce's desire. The *objet a* does not itself feature in the fantasy but is rather conjured up by unsettling feelings of death and decay. Lacan's writing style, which is obtuse, slippery and opaque, is also unsettling to readers, who are forced to return to it time and again, armed with the hope that on this occasion they will be able to resolve its complexities and fix its meaning once and for all.

In Proust, *objet a* forms as the narrator moistens a piece of *petit madeleine* into some tea – a drink he has not favoured for some time – and is tasting it when 'a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no point of origin.' He is transported back to Sundays when as a child, before mass, he would venture into his aunt Leonie's bedroom and she would give him a madeleine, dipping it first into some tea or tisane.

And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory – this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was myself. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal.³²

Beyond harmony

In developing his theory in relation to the Symbolic, Lacan was interested in understanding the operations of unconscious processes rather than the conscious *moi*. In doing so, he drew extensively from the semiologists Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson. The idea that a sound image, or signifier, expresses a concept, or signified, which relates to something in the real

world was familiar to Aristotle.³³ Prior to de Saussure, the popular understanding of language was that writing was the poor relation of thought and, consequently, that written words, or signifiers, provided the means for the expression of signifieds, or pure thoughts, to be relayed in relation to their referents. The priority and centrality accorded to the signified, or concept (*logos*), is described by Derrida as logocentrism.³⁴ De Saussure's major theoretical contribution was to highlight the role of difference in the constitution of meaning. De Saussure split meaning into two areas, value and signification. Within a language system each term gains a unique value by reference to all of the other signifiers in the system as a whole. For instance, the signifier 't-r-e-e' obtains its unique meaning by being different from others such as 'free', 'knee', 'true' and 'scree'. Furthermore, the signifier 'tree' is arbitrary in that there is nothing essential about how it is pronounced that is any more suggestive of the real thing than is *arbre*. The planes of signifiers and signifieds, or concepts, are thus constituted by difference, where value is produced negatively in terms of what something is not. De Saussure contended, in relation to signification, that signifiers and signifieds combine like a key into a lock, creating a positive value. Thus, the sound image 't-r-e-e' or the drawing of a tree instantly summons the concept of the entity comprising leaves and a trunk, the composite 'tree', which has a unique meaning.

Figure 6.2 implies a harmonious relationship between signifier and signified. The signifier gains its meaning due to its unique formulation, being different to similar-sounding words such as 'free', 'true' and so on. The reciprocal arrows suggest a harmonious relation between signifier and signified; the concept of a tree summons the sound image, and vice versa.

In interpreting de Saussure, Lacan radically destabilizes the harmonious conjoining of signifier to signified. Here I wish to make three main points in relation to consumption. First, Lacan is primarily interested in the operations of the unconscious (where signifiers obtain values) rather than in conscious signification. He retains de Saussure's idea that the value of a signifier is based on radical difference within the totality of the language system. However, he dispenses with the complementarity between signifier and signified. Instead the signifier is privileged, as embodied in written language

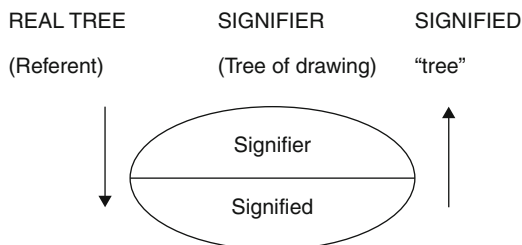


Figure 6.2 Relations between signifier and signified in de Saussure

and culture, over what is signified, or thought. De Saussure's reciprocal arrows between mutually important planes of signification are replaced by Lacan with the representation S/s, with the signifier definitively in the dominant position, a capital letter that sits on top of the signified.³⁵ The signifier, being primary, cuts into the inchoate realm of thought. Language and culture thus constitute an alien force that enters the subject of its creation like an invading army which colonizes its host, channelling its thought processes along predefined pathways.

Secondly, in structuring the subject, Lacan has it in mind that language forms the unconscious. The first chink is opened in the subject during the mirror phase when the infant develops its first concept, 'That is me!'; it is more fully opened when he renounces his desire for the mother by repressing the phallic signifier that founds the unconscious. A bar is created that separates unconscious signification from conscious thought. The conscious *moi*, who corresponds to *homo economicus*, is an imaginary formation, believing that he is self-present, self-contained and self-directed, while all the time he is subject to, and spoken by, the unconscious. When the subject speaks, it is difficult to know who it is that is speaking. If the *moi* is constructed by multiple layers of identifications, like a pile of old coats, which one of these is speaking at this particular moment? Repressed desire erupts through fissures in this self-contained mantle through telltale slips of the tongue and memory lapses. A word may become impossible to locate or may literally become stuck in one's throat; symptoms may appear as words trapped inside the body.

The third point is that Lacan abandons the fixity of meaning specified by de Saussure, who interlocks signifier with signified. Where 'tree' might be taken in a linear manner to represent something with bark, leaves and roots, such as a plane tree, Lacan argues that in common with all other signifiers, its meaning is polyphonic, depending on the context of other signifiers that are contiguous to it. 'Tree' has a number of potential alternative meanings, depending on the context: not only plane tree but also 'tree of Calvary', 'family tree' and 'tree of life'. By radically altering de Saussure's concept of signification through the prioritization of the signifier while retaining the idea that the value of a signifier is the product of difference, Lacan effects that the signified can no longer be contained in terms of an identity with the signifier. Rather than conceive of signification as the communication of a pre-established thought, or signified, it is better to think of language 'as an articulation, determined and defined by a difference that produces identities only belatedly and retroactively.'³⁶ Meaning is thus not transparent and does not unfold naturally in speech but rather can be decided only at the end of a particular sequence, if at all. The signifier never quite captures the meaning that it is supposed to express because it must rely on its articulation to other signifiers. No signifier is adequate to convey meaning, but rather it must rely on the next in the chain and so on. The demands made

manifest by the conscious subject are determined by the play of condensation and displacement of signifiers in the unconscious. Lacan's reconciliation of Freud's concepts of condensation and displacement to Jakobson's concepts of metaphor and metonymy are discussed below. There is thus an incessant sliding of the signified underneath the signifier. In this view meaning is not the transparent product of a subject who is self-present but is produced retroactively. How is meaning to be arrested? Through *points de capiton*, or anchoring points, in discourse.

Primacy of the signifier

From the above, Lacan insists that rather than imagining a harmony existing between signifier and signified, the signifier cuts into and determines the signified. Language pre-dates us, and its signifiers mould our thoughts. The child who plays the '*fort-da*' game does not scream incoherently but moulds the game according to the signifiers '*fort*' (gone) and '*da*' (back). The game exemplifies an illusion of control which is wholly lacking in the subject; the mother is gone, and the child seeks to cope with this traumatic loss symbolically. The child does not even possess the signifiers that he uses, which pre-exist him.

In differentiating his theory of the sign from that of de Saussure, Lacan offers an example (see Figure 6.3). Instead of one signifier, such as 'tree', we are presented with two. The signified, or concept associated with these, which is represented below the bar, is blank; the two doors point to the verbal signifiers that are above them, which are separated from them.

Lacan supplements the figure with the following:

A train arrives at a station. A little boy and a little girl, brother and sister, are seated in a compartment face to face next to the window through which the buildings along the station platform can be seen passing as the train pulls to a stop. 'Look' says the boy, 'we're at Ladies!' 'Idiot' replies his sister, 'Can't you see we're at Gentlemen.'³⁷

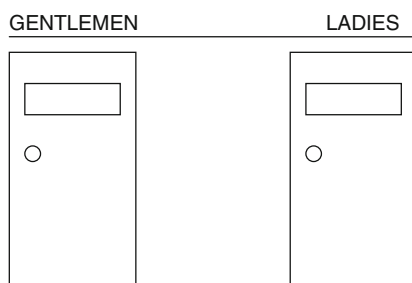


Figure 6.3 The signifier in Lacan

Source: From *ECRITS: A Selection* by Jacques Lacan, translated by Alan Sheridan. Copyright © by Editions du Seuil. English translation copyright © 1977 by Tavistock Publications. Used by permission of W.W. Norton & Company and of Routledge.

It is noteworthy that de Saussure used the example of the Geneva to Paris train as an example of the synchronic operation of the language system. Each time the train might depart with different coaches linked to a different engine, with a different driver and different passengers. Nonetheless, it remains recognizably the Geneva to Paris train because it always leaves Geneva at a certain time. It was this fact that determined its difference in the system of language from all of the other trains. In contrast, Lacan's linguistic train slides along the rails that brings it to the station, and here we are presented with the points of view of two of the passengers on board, a boy and a girl. Paradoxically, the boy ends up facing 'Ladies' and the girl 'Gentlemen'. The doors are identical, and so what distinguishes one door from the other is the signifier that is above it.

One possible meaning is that the expression of one's gender orientation depends on where one is taken to on the rails of the signifier. The signifier dominates the signified. The doors are identical and so are indistinguishable without the labels presented by the signifiers above them. Applied to sexual difference, one can see that this explanation entirely dismisses the view that individuals are biologically male or female, highlighting instead the role played by culture. This highlights the extent to which the Symbolic is all-encompassing, whereby children occupy a precise place within the family unit, which in turn occupies a position in society and culture. The child is thus an effect of the desire of the Other. This is not simply to suggest that they are a product of a moment of sexual union but that their coming into being as human subjects is symbolically defined within a social network in which the child is given a name and a family history and is laden with expectation, 'you'll grow up to be what I couldn't be', as signifier of the parents' desires, which of course can be contradictory.

The phallus, as a symbol of the lack of the other, representing unattainable jouissance, is a pure signifier that can be possessed by no one. Boys may seem to have the upper hand because they possess a penis, which signifies power. Boys seek to have the phallus by means of Oedipal identification with the father, who is thought to possess it. Girls, on the other hand, will identify with the mother and turn towards a new object, where the penis of the father acts as the substitute for the phallus. The woman, in seeking to have the phallus, puts herself into the position of being the subject of male anxiety and hostility. Consequently, successful women seek to be the phallus, to act out a masquerade of femininity putting on an exaggerated womanly image.³⁸

'Do crossword puzzles': metaphor and metonymy³⁹

Given that the dehiscent subject, split once in the Imaginary, is sundered once more by language, or discourse of the Other, that has invaded it, then one must ask, who is speaking when the subject speaks? Is this the 'me', the self-contained, coherent subject of the conscious subject of the Imaginary?

Or is it the hidden and shifting 'I' that troubles this seamless production and is revealed in disturbances, such as the omissions slips and gaps that seem to irrupt into the former? The repressed phallic signifier must now operate in the dark, beyond the law in the labyrinthine unconscious. The labyrinth provided a useful metaphor not only for Lacan but for the Dada artists with whom he associated, furnishing several articles to their journal *Minotaure*.

The labyrinth is a productive metaphor for the unconscious because desire is never directly materialized in language but makes its presence felt in the process of metonymy. 'It is there that what we call desire crawls, slips, escapes like a ferret.'⁴⁰ The concepts of condensation and displacement described by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* are reformulated by Lacan in linguistic terms as central to the operations of the unconscious. Lacan likens condensation to the process whereby one metaphor substitutes for another. Displacement is likened to the process of metonymy or contiguity between terms. At the resolution of the Oedipal phase, the subject identifies with the father and represses desire for the mother. The signifier Name of the Father thus substitutes for the primordial desire for the mother and to be the object of her desire. What is signified, the phallus, remains unchanged. However, the relationship between what is signified (the phallus) and its signifier (desire for the mother) is now mediated by the substituted term, and desire for the mother has been pushed into the unconscious. The father's name signifies desire through a chain of signification that has an invisible link to this desire for the mother. Over the course of a lifetime the subject builds many chains of signification, always substituting new terms for old and thus always increasing the distance between the signifier that is most accessible and visible and all those that are invisible and unconscious, including the original signifier.⁴¹

The repressed signifier of desire, now beyond signification, must always be represented by another signifier that substitutes for it. Lacan takes this to apparently absurd extremes. For example, in reply to a questioner who asked him what constituted the desire of *la belle bouchère*, whose case is discussed in [Chapter One](#), he replied that she desired nothing. The desire of a young academic who would not write anything for fear of plagiarism is greeted with the same enigmatic reply. In both instances, 'nothing' paradoxically takes on a concrete and positive value that gives the subject something to aim for, standing in place of the terrible and unknowable void beyond representation. For Lacan, as for Freud (at the time he wrote the *Interpretation of Dreams*), the unconscious is no tower of Babel but reveals a precise form of organization based on linguistic rules. Freud described these primary processes of the unconscious as being condensation and displacement. Lacan, borrows from the semiologist Roman Jakobson in likening the process of condensation to metaphor and metonymy to displacement.

In the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud ([1938] 1975) extends his earlier work to argue that processes of condensation and displacement are frequently at work in a variety of expressions, including memory lapses, jokes, dreams, slips of the pen and slips of the tongue. Jakobson links metaphor to the code by similarity. For instance, a 'hammer' is a tool for driving in nails, which is linked by metonymy to the rest of the message: 'Bring me the hammer!' or 'This is a hammer'. Alternative metaphors might be 'saw', 'ladder', 'head of John the Baptist.' In Lacan's understanding, metaphors are symptoms that substitute for the unrepresentable phallic signifier. Desire itself is always hidden in the metonymic displacement of language.

Freud uses the term 'wandering' speech to describe the tendency of unconscious desire to irrupt into consciousness. He cites the instance when a colleague who intends to say '*vorschein*' (bringing to light) says instead '*vorschwein*', which reflects an apparently meaningless condensation of terms ('*vor*' and '*schwein*'). He suggests that such simple slips of the tongue are facilitated by a similarity between the word that is intended to be spoken and that which is actually spoken but which is not intended. This permits the latter to make its way to consciousness, bringing about a distortion. I experienced a similar event a few days ago while writing this piece with the radio playing in the background. The BBC weather announcer was giving out the one o'clock forecast, noting that the likelihood of thunder showers was quite high for the Glastonbury music festival this coming weekend and that consequently 'one should expect a muddy shite ... I mean site ...'; thereafter he struggled to retain his composure as laughter threatened to engulf him throughout the remainder of what must have seemed to him to be an interminable forecast.⁴² There is a double similarity in operation here: first, 'site/shite' and, secondly, 'mud/shite'. His slip is obvious to those who are versed in the nomenclature of Glastonbury, with its images of mass queues at Portaloos and hordes of muddied revellers. The addition of the letter *h* brought all of these meanings into play in a manner that was obviously unintended and which subverted the intended discourse. One can represent these rather simple examples by means of the following diagram, where the conscious intended speech of the 'me', is rudely interrupted by the unconscious speech of the 'I'.

Cs, Pcs.	Vorschein	Muddy Site
Ucs.	Vorschwein	Muddy Shite

Bruce Fink puts it well in saying that such slips remind us that more than one discourse can use the same mouthpiece. In this respect, as speaking subjects, we are alienated insofar as we are spoken by a language that seems to function as an external agency.

The explanation for simple slips of the tongue seems obvious. But what of the following, more complex, example related by Freud in the same text? In discussing how one can forget names, Freud recalls an instance when, 'I was driving with a stranger from Rugusa in Dalmatia to a place in Herzegovina and I asked my companion whether he had ever been to Orvieto and looked at the famous frescoes there painted by ...'.⁴³ Not only could Freud not recall the correct name, but the names of two other artists annoyingly pressed themselves onto his consciousness even though he immediately knew that they were incorrect, 'Botticelli' and another which he knew much less well, 'Boltraffio'. Some time later he is told the correct name of the artist, 'Signorelli', which he immediately recognizes. But why could he not recall it at the time? As ever, Freud considers the context in which the incident occurred. Just before this incident they had been discussing the customs of the Turks living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, noting their great confidence in their doctors and great acceptance of fate. They agreed that if a doctor were to inform them that nothing further could be done for a sick person, they were likely to reply, 'Herr, (Sir) what is to be said. I know if you could have saved him, you would.'

Freud reasoned that there must be a link between Bosnia, Herzegovina and Herr, which somehow were associated in some form with Botticelli and Boltraffio. He recalled that he had wanted to relate an anecdote about the Turks, that they valued sexual engagement above all else; 'if that comes to an end, then life has no value.' But he had suppressed this account because he did not think it appropriate when conversing with a stranger. In his later reflection he notes that this suppression also diverted him from thoughts linking death to sexuality. Not long before, while staying in the Tyrolian hamlet called Trafio, he had learned that a patient over whom he had taken a great deal of trouble had killed himself on account of an incurable sexual disorder. Although at the time of his memory lapse Freud was not consciously aware of this melancholy event, it nonetheless appeared to be linked to the unconscious chain of associations. Freud concluded that the forgetting of the name Signorelli was not a chance event but rather a motivated act. There was a motive he wanted to repress; what he wanted to forget was not the name of the artist but something else, which he had placed in an association with the name:

*so that my act of will missed its target and I forgot the one against my will (italics in original) while I intentionally wished to forget the other.*⁴⁴

So he forgets the name, although desperately trying to recall it, while intentionally wanting to forget the traumatic event linking sex with death. In considering the various condensations and associations between signifiers,

Freud likens them to a picture puzzle or rebus. An approximation of his drawing of these associations is shown in Figure 6.4.⁴⁵

Signorelli is split into two syllables, of which 'elli' provides the only immediate retrieval cue for Signorelli. The metaphorical substitution of 'Herr' for 'Signor' may be found by means of a displacement between Herzogovina and Bosnia.

Anthony Wilden stretches the links between sexuality and death to their 'Freudian' extreme by arguing that this illustrates Freud's desire for his mother and for the death of his rivals, including his father and Fliess, and for his own death. Anthony Storr is sceptical, arguing that Freud's 'extremely ingenious' analysis of this memory lapse can seem to be 'too clever by half', that the explanation may pertain in some instance but not all.⁴⁶ Freud maintains that slips and forgetting motivated by repression occur with 'uncommon frequency' while also being careful to assert forcefully that they constitute only one group of such omissions and that there can be simpler explanations that underlie them. This is a very important topic as it concerns the nature and limits of the unconscious. Freud clearly takes his analysis of the 'Signorelli' omission as constituting further evidence in support of the complex operations of condensation (metaphor) and displacement (metonymy) in the dreamworld. On the basis of this, the unconscious is like a fabricator of crosswords that uses anagrams, reversals and cryptic clues to signal its oblique intentions. This is precisely what Lacan thought to be the case.

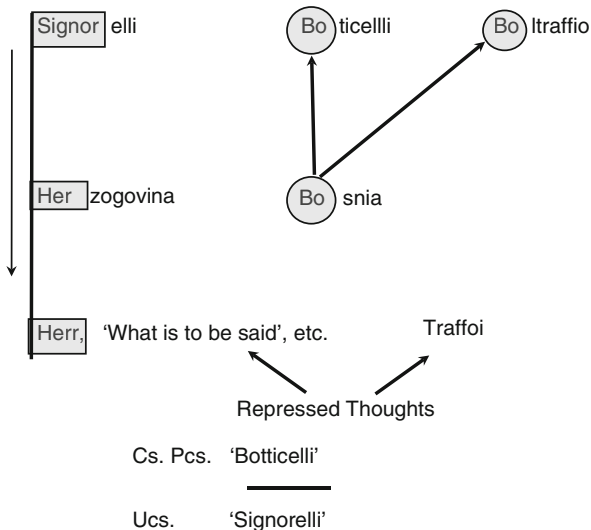


Figure 6.4 Freud's analysis of a momentary forgetfulness

Source: Freud, (1930: 9).

Recently, research has partly caught up with Freud's insight. In one study, experimental subjects were shown a battery of scrambled sentences and asked to unscramble them by making grammatical sentences from four of the words provided (Bargh et al., 1996). For example, 'sky the seamless grey is' could be rendered as 'the sky is grey'; alternatively, although less plausibly, 'the sky is seamless' would do. Unknown to the subjects, the entire battery of sentences was permeated with metonymies signifying aspects of 'old age', 'politeness' and 'rudeness'; the subjects who were primed with those 'old' cues walked more slowly after the task; those primed with 'polite' cues were considerably more polite than were those primed with 'rude' cues. This is suggestive that the unconscious does indeed process metonymic cues in a manner that can influence behaviour unknown to consciousness. Going further to suggest that condensation (metaphor) and displacement (metonymy) are the means by which the unconscious masks its meaning from consciousness requires the operation of a more complex mechanism. However, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the unconscious does act in a manner that is similar to the fabricator of crossword puzzles.

While Lacan's discussion of metaphor and metonymy is linked directly to Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, these also figure prominently in the work of his other great model, James Joyce. Umberto Eco analysed the metonymic chains underlying the condensed metaphors deployed in *Finnegan's Wake*, such as 'Minicius Mandrake' and 'Meandertale', by following a method which is almost the replica of that used by Freud with respect to the 'Signorelli' episode.⁴⁷

The use of the labyrinth as a metaphor for the unconscious should be taken with caution to the extent that this might sustain the idea that the unconscious is contained in some deep place in the psyche. In order to problematize ideas of what lies 'inside' and 'outside' the subject, Lacan employs the device of the Möbius strip. This three dimensional object can be easily formed. Simply take a relatively long and thin rectangle of paper, twist it once and tape or, more ideally, stitch each end. Running a finger along the strip, you will notice that it defeats the idea of a container as what is at one point 'inside' is at another point 'outside'. This aids the understanding that language and culture are not external to the subject, on whom they exert an influence, but rather constitute the subject's desire and being.

Points de capiton: pinning down meaning

From the above, the subject of the signifier in the symbolic is necessarily incomplete. Humans inhabit a world where events are subject to radical contingency, as is language itself, where signifiers slide from one to the next. If one accepts the view that language comprises a system where each signifier rests on a chain of signification for its meaning and that consequently meaning is constructed retroactively, how can meaning be stable? If the Symbolic order is all that there is, then the game would be up for

those subjected to the endless slippage of meaning. Thankfully for the subject, the imaginary drive for coherence and fixity that provided the original grounding of the Symbolic order steps in to arrest the perpetual motion of the signifier. Without this imaginary role, the Symbolic order would self-destruct.⁴⁸

Lacan uses the *point de capiton*, or quilting point, a term usually used in the context of buttoning down fabric in a mattress, to describe how the imaginary arrests the free flow of signification.⁴⁹ The *point de capiton* is a nodal point that stitches together the meaning of a number of related terms. This is essential for the functioning of the subject, who would otherwise be psychotic. On the other hand, it is also illusory, as there is no reason why one should objectively prefer one particular articulation of meaning to its alternatives. The *point de capiton* anchors meaning in such a way that it appears natural and inevitable.

The fundamental fantasy gives rise to an anamorphic tendency whereby the subject informs, or fills in meaning; for instance, by joining the dots in a gestalt drawing to form a line. The *point de capiton* plays a key role in fantasy as a master signifier that pins down the meaning of those around it to a greater or lesser extent. I like to think of the quilting point as being somewhat analogous to the kinds of articulation made between constructs described by the psychologist George Kelly.⁵⁰ In Kelly's theory, monolithic construal, which is similar to stereotyping, occurs when each construct exists in a one-to-one relation with all of the others in a personal construct system, whereas segmented construing allows for more fluidity in relations between constructs.

Valerie Walkerdine illustrates the *point de capiton* in her description of Mr Cole, the father of a child who attends the school where she is conducting research. Mr Cole, who is working-class and clearly head of his household, tries hard to, and largely succeeds, in getting up Walkerdine's nose. She is particularly irritated by Cole's endless replay of round fifteen of the fight scene from the film *Rocky 2*. She initially interprets his fixation on this scene and in fighting in general as evidence of a stupid, fascist, macho attitude linked to his fantasies of omnipotence, heroism and salvation.⁵¹ On reflection, she gains the insight that fighting has an extraordinary significance for Mr Cole. The Coles had taken an active part in the protest about asbestos at the local school and were the last family to return their children to it. Mr Cole eulogized to his sons the importance of fighting their corner at school and was proud of their bruises and scrapes. Cole was constantly on his guard against being thought soft or feminine. The fantasy of the fighter thus assumed a specific meaning in the Cole household that, Walkerdine insists, would not have been shared by those in a middle-class household. Of working-class extraction herself, she argued that fighting operated as a *point de capiton* for Mr Cole, becoming fixed in his history of powerlessness and in his constant struggle not to sink down, to get rights, not to be pushed

out. This is quite different to a liberal, antisexist discourse that would interpret such behaviour as being 'macho'.

Mr Cole stabilizes the slippage inherent to the operations of the linguistic assembly system by means of Imaginary, and thus illusory, fixations. Given that the principle on which the system operates is essentially dynamic and fluid, then any attempt to freeze meaning is illusory. For the viewer of *Rocky 2*, the action seems to unfold naturally from its beginning to its end. However, its drama lies in the fact that events are portrayed such that the outcome at different points could so easily have turned out otherwise and that, without the willing intervention of the viewer, the unthinkable might happen, and Rocky might fail. The play of chance and contingency may become fully apparent only when the action is watched in reverse.⁵² The same, of course, could also be said for the centrality of Mr Cole's belief in the efficacy of fighting, where no doubt many counterexamples could be cited. The *point de capiton* is not simply the individual creation of Mr Cole but also exists outside of him in wider discourse. The movie *Rocky 2* and its star, Sylvester Stallone, depended for their success on the fact that they could connect with the fantasies of millions of 'Mr Coles', for whom the escape route that the film offers is closed. Mr Cole's ready identification with the fighter who is Rocky helps explain how culture comes to figure in the construction of the subject.

Structuralism

Structuralists are so called because they focus on the importance of language in determining our actions. Consistent with *homo economicus*, most people believe that they are the agents and authors of their actions. In contrast, structuralists argue that the subject is determined by a system of rules that are hidden in culture, which is another way of saying, in language. It is commonplace to believe that thought exists outside of and independent of language and that language is simply the means to put our preconceived thoughts into action. In contrast to this logocentrism is the idea that we cannot think outside of language and indeed that we are borne into a system of culture and language that pre-dates us, providing the signifiers, or words, which are the vehicles for thought. More so, culture assigns us labels; for instance, we are positioned differently in society depending on whether we are born male or female. This is so even before we are born. To this extent one can think of language speaking through us. Think back to the '*fort-da*' game described by Freud, where the child throws away and then retrieves the cotton reel. Lacan argues that it is also crucial to recognize that the child is not simply performing the action but is representing it in speech not his own, speech that has come to him from the outside, from culture. The central ideas of structuralism are that human behaviour is conducted according to a set of linguistic rules that are hidden in the unconscious.

Differences are not haphazard but are regular, being structured according to binary oppositions.

Varda Leymore's *Hidden Myth* (1975) comprises a rigorously constructed structuralist analysis of advertising. Leymore builds a model to find out how the advertising system works. She conceptualizes this to be a transformation process whereby signs and symbols are transformed into real-life action; advertising, (the use of symbols) comes to influence the exchange of values (money and goods). She assumes that the unconscious has a universal structure where the rules which specify behaviour are organized as binary oppositions. Given that she sought to be able to predict a priori how butter and margarine advertisements differed from one another, she compared them with respect to a universal typology of foods that had been developed by Claude Levi-Strauss. Using this template, she concluded that there is essentially only one difference between margarine and butter, in respect to the transformation process, butter being closer to the original state of nature than margarine. She concluded a priori that butter advertising would accentuate that it is more natural than margarine, while margarine advertising would focus on the more positive aspects of the transformation process. To test this proposition she collected a large sample of advertisements for butter and margarine. Analysis of these advertisements confirmed her proposition. The advertising of butter linked it to images of 'naturalness' and 'basic goodness', whilst margarine was depicted as unnatural and artificial. Margarine ads emphasized the positive aspects of the transformation process, stressing its modernity and scientific basis and its appeal to health and well-being. Ideas of concord, friendship, content, care and love appeared continuously in butter ads, as did the young, the old, the father and the children. Leymore was interested in uncovering the fundamental binary oppositions which structure the advertising system and also to reveal the missing term. In thinking of what is missing in 'old, young, father and children', it is the housewife and mother, the target of the ad, who is excluded from its content. If margarine is the other or opposite of butter, it will be signified by the antonyms of the signifiers used in the butter ads, which are 'concord, friendship, contentment and care'. This opposition boils down to one common denominator: butter advertisements promise harmony and peace for the woman who purchases it; margarine, on the other hand, is implicitly associated in butter ads with war and chaos!

Comparing Leymore's approach with that of Lacan, whilst in Lacan's view the subject is spoken by language, Leymore in her study reduces the subject to a cipher for the operations of culture, effectively abolishing them. Although beautifully crafted, her account ignores the hidden presence of the Real in the Symbolic. Žižek is helpful here in citing an example from Levi-Strauss. The latter asked two groups from the same tribe to describe the configuration of their village. He was presented with two different

configurations. The first showed a number of buildings jumbled together. The second group situated the buildings within two circles, one inside the other. Levi-Strauss compared these representations with the real layout of the village and noted that each of the drawings differed markedly from this. The drawings were anamorphic representations. The Real for these villagers was not the actual layout of the buildings but the traumatic core of the social antagonism that distorted the tribal members' view of the actual layout and thus their representation of it. 'The real is thus the disavowed x on account of which our vision of reality is anamorphically distorted.'⁵³

Ideology

While the rigour of Leymore's analysis is compelling, it is purely structuralist, taking no account of the relation of the human subject to the advertising system. The concept of ideology is more fruitful in this respect as it requires a 'Lacanian' subject, in the sense that the person has a profound need to be centred and to feel coherent. It is unsurprising that there is an affinity between the *point de capiton* and Althusser's concept of ideology given the close relationship that persisted between Lacan and Althusser prior to the latter's publication of his major work on the subject (Althusser, 1964). Ideology represents 'an imaginary relation to our real conditions of existence.'⁵⁴ Ideology constitutes the human subjects by lending them a fictional sense of coherence and centredness. Ideology refers to all of those apparatuses of the state which support the status quo, principally religion, the education system and the mass media.

In the classic *Decoding Advertisements*, Judith Williamson argues for the importance of studying the ideological role of advertising as a substitution for traditional structures of meaning produced by religion and art.⁵⁵ Her argument springs directly from her reading of Lacan, through Althusser, in seeking to explain the ideological process by which advertisements rely for their meaning on an active subject, on whom they confer a meaning. She argues that a pure structuralist analysis can be too abstract because it is crucially important to understand the role of appellation, or how consumers are directly addressed as subjects of advertising, in the process of attaching meaning to advertisements.⁵⁶ In line with Lacan, she argues that advertisements require a conscious, lacking subject who responds to advertising images by seeking to gain imaginary wholeness. Williamson argues that the bare physical product has little or no meaning; cigarettes consist of almost identical white tubes filled with tobacco; perfumes, of different compositions of chemicals. Products acquire meaning only by their association with signifiers from established systems of cultural meaning, which she calls referent systems.

Williamson's prototypical example is drawn from perfume, where the well-known film star and model Catherine Deneuve; when juxtaposed with *Chanel No. 5*, acts as a signifier which associates the product with chic. In contrast, the 'tomboy' actress Margaux Hemingway transfers the signifiers

of aggressive femininity to a rival product, 'Babe'. The key point is that Deneuve and Hemingway form part of an established system of cultural meaning, which Williamson calls a referent system, and the advertising system raids such pre-established systems for its salient meanings, which it then attaches to products.

In contrast to Varda Leymore, Williamson assumes the existence of an anamorphic subject, who is appellated, being hailed or invited into the space that is crafted for her by the fabricators of the advertisement. In the *Chanel No. 5* advertisement, the target customer is lured into identifying with the image of Catherine Deneuve. However, Williamson demonstrates that advertisements also extensively rely on the consumer to supply something which is deliberately missing in the advertisement: for example, a person or product is missing, a puzzle needs to be solved, or the reader is faced with a language game or pun.⁵⁷ Advertisements thus rely for their meaning on the knowledge brought by the consumer, who provides the link to what is missing. Effective advertising is never left to chance; its likely meanings are subjected to rigorous pre-testing, conforming not simply to the codes used by the intended audience but reflecting the lives and aspirations of those who are the targets.

Williamson insists on the falsity of ideology at several points in her text. She quotes Lacan: 'The subject fastens to an image which alienates him from himself, so that he is forever irreducible to his lived identity.'⁵⁸ Similar to Althusser's definition, ideology is taken to be consonant with the Imaginary identifications made by the subject that contrast with their real conditions of existence. Advertisements misrepresent the world, disguising their strategic symbolic nature by seeming to make a purely Imaginary appeal;⁵⁹ they always position their readers as subjects who have freedom of choice, and they misrepresent the subject's relation to nature.⁶⁰ Advertising makes false assumptions about people in inviting them to identify themselves with what they consume instead of what really matters, which is their identity as a worker. Under the barrage of advertising, the worker can lose his class consciousness, so that the worker with two cars and a colour television can feel that he is no longer working class.⁶¹ This idea of falsity owes more to Althusser's development of Marx's concept of ideology than to Lacan because it seeks to convince the reader that there is a true, or real, position that can be anchored somewhere outside the *point de capiton*.

Williamson provides a sophisticated account, where advertising operates as a form of bricolage by drawing meaning from bits and pieces of existing referent systems, which already have an existence in the mind of the consumer, who is called on to draw from them in making sense of the advertisement and in so doing identifies with the product. In this respect, she argues that a purely structural analysis can be too abstract, calling instead for a 'sound understanding' of the role played by appellation, and that the constitution of the subject can bridge the gulf between what appears to be an autonomous structural system and its actualization in a social context.⁶²

Canalization of desire

Although Valerie Walkerdine (2000) never once mentions ideology, her analysis is strikingly similar to Williamson's. Indebted to Lacan, she argues that his most important contribution is in foregrounding the role played by signification in the production of meaning and the fixing of desire in specific ways. In this respect mass media images can play a formative role in channelling, or, as she puts it, canalizing, desire in culturally approved ways.⁶³ In this study she analyses British 'comic' fiction, specifically 18 stories in *Bunty* and *Tracy*, published on a weekly basis for pre-teen, working class girls. This genre contains stories illustrated by a mix of pictographic and linguistic material, where convention dictates that characters are depicted as cartoons and conversation as speech bubbles. Walkerdine argues that girls' comics are a particularly powerful form in the directing of desire. This is because they engage with the reader at the level of unconscious fantasy and thereby implicitly channel the unconscious desire of the reader in the directions offered by the narrative; for instance, in how to get and keep a man.

The stories are based on classic fairy tales ending with 'happily-ever-after' solutions and centred mostly on the insertion of the girl at the centre of the story into an ideal family. These girls are depicted as being noble, hard done by and hapless victims of circumstance. Walkerdine argues that these tales act out the Oedipal resolution. The happy family is found after a series of traumas that are associated with the loss and abandonment of the mother, culminating in favour of the father. Various substitutes are used in the tales; the prince, or the knight in shining armour.

Walkerdine argues that the very unreality of the stories is a strength and not a weakness. The power of the traditional fairy tale lies in fantasy, its ability to address important themes about potential realities. The stories in *Bunty* and *Tracy* are similar, describing difficult and miserable circumstances and then offering potential avenues of escape. For example, poverty is portrayed thereafter in romantic ways as being desirable because it can be suffered virtuously, transcended and then left behind rapidly. In these stories, as Walkerdine notes, poverty is always accidental.⁶⁴ The wicked families who oppress the heroine are also contingent. The situation is based on tragic and fantastic circumstances. To Walkerdine the unreality is sufficiently different from the reader's real-life situation so as to ensure that it is not too close for comfort, enabling the reader to identify with the reality portrayed at the level of fantasy. A typical storyline goes:

A girl has a mother who is a teacher and who chose to teach in a rough comprehensive school where she persists in her attempts to reform the children. Through ingenious good deeds the girl helps her mother to manage the school, but without her mother finding out who was responsible.⁶⁵

Another popular storyline features the heroine as an orphan who may be adopted, kidnapped, or even enslaved by a wicked cousin. The daunting life circumstances in which the girls find themselves are offset by their own unselfish helpfulness. Suppression of need is reinforced by a vision of the happy family, portrayed as a nuclear family, living in a comfortable, well-furnished house, with possessions requisite to living the good life. Walkerdine argues that these themes, although not overtly sexual, are central to the production of femininity and female sexuality. The arrival of the knight in shining armour, she reports, is portrayed as the typical solution. The comics thus produce constellations of meaning (*points de capiton*) that provide vehicles for the content of gender resolution. That is not to say that one should believe that the girls, in identifying with these texts, 'become feminine'. Instead, she contends, 'Such relations are not fitted easily onto girls and must be struggled over.'⁶⁶ In other words, she does not believe that girls are simply shaped or moulded by these images. Nor does she believe that the readings of comics is simply constituted by the relations of significations within the text, as structuralists argue:

Cultural practices do not simply engage in a process of imposing normalization. They participate in the formation of desire, fanning its flames, and thereby canalize it, directing it towards investment in certain objects and resolutions. Reading is nevertheless an active engagement, a struggle for both meaning and identity, and the role of desire and action means that readers do not identify with the heroines always in the same way.⁶⁷

Desire can be channelled by being positioned in a discourse. For instance, to what extent is it regarded as 'feminine' for a girl to be perceived as 'intellectual'? The signifier 'good' can mean, on the one hand, 'well behaved' ('good girl'); on the other, 'clever'. What is important are the relations between the significations present within different discourses and the positions offered by those discourses that are the root product of identity. Identification, the fixing of a subject in a position, takes place within a discourse. But the fact that one position rather than another is taken up depends on the mechanism of desire. The concept of discourse also allows for slippage and contradictions between discourses, whereby the same signifier can be pinned to different meanings. As the subject shifts position in interdiscourse, this can allow for the emergence of discontinuities and contradictions that split the subject. For example, 'professional woman' can lead to two different readings, one as 'professional', the other as 'woman'. Where the two significations meet there are bound to be anxieties about desire.⁶⁸ Also, particular others will be viewed differently by different subjects. For instance, Walkerdine notes that she and her sister describe their father in such different ways that they could be talking about different men. She recalled a father who was all

good, for whom she worked hard; she was his little girl. Her younger sister, on the other hand, remembered a father who was weak and ill, in relation to whom she felt too powerful. Given this, a simple model of desire is impossible to effect because the relationship between positioning, signification and desire is too complex.

Discussion

The *point de capiton* shares an affinity with but is different from the related concept of ideology. Arguably, the concept of ideology, as the central signifier around which discourse revolved, became itself a *point de capiton* for the Left during the 1960s and early 1970s. The popularity of ideology as an explanatory concept waned in almost direct proportion to the growing ascendancy of postmodernism in social theory and died a death since the fall of the Soviet empire. The rise of postmodernism did not so much attack the structuralist-semiotic-analytic technique advocated by Williamson (1978) but rather questioned its fundamental assumption, given its focus on falsity, on the existence of a true subject lying beyond ideology. I think that Williamson is largely correct when she writes in the preface to her 1991 impression that she has no urge to update her book because the structuralist-semiotic theory she employed remains a powerful means to understand the workings of the advertising system. Since she wrote this, it has become more fashionable to employ theories, such as uses and gratifications theory, which looks to how advertising is read in different ways to those intended by the advertiser. However, uses and gratifications theory relies for its findings precisely on the mechanism that Lacan warned of, which is the *moi* of conscious reflection. Although several decades old, Williamson's account provides a cogent argument of how consumer's construct meaning and identity through advertising. The reception context does matter. As Williamson points out in her book, ads require a very specific form of decoding if their intended meaning is to be read, and sometimes the receivers do not possess this code or, alternatively, they grasp the intended meaning but decode this differently because of their social position. Eco provides the example that in northern Italy an advertisement for a refrigerator will be taken for what it is, whereas in impoverished Calabria, where people lack the resources to purchase this commodity, it could be taken as an incitement to revolution.

Walkerdine's (2000) analysis is more contingent than that of Williamson, taking account not only of how narratives are organized to engage with their juvenile readers but of the differing social positions of those readers and their location in a multiplicity of discourses. Nevertheless, it is clear that the readers of the comics she analysed were being led down identifiable paths. The point that she makes – that it is extremely difficult to construct an adequate model – is well made. Her own study was necessarily limited to two comics. If she had chosen another comic for her material such as the anarchic *The Beano*, one of Britain's most successful comics, she would have

encountered the notorious *Minnie the Minx*. *The Beano* targets a slightly a younger audience (aged six to eleven) than the teenagers *Bunty* addresses. A central character since 1952, *Minnie* offers a startling counterpoint to the relatively docile post-Oedipal girls portrayed in *Bunty*. Leo Baxendale, creator of *Minnie the Minx*, recalls that George Mooney, then editor of *The Beano*, asked him to come up with a female equivalent of the fearsome *Dennis the Menace*. This character had already been developed for *The Topper*, in the form of *Beryl the Peril*. Baxendale says that 'I made *Minnie* into a kind of Amazonian warrior. Unlike many of the characters in the comics at the time she didn't have special powers or superhuman strength – she was just a sturdy twelve-year old girl. She had will and ambition.'⁶⁹ But then readers of *Bunty* wouldn't have touched *The Beano* with a barge pole, and vice versa.

The preoccupation of ideology theorists with false appearances led some in the 1970s to develop the concept of hyperreality.⁷⁰ In particular, this was the preoccupation of Jean Baudrillard, who developed this into the idea of an all-encompassing simulation.⁷¹ Disney provides a good example of this concept. Fjellman argues that Disney has purloined and 'Disneyfied' history on a massive scale in imaginary areas such as Walt Disney World, where the history of the United States is transmogrified into the caricature he calls 'Distory', representing a cleaned-up and simplified reality. EPCOT in particular, uncritically recycles Disney's corporate PR.⁷² Fjellman is concerned because of the vast numbers of people who visit Disney each year, numbering around 17 million to Walt Disney World, with 10 million visiting EPCOT. Disney's animations 'have become important icons of U.S. conservative postmodern culture. They are unique carriers of a powerful nostalgia parents often feel compelled to share with their children.'⁷³ Umberto Eco, reporting on his trip to Walt Disney World in the 1970s, commented that Disney can be viewed as a fantastic exception to the normal experience of America when measured against the benchmark of the Guggenheim Museum. However, in his encounter of one hyperreality after another outside the gates of Disney, Eco found any number of examples, including the Lyndon Johnson Museum, the Museum of Modern Art and the Getty, where the absolutely fake is presented as being more real and more authentic than the real thing. Baudrillard's account, which seems to me to be directly related to Lacan, argues that Disney operates as a monstrous alibi; far from marking the boundary between the reality of the outside world and the fantasy within, there is no difference between the two. Disney operates as a simulacrum; it does not operate in the manner of an ideology that conceals or covers up the truth. Its truth is that there is no truth or reality that lies beyond its realm of fantasy.⁷⁴

To return briefly to the *point de capiton*, after many years in the wilderness, the concept has made a rather curious appearance in marketing theory, which is not known for its tradition of radical critique. Kozinets (2007) discusses this in relation to technology, arguing that different viewpoints are anchored

according to four different points: Techtopian, Green Luddite, Work Machine and Techspressive. Each of these functions as a form of ideal point or supreme good, whereby, for instance, the Techtopian perspective, privileging notions of science and empowerment, contrasts clearly with the Luddite perspective, which portrays technology as inauthentic. Kozinets cites six case histories to illustrate his argument that each position is ultimately unrealizable, beset by contradictions. Borghini et al. (2009) discuss the *point de capiton* in relation to *American Girl*, a \$431 million brand empire.⁷⁵ They argue that the physical immediacy of the themed brand store, called *American Girl Place*, provides a quilting point that links together a range of retail brand expressions, in a manner which trumps even Disney.⁷⁶ Noting that one of the hallmarks of an ideology is that it makes a particular view of the world seem to be natural, the authors argue that *American Girl Place* offers the image of a complete and perfect world, which is summoned by the depiction of dolls from different periods in 'museal' type locations. The authors cite the example of 'Sharyn', initially a sceptic, who transforms her view as she moves from one display to another of tiny, perfectly scaled dolls from past generations and is struck by the beauty and perfection of the dolls and their clothing. She is also clearly moved by the presentation of the dolls in the museum-like dioramas which contextualizes them in their respective periods and invites her to enter their lives. As viewers moved from one diorama to another, this provided opportunities for grandmothers and mothers to share their experiences with children. The dolls are portrayed as exemplifying values of connection between the generations via the image of 'homey' caring femininity. Although the authors do not mention nostalgia specifically, they argue that this projection offers a powerful link to 'timeless' values associated with morality and caring. In this way the brand effortlessly blended materialism with heroic values – and at \$100 apiece, one would hope so too!⁷⁷ It is interesting that in Borghini et al. (ibid.) there is only the barest mention of Lacan, whose concept of the *point de capiton* is stripped of its radical edge, which is quite understandable given the conservatism narrow ideological focus of most marketing journals.

Consuming fantasy

While some authors employ the Kleinian 'phantasy', to differentiate unconscious phantasy from conscious day-dreams, I continue to use the commonplace 'fantasy'. However, Lacan's formulation of fantasy should be clearly distinguished from its conventional understanding. In the latter, there is a clear distinction between the here and now of reality and the imaginary world of fantasy. From a Lacanian perspective, if fantasy is constitutive of identity, coming to structure our view of ourselves even before the operation of language, then this must be the frame that informs, or fills in, our perception of reality. The fundamental fantasy that Lacan draws our attention to is that, by and large, the human world view is mistakenly spherical and harmonious. By projecting an image based on a gestalt of wholeness and completeness

and thereby denying the hole in the self, fantasy works to preserve the self by closing off the threat of anxiety; for instance, as provoked by images of death, separation or decay.⁷⁸ As in *The Ambassadors*, the void is always there. Sometimes, as in Freud's account of the dream of Irma's injection, discussed in [Chapter One](#), the composite image of turbinate bones evokes a Medusa head that signals the monstrous reality of the abyss. (Lacan, 1988c: 175). We do not see things as they are but framed in fantasy through the see-saw of desire. When one fantasizes about something, the fantasy is not simply about the thing itself. Freud's daughter enjoys eating her strawberry cake and what informs her fantasy is not simply the wish to have cake; her fantasy is the situation in which the cake is eaten. This structures the form of our desire. Kavanagh, Andrade and May (2005) ask us to envisage that

[h]ere you are, innocently reading a psychology journal, and an article suddenly mentions someone drinking a cup of excellent coffee at a sidewalk café on a sunny Sunday morning. Chances are that you immediately imagine how good it would be to have a cup yourself. Maybe you imagine the smell of freshly ground coffee beans, the smell and taste of the coffee, and perhaps even the sound of the grinder and the bubble and steam of the espresso machine (Kavanagh et al., 2005: 446).

Freud separates out reality from hallucination in *The Interpretation of Dreams* ([1900, 1999], where he focuses on the expression of unconscious desire. Fantasy involves the conscious construction of imaginary scenarios for the satisfaction of our desires. Is that all there is to the subject? Is fantasy merely the visualization of satisfaction as described by Kavanagh et al.'s (ibid.) evocation of the sidewalk cafe, where we imagine ourselves drinking an excellent cup of coffee whilst sunning ourselves, gazing languidly at passers-by? To enquire more closely, one must first enquire what it is that the fantasy is about? At first, it seems that it is about the desire for this 'excellent cup of coffee'; not the cheap, pre-packaged dust that is caked at the bottom of the jar in my cupboard, but coffee replete with the smell of 'freshly ground coffee beans', a sensory blockbuster that not only engages the faculties of taste and smell but sight (steam) and hearing (bubbling, frothing), too. On closer inspection, the fantasy is not simply about the coffee itself. We imagine ourselves to be on a sidewalk cafe. This cannot just be any old sidewalk; there are some sidewalks in Glasgow where one would not dare to establish such a cafe. It is sunny, but one is not invited to imagine that the sun is beating down like a merciless hammer in 50 degree Celsius heat! In Glasgow it is too cold to sit out for most months in the year, and when one does, the sound and smell of the traffic is anything but appealing. This is clearly not my fantasy but someone else's. I can perhaps fantasize being somewhere else, maybe in France or Italy, and then the fantasy will work for me. Which all goes to show that fantasy is not about components but consists of an entire

frame of reference within which actions are posited. And if any of them is somehow not right or out of kilter, the fantasy dies.

In Kavanagh et al.'s (2005) snippet quoted above, desire is not there before we begin to fantasize; its elements are articulated as the fantasy is constructed. In this way the fantasy is integral to the construction of the desire. One needs to be theoretically careful here as there are differences between Freud's Germanic use of 'wish', *wunsch*, and Lacan's use of desire, *désir*. Freud's *wunsch* is specific and episodic, whereas for Lacan, desire is continuous. It can help if one returns to Freud's analysis of the dream of Irma that he describes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. As he unravels the various layers of meaning in the dream, it is clear that desire has alighted on many objects throughout its course, some relating to very difficult aspects of Freud's life, including his sexual attraction for his patients and his competitive rivalry with colleagues who are also his friends. Lacan surmises that the wellspring of Freud's desire is rootless as it is formed by the infant's repression of the *désir de la mère* following accession to the name of the father. Desire cannot be fulfilled but consists of the repressed desire of and for the (m)other. Henceforth, throbbing unconscious desire moves metonymically from one object to another, never gaining the longed-for sense of fusion with the other. Given that we desire to be the object of the Other's desire, we do not know what we desire but must learn this by identifying our desire with that of the other. Imagine a meal – what will you have – what would you like me to have?

The Japanese meal in *Lost in Translation*.

We had ditched our fixer to get some general city shots, and had been left stranded without the comfort blanket of a translator. So when the filming had ended for the day and we realised that, at 10pm, we hadn't eaten for 10 hours, eating became a priority.

So – a nice restaurant with lots of plastic food to display its menu in the window looked enticing enough. In we entered. All the staff shouted a greeting. We smiled back. Then the menu was brought. It was in Japanese.

Our *Time Out* guide food translation section didn't help reveal its secrets. So the old-trusted ruse of pointing and ordering was the only option. I had the bowl of noodles being munched on by the girl to my right. My reporter had the steaming bowl of meat being enjoyed by the salaryman to the left.

Then the etiquette of eating got us all in a dither. My noodles arrived with a bowl of (what I thought was) soup. I grabbed the chopsticks and got stuck in. The noodles were cold and bland. I thought: bugger. My reporter's meal was so hot she couldn't eat it. She thought: bugger.

We sat there looking sorry for ourselves. The *Burger King* up the road looked an option.

In the end it worked out. The soup was a dipping bowl that was designed to transform the cold noodles from shoelace texture to something quite tasty. The meat stew cooled down and was a delight. But for a second there we felt the cold hand of cliché on our shoulders: two westerners making arses out of themselves when armed with chopsticks, an unintelligible menu and a hunger.⁷⁹

We come to desire as the Other desires. What are you having? Taste is very closely bound up with social identification, with the sort of person I think I am or should be and those with whom I identify and dis-identify. As the example illustrates, the fantasy is bound up with all of those potential models who form part of the scene, most importantly, the partner (here one rarely orders what the other is having), other diners (such as the salary-man), and the waiting staff (see McFerran, et al. 2010a and 2010b). In this sense desire is productive. Fantasy is thus not simply an image of the object we desire but consists of a structure that in-forms, or gives a form to, our desire.

Fantasy and the Real

The trauma of the Real is unbearable. Žižek's explanation of Freud's burning child dream (described in [Chapter One](#)) illustrates the relations between fantasy and the Real. A father, exhausted by standing vigil throughout his son's illness, pays someone to stand guard over his son's body. He removes himself to the room opposite where his son's body lies surrounded by candles and, leaving the doors ajar, he falls asleep on the bed. His son appears in a dream, exclaiming, 'Can't you see I'm burning!' Žižek argues that it is not the intrusion from external reality that awakens the father but the unbearably traumatic character of the dream. Insofar as 'dreaming' means fantasizing in order to avoid confronting the Real, the father literally woke up so that he could carry on dreaming. The smoke disturbed his sleep; the father quickly constructed a dream that incorporated the disturbing element (smoke/fire) to prolong his sleep. However, the dream, which confronted him with the trauma that he was responsible for his son's death, was much stronger than reality. So he awakened into reality to avoid the Real.⁸⁰

For Lacan we engage with the world through fantasy and language and that is that! Fantasy is the screen that protects us from the encounter with the Real. Fantasy must remain repressed in order to function, which is how desire starts out. Žižek offers the example of Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*. After Tom Cruise confesses to Nicole Kidman and she has ascertained they are now fully awake, in the light of day, when they are confronted with the excess of their fantasizing, she tells Cruise that they must do something immediately, 'fuck'. The film ends and the credits roll.⁸¹ Žižek says that never was the way to avoid confronting the horror of the phantasmatic netherworld so bluntly stated in the film. This is because, far from providing them with a real-life bodily satisfaction that will supersede empty fantasizing, this is instead a desperate preventative measure aimed at keeping at bay the netherworld of fantasies.

We awake from reality as an escape from the Real, the hurts, the torments, the unconscious fantasies that haunt us and that propel our desire. For Lacan the ultimate task is to awaken from the spell of fantasy, which captures us even more when we are awake.

Jouissance

Jouissance provides the reason why the human subject cannot be taken simply as the subject of structuralism, construed as an effect of language. If the subject is governed by the Symbolic ego-ideal, then jouissance describes the irruption of the id, affect or libido. Unconscious knowledge can be tracked down by means of the analytic process, even if the subject acts without awareness. However, there is no signifier to account for the jouissance of the subject, which has no rhyme or reason.⁸² Although jouissance can be equated to enjoyment, I retain the French signifier because 'enjoyment' lacks its unbearable and bittersweet nature.

Freud uses jouissance to describe the apparent enjoyment that his neurotic analysands experienced from their symptoms. Although painful and distressing, the symptoms persisted, even when his analysands understood their cause. By refusing to give them up until they experienced a further emotional transformation, Freud concluded that they experienced a bittersweet enjoyment from holding on to them. Lacan's reworking of jouissance emphasizes its excessive character; for instance, the excessive enjoyment experienced at orgasm, offering the momentary experience of the bliss of the Real. Jouissance is transgressive of symbolic social reality to the extent that society is constructed on its renunciation, or sacrifice, to the social good. The sacrifice of individual desires to social necessity is analogous to Freud's Reality Principle. The Symbolic and jouissance are mutually reliant on each other for their existence; without the Symbolic, the subject would not exist in the first place and would remain in the Real. The striving for jouissance thus represents the drive to regain the primordial unity of being. Consequently, uncontrolled jouissance constitutes a mortal threat to society. The citizen is asked to sacrifice her or his private enjoyment for the broader good of the community to ensure that the latter is free from violence and disorder. Jouissance is thus inevitably transgressive of social norms while also representing the pursuit of what is truly worthwhile. This was discussed at some length in the chapter on death and in relation to Bataille. Such values are readily apparent in the presentation of youth in popular culture, from the 'do or die' antics of icons such as James Dean onwards.

Although one must sacrifice jouissance in the interest of social order, there is also jouissance to be gained from the act of sacrifice itself. Such sacrifices are not only apparent in incest taboos. Religions, for example, instruct their members to forego earthly pleasures in order to gain eternal pleasure in heaven. In so doing, they gain jouissance from their sacrifice. This points to the fact that when we refer to jouissance, this is only in the context of the Symbolic, within which access to it is regulated. The prohibition of enjoyment is the bond that links individuals through their shared dissatisfaction. This is the salient feature of the society of prohibition. Once a person has passed through the Real to become a subject of the Symbolic,

the clock cannot be turned back. The subject is forever barred from the pure Real he experienced in its pre-Symbolic sense. Pure jouissance of the Real is yearned for as it offers the reinstatement of lost wholeness. But the Real is to be feared, too, as fusion with the other threatens our existence as Symbolic subjects. This calls to mind those bizarre instances occasionally reported in the newspapers where a celebrity is found dead from asphyxiation.

For the Symbolic subject, the Imaginary provides a means for gaining access to the Real by mediating it in fantasy. Fantasy seeks to fill in the hole created on separation from the Real, informing it by generating images and experiences of wholeness and harmony. Not all Imaginary experiences are akin to that of Disneyland. One may go where one pleases in fantasy to seek out the enjoyment that is legally condemned; one can rape and pillage an entire city in fantasy and no one will be any the wiser. Lacan, in his discussion of the notorious Marquis de Sade,⁸³ argues that de Sade may have been a sadistic monster in his writings but was not in his real life. A person, on the other hand, may seek to make jouissance into the law, but that is an entirely different matter, summoning the image of Madame Guillotine. Lacan's argument that de Sade is at root no monster but merely a fantasist invites us to look twice at our seemingly pacific neighbour; what unspeakable fantasies are harboured beneath his or her benign countenance that dare not speak their name in the *Journal of Consumer Research*? Although Imaginary fantasies work in the interests of social prohibition, they also comprise a threat to its order. Given that fantasy is Imaginary, one cannot enjoy the thing itself, only its image. What is lacking here is the *objet a*; it is only in the Real that one does not have to make a sacrifice of enjoyment. The image is what allows subjects in the society of prohibition to otherwise have some form of satisfaction. However, as was mentioned above, the *belle âme* in thrall to the Imaginary, who sees himself as a self-contained individual, by taking the other primarily as a rival, constitutes a threat to the Symbolic order.

That aspect of the imagination that works its way through the dream process can bring one close to the void of the Real. Lacan offers Freud's dream of Irma's injection, which was briefly outlined in the first chapter of this book, as an example.⁸⁴ The dream features Real, Imaginary and Symbolic elements. Even though the dream thoughts unfold in the unconscious, outside its purview, the ego and its image mount defences against this.⁸⁵ Freud's dream summons a terrifying encounter between the Imaginary and the Real. For Lacan this is 'a truly horrendous discovery', not simply because the opening of the mouth is akin to the female sexual organ but because sight of the turbinate bones opens a chasm:

There's a horrendous discovery here, that of the flesh one never sees, the foundation of things, the other side of the head, of the face, of the secretory glands par excellence, the flesh from which everything extrudes, at

the heart of the mystery, the flesh in so much as it is suffering, formless, in as much as it is form in itself is something which provokes anxiety.⁸⁶

Furthermore,

this something which properly speaking is unnameable, the back of this throat, the complex un-locatable form, which also makes it into the primitive object par excellence, the abyss of the feminine organ from which all life emerges, this gulf of the mouth, in which everything is swallowed up, and no less the image of death in which everything comes to its end, since in relation to the illness of his daughter, which could have been fatal, there's the death of the patient whom he had lost at a time adjacent to that of the illness of his daughter, which he considered to be some mysterious sort of divine retribution for his professional negligence – this Mathilde for that Mathilde, he writes.⁸⁷

In the dream, Freud's anxiety is heightened, and Imaginary fragmentation dawns as the Real draws near. Where fantasy informs, or fills in, here the subject experiences the *corps morcelé*, of being torn apart.⁸⁸

Phallic jouissance and other jouissance

Lacan's reference to masculinity and femininity as two forms of structure is not a reference to biological organs. Nor is there any overlap between his concept of sexuation and that of gender orientation. Bruce Fink reminds us that gender is a relatively recent term in English, unknown in France in the 1970s, apart from being a grammatical expression. References to 'men' and 'women', from Lacan's point of view, correspond to a particular logical formula as opposed to some kind of biological essence. The two forms of jouissance are phallic jouissance (sometimes known as semiotic) and the jouissance of the Other. Phallic jouissance is that which fails and, consequently, disappoints us. It reduces our partner to the *objet a*, the partial object or little thing that serves as the cause of our desire, what turns us on about that person, be it the modulation of the voice or perhaps the shape of some aspect of the body. To reduce the other to *objet a* is to enjoy like a man. Phallic jouissance expresses itself in specific demands for this or for that. But there is a great deal of slippage between what I say in words that I want, tell myself that I want, and the actual object that I aim at. I tell my partner that 'I want this'; she gives it to me, and I say, 'That's not it!' She gives me that, too, but desire's object will not sit still. Desire always sets off in search of something else. The Other jouissance is what lies beyond and which cannot be contained by phallic jouissance.

The title of Seminar XX is 'encore', meaning 'more', the 'more' that represents the demand of the infant for the mother: 'more, more!' Lacan likens this to the quest for knowledge, which, he conjectures, must have something

to do with a failure of satisfaction. His discussion of *jouissance* advances his earlier discussion of the inadequate and dispossessed subject. *Jouissance* is judged against a standard. This does not exist in the animal realm but comes into existence by means of its relation to the Symbolic role of language. The human ability to symbolize allows the subject to believe that the *jouissance* he obtains is not what it should be. One comes to believe that there must be something better and that others derive more enjoyment. By constantly repeating this to oneself and to one's friends, one gives some consistency to this Other *jouissance*.⁸⁹ One comes to accord it so much consistency that the *jouissance* one actually experiences appears entirely inadequate. Belief in Other *jouissance* is constantly strengthened by the media images of the good life. Fink offers the example of Hollywood's depiction of sexual relations where there seems to be a guarantee of a satisfaction that is inevitable and reliable which can be obtained and is therefore attainable.⁹⁰ This Other *jouissance* exists (made up of an amalgam of 'ex', as in exterior to the self, and 'sists', in that it insists). It is thus perceived to come from outside the self to insist that there is something beyond our immediate circuit of pleasure that can be tried that offers to fulfil the promise of self-completion. Compared to our current *jouissance*, this Other *jouissance* is what we should have. It has the quality of inevitability; since we can conceive of it, so it must actually be the case. Lacan relates Other *jouissance* to ideas pertaining to God and the fantasy that one can attain a total or special satisfaction, as in nirvana, or ecstasy. Such fantasies are so powerful that Other *jouissance* has to be. Were it not for this fantasy, one might be more content with the *jouissance* that one actually obtains. In other words, *jouissance* makes matters worse. (*c'est la jouissance qu'il ne faudrait pas*). Lacan uses two senses of the word – *faillir* 'it must be' and *faillir* 'to fail' – that are grammatically identical. These two *jouissances* are not complementary but form a couple akin to being and non-being.

Commanded to enjoy

At first reading, the idea that command of the social order has shifted in recent years from prohibition to enjoyment can be hard to fathom. Surely, social order is based on the Symbolic and therefore on law based on the prohibition of the name of the father? One would thus expect enjoyment to be censured and severely restricted by the internal power of the ego-ideal as anathema to the social order. In this context, how can the invocation of enjoyment become the central command? The answer lies paradoxically in the superego. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud noted that, like the ego, the superego arises from the id. This explains the cruel delight that the superego takes in chastising the ego. Although the superego forms the basis for the law, by means of the identification of the name of the father, this law takes the form of peremptory commands rather than reasoned judgement. Its imperative 'you must' summons the vision of a ferocious judgemental

figure. This agency, which derives a cruel enjoyment from prying into the affairs of the ego, is thus perfectly amenable to a social formation such as fascism. This formulation of the superego is also perfectly attuned to if not determinate of a change that has taken place in capitalism from its early form, where the prohibition of enjoyment associated with the Protestant work ethic has given way to an equally binding duty today, which is to enjoy.⁹¹

Taking the USA as an example, *Horatio Alger* was a nineteenth-century novelist who captivated the public imagination with his tales, such as '*Young Dick*', the story of an indigent New York youngster who became a bootblack and who, by dint of his own unceasing toil, 'street-smart' style and exemplary lifestyle, made it out of the ghetto.⁹² If the values of decency, hard work and probity, enshrined in the character of *Young Dick*, epitomized the fashioning of the *American Dream* in the mid-nineteenth century, this fantasy was to be killed off in the next, when Ernest Dichter, speaking metaphorically of course, proclaimed *Horatio Alger* to be dead. By this he meant to promote a new range of values centred around the freedom to enjoy. Contrary to the Protestant work ethic, seen now as a barrier, Dichter asserted that the typical American consumer should have the freedom to enjoy the objects of his dreams right now. An important rider to this was that he could pay later, which wrought a massive change that was facilitated by a huge increase in the availability of credit and consequently of debt.

Not only could the masses enjoy the fruits of mass capitalist enterprise, it quickly became apparent that they *should* do so. In times of recession and after dire emergencies, such as 9/11, the Western public are urged in their role as consumers to go out and shop in order to save the economy or their 'way of life'. The increasingly narcissistic, present-minded hedonist who holds sway under the command of enjoyment is perfectly suited to the interests of capitalism in its official and criminal forms; one can live for the moment by purchasing that fast car, handbag, cocaine or booze. Todd McGowan argues that this duty has spread throughout a society where the values of positive psychology, for example, take enjoyment rather than dissatisfaction as the normal state. The mention of duty in this context gives the idea of the commandment to enjoy a twist. Duty is usually referred to as a means to renounce enjoyment; for example, a husband would be 'doing his duty as a husband' if he acted as a role model for his children and did not chase women other than their mother.

The argument is made that the shift towards a life of commanded enjoyment leads to a decline in the role of the Symbolic and rise in the Imaginary in regulating social life. The Symbolic order, which provided a haven from jouissance, is fading in the current consumer society. It is worth briefly recapping the importance of the Symbolic realm. The symbol that is interposed between one person and another is important because it removes self and other from a dual, fusional and potentially combative

relation by providing symbolic distance and recognition. As that which 'murders' or is independent of the real thing, recall here the '*fort-da*' story: the symbol substitutes for the real thing in its absence, thereby creating the social safety of symbolic distance. Societies marked by symbolic distance accord different levels of prestige and honour to different ranks in society, within which an individual can gain recognition. Symbols allow objects to endure even when the actual thing has disappeared. The symbol which is shared between people is evidence of a pact between them. With the onset of the symbol and the inception of the prohibition of pure *jouissance*, one can enjoy in a socially mediated way. This may be a pale imitation of true *jouissance*, but then few would wish for the terrifying experience of an encounter with the Real, as was related in Freud's dream of Irma's injection. By way of compensation, the Symbolic offers us recognition, conveying honour and symbolically mediated enjoyment, for our sacrifice of *jouissance* through socially useful activities. In the Symbolic realm, what is important is not immediate enjoyment, rather social recognition. Some who have spent a lifetime in ruthlessly gaining wealth give their money away in order to gain such recognition. Understood as part of the symbolic context, ownership of a particular brand of car can imply that its owner has reached a certain status. That one spends time washing and waxing it suggests that symbolic recognition, rather than enjoyment, is primary. Purchases of goods become increasingly symbolic – for example, the purchase of a car or a watch might provide considerable enjoyment to a person but could also be consumed as a symbol which could be recognized by others as a signifier of worth.⁹³

Researchers at the Stanford Research Institute noticed the emergence of a new character in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which they labelled the self-expressive consumer. They labelled a subtype of this group the experienter to describe, as the name implies, those who are interested in consumption primarily for the experiences that it offers rather than for prestige or status. The rise of the experienter is paralleled with the introduction of a raft of new technologies, products and entire packaged experiences, from white-water rafting to Everest expeditions and space travel. Given that such experiences are consumed as commodities and also the litigious nature of the modern consumer, the paradox of such experiences is that they offer the ultimate experience, with the risk (which is what supplies the *jouissance*) removed. Žižek makes the point that nowadays entire ranges of hitherto dangerous products and experiences are marketed deprived of their malignant properties, such as coffee without caffeine and butter without fat. The consumer is thus offered a product that is deprived of its *jouissance*, which is what makes it substantive and worth having in the first place.⁹⁴

Todd McGowan expresses well that, from this commandment to enjoy, one should not make the assumption that there is now more enjoyment than ever. Rather, the opposite is true. The more that a person is commanded to

do something, for instance, to be more moral, the more powerful the role of the superego is in pointing out his limitations and failings in this direction. Similarly, although individuals today feel commanded to enjoy, they are acutely aware of and are discontented by constant reminders of their lack of enjoyment. An atmosphere of apathy, aggression and cynicism thus pervades the social realm. Surely, if the command to enjoy has displaced the traditional symbolic law of the father that demands individual sacrifice to the collective good, we should be witnessing social disorder and even collapse? One could either conform or rebel under the Symbolic law of prohibition. But what would it mean to conform to or rebel against the sway of the command to enjoy? One potential answer is that the Symbolic order still holds sway but is not as explicitly present as it used to be. Individuals nowadays believe themselves to be acting autonomously but remain in its sway. The Symbolic continues to constitute us even though we are increasingly unable to experience it. The phenomenological change in our experience leads us to believe that we are enjoying and that we are not bound by the symbolic structures that once deprived people of *jouissance*. But the enjoyment that we experience is only the image of enjoyment, which is an imagined enjoyment. In contrast to the society of prohibition, the society of enjoyment thrives on this Imaginary. Enjoyment in the Real remains impossible, for this would result in the dissolution of the subject. The command to enjoy thus does not create more enjoyment but merely an obligation. However, because of its increasingly Imaginary relation, this leads also to an increase in aggression towards others, such as immigrants, who are scapegoated because they are believed to be enjoying that which is rightfully someone else's entitlement.

Böhm and Batta (2010) deploy enjoyment in relation to commodity fetishism as the means to explain consumers' continuing purchases of Nike products in the face of anti-sweatshop campaigns. The authors contend that capitalism provides a symbolic system as the web, or simulacrum, on which consumer fantasies are spun, albeit a system that never fully functions (*ibid.*: 354). This openness allows for the possibility of change, exemplified, on the one hand, by anti-Nike resistance campaigns and, on the other, by the production of more fantasies for the consumer subject to believe in. Rather than seeking to understand commodity fetishism as the destruction of *jouissance*, as Marx would have it, the authors posit that Lacan's explanation offers *jouissance* as the organizing principle for Nike and others, which depend for their existence on the constant recreation of consumer enjoyment. What is missing from the simulacrum created by capital's attempt to imitate surplus *jouissance* is the death drive, the possibility that the consumer could pay the ultimate price. Sköld (2010) follows along the lines of McGowan (*op. cit.*) in relation to his discussion of the imperative to consume demanded by the superego. He focuses on a particular subject, Leannart Källström, in support of the idea that postmodern consumers are lured by corporate offerings of

an impossible enjoyment. Leannart is captivated by images of the 'Good Life' that are dangled before him in *Trailer* magazine, exemplified by the model Svempa, who is portrayed as having gained recognition by Scania. Sköld's vivid description of Leannart's imaginary positioning illustrates the contradictory 'see-sawing' dialectic of desire (Lacan, 1975), where Leannart is at one moment cast on one side of the mirror, positioned as master in the role of co-creating customer, then projected to that of the slave who is dependent on the models Svempa and Scania. Leannart stands as a particular example of the consumer who is transfixed by images of the Good Life, 'yet one that is so fantabulous, opulent and covered in candy floss that you can do nothing but fail as you attempt to pursue it.' (ibid.: 371). There is an ethical implication; as a subject 'stained by jouissance', Leannart must continue trying to enjoy in order to continue to believe in Scania.

Discussion

The preceding sections discussed in sequence, Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Jouissance. This discussion represents my own limited understanding of these concepts. In this section I will very briefly summarize his potential contribution to the understanding of consuming desire and will also mention some points of critique.

There are very few people who are agnostic about Lacan. Accounts vary from worshipful peons of praise to scornful rejections. He provides much ammunition for the latter, not least because of his deliberate obscurantism. Reading his seminars, I am occasionally reminded of a school bully who, along with his gang of cronies, gives his opponents – and there are many – a systematic working over. At times he is brutal, not only in his arrogant dismissal of ego psychology but even more particularly in doing in those, such as Melanie Klein, whose work is closest to him theoretically. He is no less respectful to the master himself. Lacan preserves Freud in suspended animation. While constantly invoking the name of the master, he does not simply retrace Freud's theory for a new era, but rather the 'French Freud'⁹⁵ effaces the original, particularly his later work.

The impossibility of reading Lacan seems to have provided the *objet a* for a profitable Lacan industry, particularly in the areas of cultural studies and film criticism. His work is perhaps better known in the latter area, thanks mainly to Slavoj Žižek, although Lacan's influence is also clearly discernible in Metz. Although consumer researchers are becoming more alive to the usefulness of video, the above points to a much more thoroughgoing engagement with the arts in exploring consumer desire.

Lacan's concept of the Imaginary calls us to question the extent to which we unconsciously seek to put the world to rights by recasting it to our image of perfection. While Freud's revolution displaces consciousness from the centre of our view of ourselves, this can so easily creep back to the centre. Decentring is hard to sustain, and analysts keep slipping back into the old

centre-periphery thinking. Thus, Lacan keeps reminding us constantly of the need to subvert this tendency. Lacan's discussion of anamorphosis is most useful in this respect. In seeking to relate this to the world of products, I felt that it would have been worthwhile to highlight the role played in this process by projection. Here I am thinking about the ways in which subjects project their fantasies onto others; for instance, when playing imaginary games with their romantic others, using terms like 'Bunnikins' (Langford, 1997). Extended onto physical objects our projections animate them, bringing them to life through attributions of personality.

Lacan's concept of the Imaginary is very useful not only in seeking to understand the importance of images in the construction of the subject but also in calling our attention to those dual relationships that subjects form with others whom they take as models and also as rivals. The understanding of self-punishment paranoia was a concern for Lacan in his early days as a doctoral researcher. It is a shame that he did not extend this into his later work. Thankfully the relationships between subjects, models and objects was more fully developed by René Girard, whose work is introduced in [Chapter Eight](#). There are interesting parallels and indeed a deal of overlap between Lacan and Girard. The latter is much clearer in his exposition and thus provides a more attractive model to follow than the more elusive Lacan. Girard's concept of mimetic rivalry accounts for many of the issues that are discussed by Lacan, in a more straightforward manner. Principally in Girard, we are presented with mimetic rivalry, corresponding to Lacan's Imaginary, and with Symbolic prohibition to this. Like Lacan, Girard argues that a pure state of mimesis can exist only in the animal realm. Both agree on the point that humans occupy a unique symbolic position, assuming a symbolic prohibition, when they are borne into the realm of language and culture. Girard lacks a concept of *jouissance* but probably feels that he has no need of it. He would explain an increase in aggression in consumer societies in mimetic terms, arguing that mimetic rivalry is increasing due to the dismantling of traditional symbolic constraints (as realized, for instance, in the family and church). Having said that, the concept of *jouissance* is interesting and does seem to open up possibilities for explanation of consuming desires that go beyond what Girard has to offer.

Lacan's tendency, shared by Girard and many others, to effect a major dividing line between the realm of the human and that of the animal other is troubling for Jacques Derrida, for whom Lacan was a model. Lacan argues that the adult infant's recognition of its 'self' in the mirror is a peculiarly human event, which an animal such as a chimpanzee has the good sense to ignore.⁹⁶ This argument, which is crucial to his development of the mirror phase and thus of uniquely human access to the symbolic, is severely dented by Derrida (2008). In any event, anyone with a knowledge of ethology would nowadays dismiss Lacan's claim regarding chimpanzees as being uninformed by the facts. The mirror stage also forms the basis for

Billig's (2006) claim that Lacan misused psychology. In the paper he refers to Lacan's plagiarism of Wallon, which is not particularly newsworthy, having been long before mentioned by Roudinesco (1997),⁹⁷ within the more interesting question which enquires into the general adequacy of Lacan's evidential base for the mirror stage. Billig acknowledges that this is touchy ground because critical psychologists reject the evidential basis of experimentalism and indeed of conventional psychology in general. However, he notes, too, that Lacan himself made use of conventional psychological theory in constructing his argument for the existence of the mirror stage. On investigation, Billig found that this use could better be characterized as misuse, which 'raises some awkward questions for Lacanian theory'.⁹⁸ Lacan was selective in choosing references that suited his explanation, was not accurate in citing these and also ignored studies that ran counter to his theory. Billig's article received a riposte from Yannis Stavrakakis (2007) on a number of grounds. First, Stavrakakis argues that as the paper on the mirror stage was written at an early point in his career, the criticism is limited to 'a period when Lacan is not yet the Lacan of the 1960s and 1970s'.⁹⁹ Secondly, he argues that even when Lacan makes use of such evidence, this does not tell the reader much about the particular use he makes of it. Third, given that Lacan's work is extensively used in cultural studies, one might wish to consider the emergent evidence for his ideas that spring from that field. Stavrakakis saves his powder for the assertion that Lacan plagiarized Wallon, asking why would Lacan be so naive as to publish his paper on the mirror stage, which sure enough fails to mention Wallon's name, in an article published under the editorship of Wallon himself? He also disputes the claim that Lacanian commentators have ignored Wallon's work. In doing so, he tends to skirt the most important points that Billig is making.

The Lacan described by Roudinesco (1997) is revealed warts and all. Perhaps most disconcerting is her assertion that Lacan not only appropriated the fate of Marguerite, the celebrated Aimée, whose analysis was the bedrock of his thesis; 'he projected her into a "case" through which he projected not only his theories on madness in women but also his own fantasies and family obsessions. He filched all Marguerite's writings, her photographs, her whole life history; and he never gave any of it back. This meant a constant distortion of their relationship, a coldness between them that nothing could remove. Lacan was interested in the woman only in order to illustrate his ideas on paranoia and write a theoretical work that would make him the founder of a new form of Freudian discourse. But she steadfastly refused to fill the role he wanted to force on her. She was an unwilling collaborator and reproached Lacan as long as she lived for using her case in support of a psychiatric method that she condemned as repressive.' (1997: 35)

On the other hand, it could be argued that Lacan's diagnosis of Marguerite as suffering from self-punishment paranoia ameliorated her treatment. Additionally, the publicity attending the thesis led to the celebration of

her work by Surrealists, including the famous poet Paul Éluard. The lives of Marguerite and Lacan continued to intersect in odd ways. Unknown to Lacan, her son became one of his analysands and subsequently became a psychoanalyst of some repute, who eventually lambasted his mentor. Marguerite herself, much later in life, became the housekeeper for Alfred, Lacan's father.

None of the above can detract from Lacan's immense contribution to the understanding of desire. In positing a subject who is impossibly and doubly split, tied up in knots by desire for lost unity, driven by an urge to centre the world and maddened by desire for jouissance, he has rewritten Aristophanes for the modern age.

7

Freedom

Introduction

Ask most people if they believe themselves to be free, and they usually reply in the affirmative. This is hardly surprising, given that nobody in a modern industrial society is marched to work by armed guards, nor are shoppers forced to shop at gunpoint. When it comes to the latter one might justifiably argue that in some respects there is too much rather than too little choice. Just as the shopper has a variety of alternatives to choose from, so the voter has freedom of choice between a number of offerings in the political sphere. The above description roughly captures the bounds of freedom as envisaged by neo-liberalism. Freedom exists with respect to something or someone, just like its opposite, constraint. Liberals advocate freedom in respect to two important contexts, political freedom and economic freedom. Political freedom is tied to the idea that all citizens are presumed to act rationally in their self-interest and expects them to behave responsibly by casting their vote in seeking to elect those who best represent their interests and by playing an active role in lobbying these representatives in the period between elections. The liberal assumption of economic freedom is that one should seek to enable the creation of a free market with many buyers and sellers each acting in accordance with their self-interest.

How free is the average citizen-consumer? The liberal assumption – that this person is rational, in that he knows what he wants and he evaluates all means for achieving this, selecting the best available means and acting on the basis of perfect information – contains within it some questionable assumptions. Recent consumer research is devoted to an investigation of the ways in which individuals depart from this ideal model.¹ Ideas of consumer and political freedom accentuate the role of individual action and play down the role of structural and institutional constraints. Thus, while one may be said to be free to engage in political activity, this can be realized only by voting for one of the two to three main parties. We are likewise free to spend our leisure time howsoever we want. In a technologically obsessed,

'knowledge-based' work culture, disentangling what is 'work' from what is 'leisure' becomes increasingly difficult. How then to decide what to do with the time for leisure that is our very own? In *We*, by Zamyatin (1993), this problem is solved because one hour is set aside each day for private time. In the novel it is this personal time for human interaction that leads the protagonist D-503 to experience a welter of emotions, to recognize that the hymn he had set out to compose in praise of One State is becoming a parody and he is in mortal danger of begetting a soul. One wonders whether Zamyatin would have bothered writing if he lived today, when even the consolation of the 'personal' hour has given way to the 'Net chat'.

This chapter discusses freedom with respect to Freud's paper *The Ego and the Id* (Freud 1991 [1923]). This challenges the assumptions we make in using terms such as 'I' or 'me'. If one's 'self' is a composite of three agencies, one of which represents primitive desire; the second, a garrison that represents the internalized demands of society and the third, the rational self, then what are the implications for the understanding of freedom? The desire to be free, to be truly 'me', at one with oneself may be expressed in the desire to be free of one's community or the stifling constraints of the society in which one lives. However, the agent of the community or society is not only out there somewhere, lodged in a place that is external to the self, but also resides at the core of the self in the form of the superego. Freud says, 'Where id was so ego will be', suggesting that, by means of the process of identification, primitive desires of the id will be and indeed must be civilized if progress is to continue. We must live with a certain amount of unfreedom in a civilized society. So sexual attachments made to others in the outside world are brought into the ego. The ego inhibits instincts – and a large share of this work is carried out by the ego-ideal, which is partly a reaction formation against the instinctual process of the id. Below we first discuss this aspect of freedom, which seeks to enable the ego to become more autonomous with respect to the id. We then explore a contrary way of understanding freedom which focuses on the role played by repression. Zamyatin brilliantly illustrates the perception of an extension of rationality in the modern age, beyond the bounds of reason, towards a mad rationalization of all that is human. In this understanding, the actions of those who believe themselves to be rational, whether as citizens, consumers or producers, are themselves rationalized. This leads to an ontological question concerning the authenticity of the reality lived by citizens, consumers and workers; how can one be truly alive if one's desire has been appropriated?

***The Ego and the Id* (1923)**

In this paper Freud reformulates the various agencies of the psyche and the roles that they play in influencing human thought and action. In this latest

formulation a new agency, the id, is seen to be the repository of psychic energy. In this view one way of controlling the id is by means of introjection and identification, whereby a person takes into himself that which he cannot otherwise deal with. The ego is thus constructed as the id expends energy in making identifications with others, the most primitive of these being the ideal-ego. The superego, which watches over and punishes the ego and eventually develops out of the ego-ideal, is the agency associated with the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Ego makes a progressive conquest of the id.

Much of the 'Ego and the Id' is concerned with integrating Freud's ideas about the process of identification with the understanding of the formation of the ego. In this explanation the ego is no longer the source of instinctual energy. Rather he attributes this role to a new agency called the id (*das Es*), which he likens to a reservoir of energy representing the most primitive core of the self. This raises the question of how the ego comes to be. It becomes clear in the course of his discussion that the ego and the superego are the products of the investment of id energy that are constructed as identifications. In *Mourning and Melancholia* (Freud, [1917, 1991], Freud theorized the introjection of an external object inside the ego to enable the ego to master the object. In the present paper he ventures further to suggest that there are two ways in which the person may relate to an object: she may seek to have the object sexually, or to be it, by identifying with the object and setting the object up inside the ego. While acknowledging that he does not understand the exact nature of this substitution, Freud nonetheless ventures to conjecture that the character of the ego itself is the precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and contains the history of those object-choices.² In this explanation the ego is not a primordial solid entity like a rubber ball but is constructed as a laminate of layers of identifications, the personal qualities of ideal figures in the subject's life that are considered laudable and heroic and which are introjected into the self. Freud warns that if such object-identifications become too numerous and unduly powerful, this may lead to a pathological outcome. For instance, we have seen in our earlier discussion of narcissism, that Lacan employed this conception of the ego in explaining the apparently bizarre behaviour of Aimée, who had formed a series of powerful ego-identifications, leading finally to her attempted murder of an actress.

Freud goes on in this paper to suggest that the transformation of an erotic object-choice that can be observed in melancholia into an alteration of the ego provides the means by which the ego can gain control over the id and deepen its relations with it, but at a price:

When the ego assumes the features of the object, it is forcing itself, so to speak, upon the id as a love-object and is trying to make good the id's loss by saying: 'Look, you can love me too, I am so like the object.'³

Freud clarifies the role of identification in relation to the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. The boy, who first develops an anaclitic relation to his mother's breast as an object-choice, in the normal course of development comes to identify with his father, although ambivalence remains:

Henceforward his relation to his father is ambivalent; it seems as if the ambivalence inherent in the identification from the beginning had become manifest. An ambivalent attitude to his father and an object-relation of a solely affectionate kind to his mother make up the content of the simple positive Oedipus complex in a boy.⁴

Dissolution of the Oedipus complex leads to the strengthening of masculinity in the boy. Girls, on the other hand, either establish or intensify identification with their mother. However, in this paper Freud acknowledges how complex this entire process is if one is to accept the ultimately bisexual nature of human subjectivity.

While acknowledging the complexity of the processes involved, Freud concludes that the broad outcome of the sexual phase is the modification of the ego by the inclusion of an agency within it called the ego-ideal, or super-ego. The superego is not simply composed of the residues of early object-choices of the id but is also a reaction formation against those choices:

Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: 'You ought to be like this (like your father).' It also comprises the prohibition: 'You may not be like this (like your father) – that is; you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative.'⁵

The superego retains the character of the father, and religious authority, teaching and schooling will lead to a stricter control of the ego by the super-ego, either in the formation of conscience or an unconscious feeling of guilt. To Freud the superego forms the basis for religion and the formation of conscience. However, like many of Freud's creations, there is a sting in its tail:

From the point of view of instinctual control, of morality, it may be said of the id that it is totally non-moral, of the ego that it strives to be moral, and of the super-ego that it can be super-moral and then become as cruel as only the id can be.⁶

Here Freud forcefully makes the point that the more that a man checks his aggressiveness towards the exterior, the more severe or aggressive he becomes in his ego-ideal. He reiterates that the more a man controls his aggressiveness, the more intense become his ideal's inclination to aggression against his own ego. He explains this as a form of displacement of aggression onto his own ego. The reason for this is apparently that in the process

of sublimating aggressive id impulses, this aggression becomes transferred to the superego.

Freud now begins to see the ego in its strength and in its weakness. It is like a constitutional monarch, without whose sanction no law can be passed, but who hesitates long before imposing his veto on any measure put forward by Parliament.⁷ It gives mental processes an order and submits them to reality testing and postpones motor discharges. The ego is enriched by experience from without. The id comprises its second external world, which it seeks to bring into subjection. It withdraws libido from the id and transforms the object-cathexes of the id into ego structures. The id, dominated by the pleasure principle, demanding immediate gratification, is thus literally reined in by the ego, which Freud likens to the rider of a horse:

Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own. (Freud, [1923] 1991: 364)

What can freedom mean, given Freud's description of the structure of the psyche? Free expression of id impulses could be conceptualized as untamed animal sexuality. But how can this be free, given that there is an outpost of civilized society that is also resident in the head in company with a third that seeks to reason between the demands made by each? To free the id from the yoke of society would overwhelm the self by unleashing powerful primitive forces. A fully free superego would, on the other hand, overwhelm the ego, which would be little more than a mirror of society. Surely then it is the ego itself that should be freed? But as Freud has explained, the ego is destined to be conflict-ridden. However, as is described below, although he was nonplussed and dismayed at interpretation of his theory by others, he was not free to impose his will on them.

The plague: mainstream psychoanalysis in the USA

'Don't they know we are bringing them the plague?' said Freud to Ferenczi and Jung as their ship sailed into New York harbour in 1909. Whether or not invented by Lacan, this quote has since been the subject for much rumination. Many interpret it as referring to the rather dismal prognosis that Freudian psychoanalysis makes of human nature, by depicting a self that is riven by conflict, haunted by guilt, scorched by shame and open to every perversion. Freud's statement, made just as he was about to begin his first lecture tour of the United States, probably also reflects his anxiety at the reception to this pessimistic view. Much later, when it became clear that psychoanalysis had become much more successful, more quickly, than he could have envisaged, Freud was led to reflect with some consternation on

how this too-ready acceptance of psychoanalysis had been accompanied by the pasteurization of his more radical insights.

Freedom to conform

From a reading of *The Ego and the Id*, one possible idea arises that a more civilized and better adjusted self can be constructed by strengthening the ego, thus enabling it to colonize more parts of the id. Strictly speaking, one aspect of the self, the id, will be less free, but, on the other hand, this new self will be more civilized and will thus be an improvement on the old self. This became the focus for the field of ego psychology that was to quickly develop in the UK through the work of Anna Freud and in the USA, where it was developed by Heinz Hartmann, amongst others. Hartmann, in particular, developed the idea that there might be a part of the ego, particularly that responsible for motor coordination, reality testing and memory, that might be relatively unconflicted and autonomous. The idea of building the autonomy or strength of the ego thus took hold as a means for strengthening its defences against the vicissitudes of an unruly id, as expressed, for instance, in impulses towards perversion and homosexuality.

Ultimately the idea of freedom came to be linked in the USA to that of a normal or well-adjusted self (Turkle, 1979; Illouz, 2007). A strong ego was thought important to equip a person to fit into society; as Roudinesco (2001) artfully puts it, in the United States, 'psychoanalysis became the instrument of an adaptation of humanity to a utopia of happiness', where the 'guilty' person was no longer condemned to the hell of his or her passions but could be detached from them.⁸ Despite differences with Hartmann in other respects, a number of therapists, including Ernst Kriss, Alfred Adler, Erich Fromm and Karen Horney, joined with him in rejecting Freud's view of the psyche as being essentially conflicted, in advocating a view of the self that was more autonomous and flexible. This was more compatible with the American view, that people could and should shape their own destinies, than with Freud's rather deterministic view.⁹ As Roudinesco notes, nothing could be more foreign to Freud than the idea that sexuality is unwholesome, and it seems that he was frequently drawn to comment on the unforeseen way in which his theory had been co-opted in the United States.¹⁰

Freud's daughter Anna came to settle in England with her father just before the onset of World War II, eventually establishing a practice in Hampstead. Like Hartmann, she focused on the ego as a form of psychic hero that battled with the conflicting forces of superego and id. She focused specifically on the mechanisms of defence used by the ego to protect itself in these struggles. Overrigid defences, she argued, are associated with maladaptive behaviour as the ego, to be healthy, must adapt to reality and not turn away from it. In Britain and the United States, by the 1950s, the concept of adjustment had become a central means for the psychologization of

the self, meaning the tendency to judge a person's behaviour in terms of his individual character and not his social situation.

Freedom to self-actualize

The humanistic psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, who came to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s, raised the idea of the autonomous ego to a new level. Rogers held that the self is essentially good or healthy and that mental problems and criminal behaviour are essentially deviations from this course. Optimistically he also argued that every organism has within it a self-actualizing tendency which reflects its capacity to realize its full potential. The only things that hold the person back from expressing this potential are the right conditions.¹¹ Maslow was anti-Freudian to the extent that he believed that the nature of social organization, or 'civilization', itself constituted the major barrier to the realization of freedom, as it often assumed a shape that denied people the realization of those basic needs, whose satisfaction was essential if they were to reach the natural apogee of their development on the peaks of self-actualization. Thus, to be free (to self-actualize) the individual must be free from hunger and thirst; free from danger; free to receive the respect of others and to achieve the requisite status in society. His work contains several examples of situations where he believed the social environment to be so hostile that this freedom was atrophied, including, interestingly, some fishing villages in the east of Scotland. Fear of success became the new line that divided those who were sick from those who were healthy:

The people we call 'sick' are not themselves, the people who have built up all sorts of neurotic defences against being human.¹²

Freedom to self-realize

Illouz (2007) argues that the ideas associated with ego psychology held great force at the time they were promulgated, by resonating with the liberal view that self-development is a right. This provided a greatly enlarged forum for psychologists to operate: 'People who had un-realized lives now had need of care and therapy.'¹³ The concept of self-realization thus came to be linked to a therapeutic narrative. Elements of this are to be found in much earlier work; for instance, the series of studies conducted by Elton Mayo. Mayo, who trained as a Jungian therapist, subsequently conducted studies into the nature of employee motivation at the General Electric Hawthorne plant between 1924 and 1927. He reported that a therapeutic approach that involved simply listening to the women's troubles led ultimately to an increase in their productivity. By the 1960s the proliferation of this discourse led to the pathologization of ordinary lives to the extent that, from the time of the injunction that urged people to become 'complete' or 'self-realized' selves, a whole other set of selves were regarded as being

neurotic, unhealthy, or incomplete in some way. Groups such as EST (Erhard Seminar Training) that started life in the 1960s as a means to enable people to gain access to their real selves continue as business corporations to this day.¹⁴ Today the forums for discussion of the self seem to be endless, involving a variety of media, including talk shows, support groups, counselling, rehabilitation programmes, therapy and the multitude of sites that populate the Internet.

Against freedom (according to ego psychology)

Freud was dismayed by the interpretation of his ideas in the USA. He might have been equally dismayed that the main challenge to the ego psychologists came from Europe in the form of a series of virulent attacks by the 'French Freud',¹⁵ Jacques Lacan, who read Freud in an ingeniously subversive manner. For instance the statement, 'Wo Es war, sol Ich warden, in *The Ego and the Id*, is interpreted by ego psychologists to mean, 'Where Id was so Ego will be', suggesting that, if human progress is to continue then the primitive desires of the id must be civilised. In this reading, not only must one live with a certain amount of un-freedom in a civilised society, the beast within must progressively be tamed and conquered by ego-identifications. Lacan proposes an alternative reading of. 'Wo Es war, sol Ich warden' as, 'I must come to be where the foreign forces – the Other as language and the other as desire – once dominated'. He insists that the 'Es' mentioned in the quotation does not signify the id, because Freud does not say 'das Es' or 'das Ich' here, as he usually does when designating these agencies. Instead he says that 'Es' refers to the unconscious Symbolic order, comprising human culture and the chance life-circumstances into which all human subjects are thrown. We do not choose these circumstances but must nonetheless come to terms with them by subjectifying them and thus assuming responsibility for them. 'Where the Other pulls the strings, acting as my cause, I must come into being as my own cause.'¹⁶ To put it another way, although 'I' am driven largely by circumstances beyond my control, I must take ethical responsibility for these circumstances.¹⁷ Lacan argued that it is the responsibility of the analyst to facilitate the coming forth of this subject, of an 'I' that assumes responsibility for the unconscious, that arises there as an unconscious linking up of thoughts which seems to take place all by itself without the intervention of anything like a subject.¹⁸

Lacan contests the ego-psychologists' idea that there is a part of the ego that is 'healthy' because it is autonomous. Where, he asked, is this healthy part of the ego? Furthermore, he enquires into the nature of the relation between analysand and analyst to ask whether this notion that the patient is 'healthy' is not simply another way of saying that this health is attained once the patient has come to an understanding of reality fortuitously synonymous with that of the analyst. In Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, the protagonist simulates his 'healthy' state in order to dupe the analyst.

A second question that Lacan asks is, how can the ego be adapted to reality? This seems rather obvious. But Lacan asks the reader to imagine that his desk is capable of speech. The desk says it is perfectly adapted to 'reality', or, in other words, to Lacan's papers and pens and no doubt to Lacan himself. The desk sees its reality as being all reality and does not know whether it is adapted to reality or reality to it. The problem is the same for the ego. Even though the ego is the seat of human perception, how is one to know what is meant by its engagement, or not, with real objective reality? The fact that the desk may simply be adapted to Lacan's reality invites one to consider who it is that defines what the nature of reality is in society? Why seek maladjustment in the individual ego rather than in the social situation?

Ideas similar to those of Lacan are expressed in one of the great speeches by Martin Luther King, which argues that one of the great clichés in modern psychology of his time was the word 'maladjusted', continuing:

But I want to leave you this evening saying to you that there are some things in our social system that I'm proud to be maladjusted to, and I call on you to be maladjusted to. I never intend to adjust myself to the viciousness of lynch mobs; I never intend to become adjusted to the evils of segregation and discrimination; I never intend to become adjusted to the tragic inequalities of the economic system which will take necessity from the masses to give luxury to the classes; I never intend to become adjusted to the insanity's of militarism, the self-defeating method of physical violence. There are some things that I never intend to become adjusted to, and I call on you to continue to be mal-adjusted.¹⁹

Lacan would have regarded the promulgation of the ideal of freedom to self-actualize, as the apogee of human selfhood, to be little more than madness. In his view the ego, as expressed in the order of the Imaginary, is the seat not of self-realization but of self-delusion. His concept of the order of the Real is inexpressible. To seek to achieve 'self-realization' by approaching the Real would be to invite the potential not only for bliss but also for terror and madness. Becker (1973) adopts a similar stance. Phrases such as the 'fully centred person', the 'joy of peak experiences', and 'freedom to achieve your full humanity' inevitably carry a burden and dread. Following Freud, Becker argues that if one truly accepts one's desperate situation, then one will come to see that neurosis is natural and even psychosis explicable. Repression is necessary because it makes an otherwise untenable life worth living.²⁰ He tells the reader that if a patient presents himself to him with a relatively minor ailment such as an obsessive compulsion, his (Becker's) advice to the patient would be 'Keep it!' – because who knows what terrors the ailment is keeping in check.

Liberating Eros

In complete contrast to those discussed above who depict freedom as the ability to adjust to the demands of the social situation, the Surrealists (1920–1939) sought to unsettle the idea of social reality by producing surreality. In the early twentieth century the Dada movement presented an iconoclastic challenge to the art establishment by exhibiting ‘ready-mades’, including Duchamp’s *Fountain*, in the sacred space of the art gallery. Such travesties revolted against the Imaginary portrayed by formal art that elevated spiritual qualities of heroism and suffering, drawing millions to enlist in the carnage of the First World War. Dada became an international movement, with practitioners in Zurich, Berlin, New York, Paris and even in Russia, which later came to be assimilated into Surrealism in the late 1920s. The Surrealists included a number of poets and painters, at the core of which were André Breton, Paul Éluard, Robert Desnos, René Char and Salvador Dalí, but which included at its fringes Miró, Picasso, Klee, Magritte and Lacan.

Breton, who had studied medicine and later psychiatry, met Freud in 1921 and used psychoanalytic techniques with his patients. Most French intellectuals had to wait until the 1930s, when Freud’s work was first translated into French. Perhaps more importantly, Jacques Lacan was an early associate of the Surrealists, most notably, Salvador Dalí, publishing in the periodical *Minotaure* prior to embarking on the work for his doctoral thesis, which focused on an investigation of Aimée’s paranoia. There are strong resonances between Dada, the Surrealists and Lacan, particularly in respect to their iconoclasm. Soupault’s *Portrait d’un imbécile* (1921) economically illustrates Lacan’s concept of the Imaginary,²¹ whilst Breton’s fragmented self-portraits powerfully evoke the Symbolic. They also share in common the idea that social reality is not simply ‘there’ but is infused with and constructed by desire, and Dalí shared Lacan’s interest in paranoia. In the first version of the *Surrealist Manifesto*, published in 1924, Breton, the ‘pope’ of Surrealism, insisted on the omnipotence of the dream in the play of thought that is free of reason’s yoke. Breton summed up his view of the spirit of Surrealism as the realization of his own original desires. Desire is authentic because it is original, constituting the primal means by which nature speaks through us. By loosening desire from the chains of its restrictive social moorings, Breton argued, one can come to see the prevailing conventional view of ‘rational’ liberty for what it is, a sham that masks social inequality. Dalí, who had the capacity to shock even his fellow Surrealists, expressed his view more bluntly: ‘No desire is blameworthy, the only fault lies in repressing them.’²²

The Surrealists in 1922 declared themselves ‘specialists in revolt’, stressing their willingness to undertake any action in pursuit of this goal (Dean, 2002: 256). In investigating, excavating and exhibiting the fullness of their desires, they sought to rub the nose of the Establishment, conceived of as the censoring conservative political elite and the Catholic Church, in the fecund mess of their imaginings. They achieved this not only through their

considerable artistic output but also by taking a radical stance on major issues such as the divorce of Charlie Chaplin and the trial of the Papin sisters, who were publicly regarded as notorious murderers. Their poetic imagination focused on how the use of words, liberated from reason, could be seen to 'make love' to one another. They developed perverse techniques, such as Max Ernst's 'frottage' ('rubbing' – frotteurism is a pre-Oedipal sexual component instinct). They were also influenced by Freud in their use of automatic writing to draw close to the level of the unconscious and their use of symbolic objects to substitute for desire. However, they did not cling slavishly to Freud, and it is also clear that Freud regarded their activities with perplexity if not outright concern.

In conformity to their espoused principles, the Surrealists sought to free their desires in relation to the conduct of their own relationships, a project that met with varying success. Their surveys on love (1929), the encounter (1933), striptease (1958) and erotic representations (1964) were intended to complement their artworks by providing more direct and personal responses.

Haunted by desire

For Breton, as for Freud, the mind can make the most tenuous link between two objects, using ruses such as substitution, displacement and condensation to veil the origins of desire. In such a context, apparently innocuous details may prove to be of great significance. He reflects on two objects, an iron mask and a wooden spoon-shoe that he and Alberto Giacometti had purchased in a flea market. At the time he had been obsessed with the phrase 'cendrier de Cendrillon' (ashtray of Cinderella). When he sees the spoon, he immediately feels that it is linked in some way to the ashtray; but what can this mean? He moves through a range of associations – 'slipper-spoon, penis, perfect-mould-for-penis' – in arriving at the interpretation that behind this purchase was the desire for love. In this way Breton sought to instruct himself and others in the ruses used by desire to shield itself from consciousness.

The Surrealists used psychoanalytic tools to explore the nature of desire. *Pietà* by Max Ernst is at once scandalous of propriety and revelatory of the artist's desire. For Meret Oppenheim the shoes represented in *My Nurse* represent different feelings. The shoes squeezed tightly together evoke the association of thighs tightly squeezed together in pleasure. Oppenheim recalled being reminded that as a child, she had a nursemaid who was dressed in white and exuded sensuality. The shoes themselves had been discarded by Max Ernst's wife Marie-Berthe.

The Surrealists used perverse images to directly challenge the perceived stifling restrictions of the social order. Scandalized by government bans on the sale of works by Flaubert and Joyce, they recruited pornography to their task of overturning mainstream values. Pornography came to be seen as 'virtually anything elites believe threatens their power at a given time and

place.²³ Officially, at that time pornography was construed to be an indication of moral decline and degeneracy although the Surrealists detected the whiff of hypocrisy, alleging that those who were at the front of the queue to ban pornography were the very ones who discretely engaged in perverse practices. During the 1920s the movement against pornography was part of a wider movement for the creation of a 'healthy' sexuality, uncontaminated by perverse desires. The Surrealists believed perversion was produced by the repression of natural instincts by a puritanical culture and so became trenchant opponents of censorship. This involved the re-issuing of some of the Marquis de Sade's most infamous works. In a rather rose-tinted view of the notorious murderer and pervert, Paul Éluard described de Sade as having been locked up for

having wanted to give back to civilised man the force of his primitive instincts, for having wanted to unleash the amorous imagination and for having struggled desperately for justice and absolute equality. (Dean, 2002)

As Dean (2002) points out, de Sade was actually locked up under *lettres de cachet*, private letters sent by his noble family to the king, urging him to have the man locked up for the safety of those in his vicinity.

Surreal commerce

The Surrealists are generally remembered for their marriage of Freud to a Marxist critique of capitalism. Breton and Picasso were members of the Communist Party. They thus looked askance at anything that might reek of commerce, which could be taken to signify bourgeois values. Having said that, Breton's parents were shopkeepers and Lacan's, vinegar merchants. The Surrealists were involved in dealing, photography and advertising and in the world of high fashion. Dalí in particular – nicknamed 'Arvida Dollars' by Breton, was no stranger to commerce through his later involvement in jewellery design.

Commerce was also used by Dadaists and Surrealists to reflect on the nature of consumer desire. Duchamp illustrated this through the metaphor of Buridan's ass, where the beast, standing in reach of both hay and water, died because it could not decide which to have first. This image led him to conceive of desire as a cycle of attraction and disappointment. He considered the reflections of shop windows, describing them as seductive invitations to penetrate the glass. The penalty consists in cutting the pane and feeling regret as soon as possession is consummated.²⁴

Freedom: from the Beats to *The Catcher in the Rye*

The rise of totalitarianism in Europe and Japan and the brutal mechanized wars that ensued gave birth to powerful dystopian novels; for example,

Zamyatin's *We* (1993), first published in 1924; Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984* (1949). In each dystopia the protagonist initially thinks himself free but comes to realize that this is an illusion built on the assimilation of state propaganda. The idea that one might not be free is bad enough; what is worse is the idea that the state can look inside of one's head or, worse still, actually be inside of one's head. What of freedom then?

The Beats

On the face of it, the bohemian lifestyle adopted by Brendan Behan, Patrick Kavanagh and others who debauched in Dublin's Catacombs and those associated with what came to be known as the Beat generation in the United States were more concerned about sexual freedom and freedom to use drugs than with the power of the state. The Beats, who emerged in the late 1940s and through the 1950s, represented a potent fusion of all that was repressed by the American dream: black jazz 'cool', laconic drug-induced prose and homosexual angst. At the core of the movement in the USA were William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and Joan Vollmer. Burroughs, described by Ginsberg as the presiding genius of the movement, drew his wealth from the mighty Burroughs Machine company while raising a finger to polite society in *Naked Lunch*. If Kerouac's *On the Road* made Beat accessible, Ginsberg's epic of rage and discontent, *Howl* (1956), which was written while he was at Berkeley during the summer of 1955, became and remains the movement's anthem. Ginsberg reputedly turned full-time to write poetry on the advice of his analyst. Inspired by Blake's visions, *Howl* is a visceral yet dreamlike rant whose opening line grabs the attention:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked²⁵

Five pages later, these 'best minds' undergo the rigours of work in the advertising business in Madison Avenue,

who were burned alive in their innocent flannel suits on Madison Avenue amid blasts of leaden verse & the tanked-up clatter of the iron regiments of fashion & the nitroglycerine shrieks of the fairies of advertising & the mustard gas of sinister intelligent editors, or were run down by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality.

Howl outrages not only in its content but in its style. The second section of the poem likens industrial society to Moloch:

Moloch in whom I sit lonely! Moloch in whom I dream Angels!
Crazy in Moloch! Cocksucker in Moloch! Lacklove and
manless in Moloch!

Moloch who entered my soul early! Moloch in whom I am a
consciousness without a body! Moloch who frightened me out of my
natural ecstasy! Moloch whom I abandon! Wake up in Moloch! Light
streaming out of the sky!

Moloch features elsewhere in Ginsberg poem, as it did in his career; he worked as a copyboy for a newspaper in Denver and in market research in Mexico. The marketplace is directly present in Ferlinghetti's *A Supermarket in California*. Although bound up in this culture, the Beats sought to provoke, to shock their audience out of their complacency. This is more apparent in Ferlinghetti's *A Coney Island of the Mind*. The poem first summons Goya's grotesque images of suffering and death before comparing these to the American landscape:

we are the same people
only farther from home
on freeways 50 lands wide
on a concrete continent
spaced with bland billboards
illustrating imbecile illusion of happiness²⁶

The message is clear. In the land where the bland lead the bland, real people continue to suffer as people always have done; it just doesn't seem that way any more. Ginsberg's *Industrial Waves* (1987) is an acerbic reflection on the nature of liberal freedom.

The New Right's a creepy pre-Fascist fad
Salute the flag and call on Mom and Dad
Shit on the niggers it's their fault they were slaves
In a free market you can get rich filling graves

Freedom for the rich to suck off the Work of the Poor
Freedom for Monopoly to corner the markets in horse manure
Freedom for the secret police and guys with guns
Freedom for bully buys! Death to the Radical Nuns!

Ginsberg zeroes in on hypocrisy with respect to the administration of justice:

Freedom to buy Judges! Freedom for organized crime!
Freedom for the Military! 'I got mine.'
war and the drugs trade;
'Freedom for War! Fight for Peace! Whoopee!
Government off our backs' – except the Military!

Freedom for Narcs to put junkies in jail!
 Freedom to punish sick addicts all hail!
 and pornography;
 'Freedom for Cosa Nostra's pornography
 Freedom to ban your verse in the high school library'.

These verses reflect themes and concerns that would not have been strangers to the Dadaists or the Surrealists, most specifically, via their creation of an iconoclastic insight into the issues that create the illusion of freedom.

Despite the enormous influence exerted by the Beat poets, loner and recluse J. D. Salinger represents most clearly the preoccupations of this time. His classic *The Catcher in the Rye* continues to be taught – and banned – by officialdom. The book is about a few days in the life of Holden Caulfield, sixteen years old and expelled from school, as he experiences his first fumbling foray into the adult world. A central theme is Holden's preoccupation with 'phonies', whom he considers inauthentic because they try to be other than they really are by trying to impress others. His roommate Ward Stradlater is labelled a phoney by presenting himself as a 'jock' to impress girls. Phonies are presented by Holden as desiring material goods so that they can impress others and so become something they are not. The difficulty is, as the reader can emphatically see, that Holden himself is caught up in the phoniness he despises in others.

At the heart of the predicament of Salinger's tale and what perhaps still makes it compelling is the torn feeling that, on the one hand, freedom represents being integrally and authentically 'oneself', irrespective of the demands of others, and on the other hand, a different kind of freedom beckons, in the notion that one can be free to be whomsoever one wishes to be. This is perhaps made explicable if one considers that Holden is caught with one leg on either side of a chasm that divides the 'inner-directed' from the 'other-directed' character.

Freedom and other-directedness

It is possible to detect a key in Holden Caulfield's anxious predicament, described above, to suggest that he was caught in the midst of a change to what was referred to at the time as the 'other-directed' character. In *The Lonely Crowd* (1961), Riesman et al. trace changes in American society from a pattern based on tradition to one based on inner-directedness and ultimately to what they call the other-directed character. Influenced by Freud, Riesman et al. believed that the relation between the person and society had changed fundamentally over time. The tradition-dominated person is very much part of the community to which he or she belongs and so scarcely has a separate sense of individuality. Inner-directed characters began to emerge in European society during the Renaissance and the Reformation. During this period, which shows high rates of urban growth, those who

lived in rural communities were forced by circumstance to move to the cities, where more often than not they found themselves interacting with strangers. Unlike those who had spent their lives in the circle of community, the inner-directed character became aware of the existence of different competing traditions.

Cut off from traditional life of a community and forced to live with the knowledge of competing traditions, the inner-directed character turned to the world of work for meaning and identity. However, with the shift through the 1950s to middle-class employment in the service industries, a new character emerged who was shallower, more profligate with his money, friendlier, more uncertain of himself and his values and more demanding of approval. Riesman put this change down to the growth of a more permissive society, where the peer group became more important to the child than the parents and where parents and the media stressed the importance of 'fitting in'. A central feature of the other-directed character is the need for approval. While the inner-directed person is inspired by a need to maintain a good reputation and to keep up with the Joneses (to have as high a life style as your neighbours), the other-directed person aimed to keep up with the Joneses more in terms of the quality of his inner experience.

Packard: the autonomous self²⁷

Vance Packard, best-selling author of *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) and *The Status Seekers* (1959), was an unlikely social critic. His biographer notes that Packard would have begun his memoirs with the line 'My uncle Bill told me I was born a mistake.'²⁸ Like Holden Caulfield, Packard always had the sense of being an outsider, uneasily straddling the social worlds he moved in and believing himself to have an 'under-integrated personality'. Born of farming stock in Granville Summitt, Pennsylvania, Packard spent his early years as a farm boy in a traditional community where religion mattered and neighbour helped neighbour. His biographer notes that these people were not drawn by superficial symbols of class and did not use the possession of material goods as a yardstick by which to judge others. His father helped organize other local farmers into a cooperative called the Dairyman's League to oppose Sheffield Farms, a powerful private distributor. This proved to be of great significance to Vance, who thenceforth contrasted greedy middlemen and big business to virtuous farmers, who were seen as the real authentic heart of America.

Horowitz describes how the Packard family eventually lost the battle with Sheffield Farms, and Vance's father secured a job at Pennsylvania State College as farm manager. The family's arrival at Penn State proved to be a major turning point in Packard's career. Confronted with so many talented strangers, he developed an ambition to be the best. The move also accentuated his feeling of belonging nowhere. Packard, at first, identified with his parents' strong religious beliefs and their arguments that powerful

vested interests posed a threat to the integrity of the family. This conflicted with his growing left-leaning secularism following the move to Penn State. On graduation he was lucky enough to scrape into a postgraduate place at Columbia University, where pollster George Gallup taught him how to use the new opinion-poll technique. On graduation, in a tight job market he found an opening with the *Boston Daily Record*, a sensationalist publication targeted at that city's Irish American working-class audience. At this time he began to read Thomas Mann, reflecting on how the commercial pressures from his job led him to compromise on his socialist principles. Reading Mann renewed his interest in the relations between individualism, totalitarianism and mass society and reinforced his belief in personal autonomy and freedom.

Horowitz describes how, living in Boston, Packard was separated from Virginia Matthews, the love of his life, who remained in Pennsylvania. It became clear that their relationship was in jeopardy when she began to date a local successful dentist. Packard's attitude to wealth and success made the new relationship all the more difficult to bear.

In a letter he drafted to Virginia, he attacked the dentist's 'large spending power for amusing, entertaining, diverting' her 'in extravagant fashion'. Vance felt she found in consumption something that gave her 'a vicarious release to... [her] repressed urge to spend.' Look carefully at the dentist, he remarked, 'strip him of his spending power (car and dough) and look again'.²⁹

Virginia countered by querying how she and Vance could marry and live on the salary of a reporter. As it turned out, Vance didn't have to make the decision, as in May 1938 the *Record*, with a recent history of falling circulation and loss of advertising revenues, dropped him and twenty others. Aged 28, he moved to *America Magazine*, where, as Horowitz notes, he ended up writing 'the kinds of stories whose formulaic quality had bothered him since his junior year in college.'³⁰ It was while there that Vance started work on the material which would eventually become *Hidden Persuaders*. In 1954, *Reader's Digest* gave him an assignment to look into the increased use of Motivational Research by marketers. Not long after he completed the article, *Reader's Digest* decided to include advertising in its publication. Although he was paid for the article, he learned that it was not to be published, drawing the obvious conclusion that this might be due to the recent decision about advertising. Chagrined, he decided to turn his article into a book-length piece. It took him just two months to write the book, which was published at almost exactly the time that *America Magazine* folded.

Hidden Persuaders constituted a direct assault on those who argue that advertising is fundamental to the nation's well-being. Horowitz notes that advertising expenditures increased from \$2 billion in 1939 to almost \$12

billion in the 1950s. Advertisements had grown to be more sophisticated and subtle during this period, with advertising professionals benefiting from the new medium of television and advances in opinion polling and from psychoanalytic theory, including motivation research. Although advertisers were created in a bad light in literary fiction of the time, there were many who extolled its virtues. Ernest Dichter, in a famous quote, announced Horatio Alger to be dead, or in other words, that the traditional virtues of hard work, thrift and saving were dead, displaced by the values of the rising consumer society that sanctioned the contrary hedonistic view that prosperity is there to be enjoyed. There was certainly evidence at the time for the demise of the culture of thrift, with the increased use of instalment credit and credit cards leading to an increase in consumer debt to three times the rate of personal income.³¹

Hidden Persuaders begins with a warning, that the United States is drifting from a culture based on authentic producer values to one based on shifting anxieties. Packard warns about the use of social science techniques, in particular, Motivation Research by big business advertisers seeking to channel desire through commodity consumption. The bulk of the book is devoted to case studies describing the new techniques used to seduce Americans into buying products. In particular, Packard cites examples of how Motivation Research bypasses consciousness in order to access unconscious desire.

Vance Packard believed the hidden persuaders were moving America closer to the world described by Orwell in *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949):

Drawing on his experience at *America Magazine*, Packard believed that the danger was that Big Brother, represented by psychologists, market researchers, advertising agencies and corporations, would invade privacy and erode self-determination. At one point, for example, he mentioned the way the business community simultaneously deplored 'creeping socialism' and looked the other way when it came to industry's circumscription of freedom.³²

Although concerned by the use of methods derived from Freud's theories, Packard was no Freudian in that he was not schooled in the Freudian view of the conflicted self. He was primarily concerned by the shift from the producer ethic to one based on consumption and was hostile to Dichter's attempt to make people feel less guilty when engaging in conspicuous consumption by making hedonism moral. Rather than celebrating the new-found affluence of the 1950s, he argued that big business was creating a nation of overanxious consumers. Packard's ideal was drawn from his reading of Riesman's *Lonely Crowd*. Riesman argued that Americans should resist the pressure to adjust to the new social conditions and should instead strive to be autonomous and self-directed. Packard went further:

Driven by internal promptings more than by the opinion of others, he adopted a more thoroughgoing individualism than Reisman advocated. Packard defined nonconformity principally in terms of the desire to be free of restrictions and to be able to live apart from large bureaucratic institutions.³³

Ironically, one of the consequences of the publication of Packard's book was to spark an enormous interest amongst producers as to how they might fruitfully employ these marvellous hidden techniques of persuasion in selling their own products. Horowitz's analysis of the correspondence received by Packard reveals that he received a number of such requests.

Dichter's reply to Packard

In terms of harnessing Freud's ideas to the workings of government and business, Ernest Dichter comes second only to Edward Bernays, Freud's nephew and founder of public relations. Dichter was educated in Austria and started the Institute for Motivation Research in 1946 in seeking to use Freudian concepts so as to better understand consumer desire.

Dichter (1960) argued that the key to desire lies in an understanding of the unconscious motives that often lie behind it. He pioneered a number of forms of research in marketing, including the use of non-directive depth interviews and focus groups. Simple observation was also used extensively. The institute's first study was into Ivory Soap, where, by means of detailed observation, motivational researchers learned what others had ignored. When asked what attributes they took into account in buying soap, consumers mentioned its price, and smell. But when they were asked to pick out the soap of their choice from a selection, researchers noted that consumers did not simply look at each bar but often held it, felt it and sniffed it. The researchers concluded that previously ignored attributes such as the feel and shape of a soap bar are important attributes for consumer choice in this area.³⁴ When asked what attributes they took account of when choosing coffee, consumers mentioned aroma, consistency, freshness, taste and price. But when Dichter engineered a coffee that was colourless, he quickly found this unmentioned attribute to be of great importance as a large number of consumers rejected the colourless variation.

While noting in the above examples that the hidden motivations are unconscious, Dichter does not search for a sexual referent lying behind them. Some of his other studies submit products to a more classically Freudian reading by linking consumer motivations to desires that are sexual and troubling. For example, his study of the significance of baking concludes that the activity produces feelings of love and security for the woman. The smell of baking that pervades a home strongly recalls the mother. The most fertile moment occurs when the woman gathers the finished cake from the oven. The entire experience is similar to that of giving birth. The woman

asks herself, 'How did it turn out?' 'Will it fulfil expectations?' One does not need to delve into Freud in order to extract the meaning of baking; the colloquialism 'bun in the oven' says it all! Additionally, it is not at all clear that a woman would want to suppress her desire to have a child. It is more likely though that she will not be aware of the metonymic relation that fuels her joy at bringing forth a new creation from her oven. Dichter invokes darker motives in explaining the satisfaction obtained in eating crackers:

On a deeper level the consumption of crackers is closer to the original ritualistic meanings of baking, where biting into, cracking, crushing of fetishistic and symbolic baked images were involved. Animal crackers and unusual shapes owe their origin to this mystical meaning of crackers.

Dichter's coyness and circumspection in the above is interesting, given that he is referring to the totem meal, discussed by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. In this view the original fetishistic meal that yielded such intense pleasure to those who partook of it, which is recalled in our fondness for crunchy foods today, was provided by crunching the bones of the dead father, the leader of the primal horde.

Dichter thus argues that consumer purchase behaviour of a product is motivated not simply by rational attributes such as price, appearance, lather and colour but on a combination of these factors, plus an 'intangible' element he labels the personality or soul of the product. Thus, Ivory Soap was perceived to have a sombre, utilitarian and thoroughly cleansing character. His *Handbook of Consumer Motivations* (1964), contains findings from 2,500 studies of motivation carried out by the institute, ranging from the motivations that lie behind perceptions of chickens, raisins, prunes and shoe salesmen. Prunes, for example, were likened by consumers to spinsters, being old and dried up. Subsequent marketing campaigns sought to displace this negative image by conjoining prunes to positive youthful attributes of sunshine and health.

Dichter linked brand identity to personal identity by arguing that individuals project themselves onto products; In buying a car, they actually buy an extension of their own personality (1964: 86/87). Likewise, when they are 'loyal' to a commercial brand, they are 'loyal' to themselves. In discussing areas such as brand personality and social marketing, he was well ahead of his time.

More importantly for our argument concerning freedom is his introduction to *The Strategy of Desire* (1960), where he confronts some of the arguments presented by Vance Packard in *The Hidden Persuaders*. Dichter starts by recalling how, during one of his talks, a lady chastised him, arguing that his use of motivation research was realizing the predictions of Orwell's 1984. Dichter's response is twofold. First, he links the development of technology, from fire to the car, aeroplane and computer, as necessary to human evolution. The transformation of such technologies, he argues, is part of

the necessary flux of challenge and growth that signals the advance of civilization. In a possible sideswipe at Marcuse, he contrasts this with those who wish to go back into the 'womb-like warmth and dreamy ignorance' of nirvana, a state that he argues is closer to the docility portrayed in *1984* than is his own position. He proceeds to argue that the strategy of human desire is the shaping of the human factor in the ultimate quest: 'Human conquest is a conquest of the animal within us.'³⁵ He then discusses persuasion and education, arguing that it is not the means of persuasion that is important, which necessarily must always contain a mixture of rational and emotional appeals, but the goals. He reminds readers that during the course of human history, societies have been organized in pursuit of morally repugnant goals such as cannibalism, bigamy and human sacrifice, presumably asking them to infer that the goals of late modern capitalism are relatively beneficent by comparison. Far from seeing a problem with the use of Motivation Research, he asserts that it is his *duty* to make people feel dissatisfied and that the danger lies the other way around, in making them believe that they live in the best of all possible worlds. He asks, is it moral to convince a person of the beauty of a new car, to make him spend \$3,000 or \$4,000 he might have spent elsewhere? And if it is immoral, then where do we draw the line?

Strictly speaking, a new car, a color TV set, cigarettes, beer or French wines are not necessities. But they all represent aspects of a full life. Modern psychology considers a man well-adjusted when he can strike a proper balance between the cycles of tension and satisfaction, when he can continuously grow and expand his power for enjoyment and creative explanation of his capacities. Such an expansive life can be considered ethical not only from the point of view of the individual, but also from that of the society.³⁶

Furthermore, he argues that the role played by products in human fulfilment is incidental. However, if the desire for freedom and discovery can be expressed through the glamour of a new convertible: 'I will willingly accept responsibility for combining two strong human desires for the benefit of the car advertiser – and ultimately the benefit of the national economy and the creative happiness of the individual'.³⁷ He continues to assert that what matters is not the means used to persuade or to educate someone but the goal. It is only when persuasion is used to instil 'static and stale contentment' that it results in maladjustment and becomes clinically incorrect and morally undesirable.

Liberating Eros, part 2: Herbert Marcuse

Vance Packard was chalk to Herbert Marcuse's cheese. The relatively unschooled journalist who grew up on an isolated farm in the USA, who

subscribed to the ideal of an autonomous self, was light years away from the sophisticated urban German philosopher and social theorist schooled in Freud and Marx. Associated with the prestigious Frankfurt School, Marcuse left Germany following Hitler's ascent to power. On arrival in the United States he began teaching at Columbia University, prior to moving to Harvard, then Brandeis University and finally to the University of San Diego. He became famous throughout the Western world in the 1960s following the publication of two important books, *Eros and Civilization* (1966 [1955]) and *One Dimensional Man* (1964), each raising questions about freedom and authenticity in modern society. Because of his willingness to speak at protests, Marcuse attracted the moniker 'Father of the new Left'.

Marcuse clarifies his position in the first sentence of *One Dimensional Man*: 'a comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization'.³⁸ His argument is paradoxical. How can it be that reason and democracy can be implicated in a lack of freedom, in unfreedom? Surely reason and democracy constitute the very basis of what freedom ought to be in a liberal democracy? Thus, one may gripe that there is insufficient choice in the political sphere in that parties profess to be of different colours but are essentially of the same hue. Similarly one may carp about competitive restriction in the economic sphere, insider trading, rampant price-fixing, the revolving door that links big business and government and cynical attempts to defraud consumers. If anything, reason prevails and grows stronger in the sway of such arguments because the outrage stems from the belief that political and economic life that ought to be reasonable in actuality is not.

Marcuse's psychoanalytic argument is that one may believe oneself to be free, that one may even indeed be happy, but that the reality is different:

In the 'normal' development the individual lives his repression 'freely' as 'his own' life: he desires what he is supposed to desire; his gratifications are profitable to him and to others; he is reasonably and often even exuberantly happy. This happiness, which takes place during the few hours of leisure between the working days and the working nights, but sometimes also during work, enable him to continue his performance, which in turn perpetuates his labour and that of others. (1966: 46)

Against the notion of adjustment promulgated by the ego psychologists, Marcuse returns the reader to Freud's undermining of the idea of the autonomous individual. The liberal conception of the autonomous, rational and reasonable individual appears as if frozen in time. But the reality is that this conception of the modern individual is shaped by sociogenetic processes that define its personality and relations. The appearance of the rational individual through the course of time is synonymous with the repression of instinctual desire (1966: 57). Marcuse is not so foolish as to argue that all repression of instinctual desire is bad. Rather he targets forms of oppression

that restrict human potential. In this view the repression of a young child's expressed 'need' to cross a busy street does not repress her potential.

Marcuse's argument is not based on the critique of repression but of surplus repression. Some level of repression is normal in any society. However, the surplus repression characteristic of modern industrial society is linked to a new form of social organization of the reality principle, which he calls the performance principle. This title is apt because it describes the modern imperative for production where society is stratified according to the economic performance of its members.³⁹ Marcuse's argument then proceeds in two directions, each linked to the reduction of libido in modern society.

First, the metronome beat of the performance imperative leads the individual to spend most of her waking life engaged in repetitive labour. When the satisfaction of physiological needs, including sleep, is taken into consideration, the person is left with a residue of, on average, four hours per day for leisure. Leisure time is itself largely dominated by the culture industries and is transformed into 'a passive relaxation and re-creation of energy for work.'⁴⁰ Modern life is cast into two moulds, consisting of work and recuperation and re-energizing preparatory to work. Furthermore, the nature of work is alienating for most people in that a portion of their precious energy, or libido, which they have invested into the labour process, is appropriated in the interest of profit and does not return to the self.

Secondly, in addition to this temporal reduction in libido, there is a spatial restriction, whereby genital sex for purposes of procreation is sanctioned publicly as the only form that is socially acceptable, with the proscription of the sexual 'component' instincts, that are labelled as perversions. This, he argues, has the effect of spatially reducing the libido:

The perversions thus express rebellion against the subjugation of sexuality under the order of procreation, and against the institutions which guarantee this order. ... The perversions seem to reject the entire enslavement of the pleasure ego by the reality ego. Claiming instinctual freedom in a world of repression, they are often characterized by a strong rejection of that feeling of guilt which accompanies sexual repression.⁴¹

Marcuse's rhetorical style makes it appear that he is arguing to unleash the power of the id to overwhelm the bastions of the monstrous society that creates surplus repression. He refrains by arguing that given free rein, these forces would threaten the future of humankind by releasing sadomasochistic processes. In the interests of society such destructive impulses must be diverted from the ego onto the external world, where they are expressed in the development of technology and in the formation of a punishing superego that achieves the submission of the pleasure ego to the Reality principle and assures civilized morality. Here the death instinct is recruited

to the service of Eros, where aggression provides energy for mastery and exploitation of nature to the benefit of humankind. Civilization perseveres throughout this as the superego builds up and protects the unity of the ego under the Reality principle and works in the service of Eros. However, it attains these objectives by pitting the ego against the id, turning a part of the destructive instincts against a part of the personality by destroying or splitting the personality as a whole. This inner destructiveness constitutes the moral core of the mature adult. Conscience is thus permeated with the death instinct, and driven to the extreme in melancholia, a pure culture of the death instinct may prevail. Thus, the very progress of civilization leads to the release of increasingly destructive forces.

Towards the end of *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse discusses ways out of the dilemma of modern civilization and surplus repression. How can one stop Eros from being continually weakened through the demands for continuous sublimation and surplus repression? He argues that the myths of Orpheus and Narcissus may form the basis for a new Reality principle. For example, Narcissus is usually spoken of in negative terms as an image of death, being static and captured by the aesthetic image, which he fails to recognize as himself. Marcuse argues that this can be taken as the basis for a new form of society based on a sensuous productivity, where the static triumphs over the dynamic. He reconfigures Freud's explanation of infantile narcissism, emphasizing that it is during this period that the infant experiences the oceanic feeling of oneness of connection, being bathed in the world. In positing such oneness with everything, he argues that narcissism may contain the germ of a new Reality principle.

Marcuse employs apocalyptic language and vivid prose to illustrate his vision of a movement in society towards an aesthetic celebration of sensuousness and play that moves beyond the dystopias of *1984* and *Brave New World*. Arguing that society needs this new mode of civilization to heal the wounds of the old one, he says.

Freedom is thus, in a strict sense, freedom from the established reality; man is free when the 'reality' loses its seriousness and when its 'necessity' becomes light.⁴²

Rather than being dominated by nature, as in primitive times, or seeking to dominate nature, as in modern times, the new aesthetic asks us to contemplate it. Marcuse imagines a freedom of abundance that is beyond necessity, where society is based around the idea of saving time for leisure. How to get there? Modern civilized morality is based on that of repressed instincts. Liberation of these instincts implies debasement of the higher values of society. But then such debasement of higher values may be necessary in that it will take them back into the 'organic' structure of human experience from which they were separated, and the reunion may transform the

structure itself. The move to a non-repressive reality principle thus requires a psychical and social regression that will reactivate the early narcissistic phase of the ego:

If the guilt accumulated in the civilized domination of man by man can ever be redeemed by freedom, then the 'original sin' must be committed again: We must again eat from the tree of knowledge in order to fall back into the state of innocence.

The notion of a non-repressive instinctual order must be tested on the most

'disorderly' of all instincts – namely, sexuality. Non-repressive order is possible only if the sex instincts can, by virtue of their own dynamic and under changed existential and societal conditions, generate lasting erotic relations among mature individuals.⁴³

He explains this in Freudian terms. Regression would lead to a decrease of social controls over sexuality. This would break down the bastions of the performance principle, thus undoing the channelling of sexuality into monogamy and lifting the taboo on perversion. With the reduction of the workday to a minimum, libido which would no longer be required for investment into stultifying labour would be released to overflow institutional limits. The body, resexualized, would lead to a resurgence of polymorphous perversity and a decline in genital supremacy. The body in its entirety would then become something to be enjoyed in and for itself, as an instrument of pleasure. This in turn would lead to the disintegration of the monogamous and patriarchal family.

Marcuse concludes rather pithily, given his weighty reasoning, that the prospects flowing from his theory seem to confirm the view that instinctual liberation will lead to a society composed of sex maniacs.⁴⁴ Against this he argues that this process involves not simply a release but also a *transformation* of libido (his italics). Rather than being constrained into a narrow form of sexuality, this erotizes the entire personality, spreading libido over private and societal relations, bridging the gap maintained by the repressive reality principle. He contrasts the grotesque explosions of repressed sexuality that occur within the performance principle, which emerge in sadistic and masochistic orgies of military rape and violence, with the free development of libido within transformed institutions. In the reconfigured scene the inhuman, compulsive, coercive and destructive forms of the perversions associated with repressive culture will be transformed as compatible with normality in the higher civilization that beckons. Thus, he suggests that sexuality can, under certain conditions, create highly civilized human relations without being subjected to repressive organization.

Although dense and difficult to read, requiring a thorough grounding in Freudian theory, Marcuse's works proved to be extremely influential in the United States and in Europe during the 1960s and into the 1970s. In retrospect his words appear prophetic, especially his plea to escape from mass industrial society by regressing back to the garden of narcissism in a bid to reconfigure psyche and society and so suture the two in a new formation. But then Marcuse was more than simply a prophet; his theories presented models for those hippies and others who were disenchanted with the activities of the military-industrial complex, appalled at the easy hypocrisy that prevailed, who didn't want themselves to be phoneys. Many didn't bother to read his books to understand its underlying message of 'Free Love'.

Commentators on Marcuse assert that for all his sophistication, his argument is fundamentally naive. For instance, Becker says that his promotion of an untamed sexuality presumes the repressive society foists guilt onto the child, whereas, in fact, it is the child who freely assumes guilt. To imagine a human nature free from guilt is in this view impossible. Marcuse's arguments are probably best relayed in arguments today in remakes of *The Stepford Wives*, which illustrates the bland, inauthenticity of life in modern industrial society.

The Spirit of '68

The 1960s was a period of ferment across the Western world that came as something of a shock to intellectuals, who had expected this generation to be even more fully incorporated into the machine society than were its parents; being seduced by the massive rise in availability of consumer products to engage in lifelong careers in the service of banks and corporations and content to spend their well-earned money on the latest gadgets. Instead, as Theodore Roszak notes, when the American middle classes looked to see where the counterculture was, they found it staring back at them from the other side of the breakfast table.

In the United States several strands of tension wound together to form a thrumming chord. Through the late 1950s and into the 1960s the university system there had been rapidly expanded. Students came to expect freedom of speech, but university regents maintained a largely authoritarian system. The influence of the Beats spread from the more radical universities. Radical students also became aware of the emerging movement for civil rights that was emerging under the leadership of Martin Luther King. Works such as *The Hidden Persuaders* (Packard, 1957), *The Waste Makers* (Packard 1960), *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1962) and *Unsafe at Any Speed* (Nader, 1965) spread considerable unease about the role of big business corporations. This was fuelled by two books by heavyweight economist J. K. Galbraith, particularly the *New Industrial State* (1967), that gave rise to worries that the big business elite, which he called the technostructure, enshrined the values

of an antidemocratic, self-serving elite. Marcuse's work and influence was likewise growing. In hindsight it was not difficult to spot the fact that a crisis was likely to ensue.⁴⁵ Added to this, the initially euphoric reaction of youth to the promise of the Kennedy presidency reversed into overt hostility towards government and big business with the escalating commitment to support the South Vietnamese regime through conscription.

If the American cognoscenti were taken by surprise at the events that unfolded during the 1960s, the French elite were even more shocked by the first major domestic upheaval to have taken place since the institution of the Paris Commune in 1789. In contrast to the United States, French society was highly stratified and hierarchical. The theoretical fashion that pervaded many French university courses at that time was structuralism, deriving from Saussure's semiotics and developed by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. As its name suggests, structuralism was concerned with a split between surface and depth; it argued that superficial reality is explicable by relatively simple underlying unconscious rules. Chomsky's structural linguistics, which is an exemplar of the structuralist approach, argues that the complexity of language can be reduced to an underlying system of variations between noun phrases and verb phrases. From this, structuralism gives priority of explanation to existing rules rather than to human action (Turkle, 1979).

In the wake of the sudden flux and change of the events of 1968, structuralism came to be seen as untenable. Scholars sought elsewhere in search of an explanation for what they witnessed on the streets of Paris. May 1968 seemed to form the antithesis to the established society, characterized by antistructure, antihierarchy, antirules, enervated by the idea that language could be reinvented. Marcuse's writings were particularly popular in this environment, particularly his exhortation for a return to the garden. Lacan's theory was also popular. The French Left, was split into a number of factions, most of which opposed the Communist party. Members of these groups read Lacan in different ways. Some followed a relatively structuralist line in sharing with the philosopher Louis Althusser the belief that one does not become truly human until one is initiated in the system of language and culture that constitutes the Symbolic realm. Others in direct contrast to this view seized on the Symbolic, representing the order of culture and the law, as the problem which needed to be reinvented. Given that the Symbolic, or culture, is framed by the rules of language, then these rules, too, had to be reconfigured. Kristeva argued similarly to Marcuse the need to direct attention to pre-symbolic formations. Such feelings were given expressions in street slogans of the time:⁴⁶

Paris 1968: Selection of Street Posters:

Un flic dort en chacun de nous, il faut le tuer.
[A cop sleeps inside every one of us, we must kill him.]

Désirer la réalité, c'est bien. Réaliser ses desires, c'est mieux!
 [Desiring reality is good. Realizing your desires is even better!]

Mons desires sont la réalité.
 [My desires are reality.]⁴⁷

A particularly resonant phrase was *sous les pavés la plage* – underneath the cobblestones, the beach. These 'sur-symbolists' called for an end to repression, to the 'dictatorship of the Symbolic', and for a re-engagement with nature, as expressed in the desire for a return to Eden:

The naturalists saw the goal of politics to be return to man's freedom, to his sense of being a passionate animal. They glorified a model of a pre-symbolic age of direct fusional relationships, of spontaneity, of primitive, unmediated desire. They decried 'phallocentrism' and denounced the family as the bearer of hierarchy and taboo. They looked to children, primitive peoples, and most of all to the mad as examples of people in touch with the power of the presymbolic. What these marginal groups were presumed to have in common was that they had not yet been fully 'Oedipalized', that is, that the Symbolic – that is, language structure and society – had not entered them. They were still in Eden.⁴⁸

One of the most popular expressions of post-1968 naturalism was to be anti-Oedipus: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, consists of a diatribe against Oedipalization. Deleuze was a philosopher and Guattari a Lacanian analyst. They enquired into the relation of speech and desire in the events of 1968. They also attacked psychoanalysis by exalting the schizophrenic's proximity to the Imaginary. In their analysis the schizophrenic makes no difference between personal and social experience: his or her personal expressions are themselves political expressions; for the schizophrenic word and thing are one and the same; saying is doing. Guattari described the fluid groups of 1968 as the harbingers of a new schizo-culture where all boundaries would be dissolved.⁴⁹

Discussion

This chapter introduces a number of the ways in which Freud's concepts have been recruited by others to the cause of freedom in the twentieth century. Freud provides a means for conceptualizing freedom that goes beyond the notion of the unitary self. His theory of the conflicted self and its related concepts of id, ego and superego are useful in providing a template to analyse conceptions of freedom. Thus, one may not feel 'free' to the extent that one's being is inhabited by a watchful presence, representing an outpost of society that is felt to be repressive. This view may give rise to feelings that the forces of the id can be harnessed in the pursuit of freedom.

If one accepts the view that the self is conflicted and that part of the self represents the internalized values and expectations imposed by society, then this might partially explain what Breton, in *Nadja*, called the haunted nature of human subjectivity and consequently how unsure people are of their grounding in reality. When one comes to doubt the reality of the world that one inhabits, one comes also to question its authenticity and, in turn, one's own. The profound shock and moral slippage that can ensue is expressed well in *The Truman Show* (1998), where the protagonist, who strikes out towards freedom, discovers, only as his dinghy bumps into the studio wall that marks the end of the 'ocean', that he has spent his entire life as part of a reality television show.

The question of the manufacture of reality separates ego psychologists from many of the others discussed in this chapter. The former group sought to adjust the individual to social reality. On the other hand, if one believes that social reality is not given but manufactured, one wonders who are the manipulators and to what ends are they working? In this context the experience that one's freedom is authentic is crucial to the operations of several of the social movements discussed here. The Surrealists sought an end to social hypocrisy in order to live out the authentic reality of their desires; Holden Caulfield is troubled by the lack of authenticity he perceives in the phoney who attempt to seduce others by means of their manipulation of appearances, conjured from their ownership of consumer goods. Vance Packard seeks to expose the phoney consumer society.

One may take the opposite course to that adopted by Holden Caulfield and actively seek to use the symbolic markers attached to consumer goods to freely express one's identity. In this respect one might argue that fashion provides a means for the expression of one's individualism. It also allows individuals to play with different images of the self. Desire for fashionable images of novelty spring directly from the desire of consumers. Those firms that make up the fashion system promote an ideal of fashionability or the idea that one can trade in one lifestyle or identity for another that has more novelty value. A major task for the fashion industry is to remove the initial hostility of the Holden Caulfields of this world so as to entice them to explore the range of alternative identities that are available for purchase in the marketplace. Patrick Hetzel (1995) argues that in order to do so, these objectors must first come to accept the legitimacy of styles that are alternative to the one they favour by admitting that it is fine for others to adopt such styles if they wish to.

Those who have argued the manufactured nature of social reality stress the authenticity of the sensuous and argue for the liberation of Eros to smash the repressive social apparatus. The Surrealists, Marcuse and the activists of 1968 share concerns for sexual liberation as part of a more encompassing social and psychic liberation. Attitudes towards sexuality and sexual behaviours have changed dramatically in the forty and more years that

have elapsed since 1968. The role played by the superego, or the 'policeman inside the head', as one 1968 poster had it, is interesting in hindsight. The activists of 1968 were concerned about the spread of the surveillance society as part of an ever encroaching state control. Now, at a time when surveillance is at a different quantum, it appears that instead of being concerned by surveillance, many citizens and consumers are concerned to have every aspect of their physical and mental state pored over on the Internet and on 24-hour reality television.

Freud's theory is useful, too, to authors, artists and poets as a tool to understand the meaning of freedom. Freud's tripartite division of ego, id and superego thus constructs the very understanding of freedom that these groups envisaged. This alerts one to the fact that the reception context in which ideas are decoded changes the nature of the ideas themselves. This happened in the medical community, where Freud's generally downbeat assessment of the human condition as generally unhappy, together with his portrayal of a vacillating and conflicted self, was transformed by the ego psychologists, who linked this to their notion of an autonomous, expressive self, to which Packard subscribed. Freud was scathing about the reception of his ideas in the United States. He was also confounded by how the surrealists, too, recruited them to their specific cause. Likewise one wonders at the reception Freud might have given to Marcuse, particularly with respect to the latter's advocacy of the use of Narcissus as the basis on which to construct a new society. The same can be said of the reception of Lacan's concepts by the French activists in 1968 – which he wrote about acerbically in *Television*.⁵⁰ As described by Lacan, the imaginary is the space of misrecognition and delusion, and yet this is the basis on which some argued for the creation of a new society that would be truly free. In 1971, Coca-Cola launched their 'Real Thing' commercial, at which point this story ends. Welcome to the world of Onestate!

8

Hysteria

The hysteric is the iconic figure of psychoanalysis: Her symptoms fed the theoretical insight of Charcot, Breuer and Freud; they inspired the Surrealists as the source of a new creative madness and independent femininity; for Lacan, she forms the model representing the true quest for knowledge; for Baudrillard, she constitutes the model for rootless consumer desire. The hysteric provides a model for critics as the embodiment of the wrongs of psychoanalysis, her treatment a testament to forceful misreadings of the symptoms exhibited by young and vulnerable women in the interests of male power, some of whom defiantly refused its message.

The actions of the hysteric are apparently senseless. Because her symptoms are constantly shifting, she presents a continual question to the analyst: 'Tell me who I am; what is my desire?' There was something compellingly unaccountable and mysterious about these young female hysterics that Freud found intensely attractive, likening their accounts to an unnavigable river.¹ Hysteria is traditionally explained as being due to a wandering womb, to account for the onset of otherwise inexplicable symptoms expressed in the body. One of Freud's celebrated cases 'Anna O.' exhibited an array of symptoms and for some time had an extreme aversion to drinking water, eating only fruit and melons: The birth of psychoanalysis as the 'talking cure' occurred when 'Anna O.' revealed to Breuer under hypnosis, her consciously repressed disgust at the sight of a dog drinking from a glass of water.² Behind the physical symptom expressed by her revulsion lay the hidden memory that could be acted out only in the body as it was too traumatic to bring to consciousness. Hysteria thus became associated with a hidden trauma linked to mimesis. Anna had identified with the dog by putting herself in its place, a thought that for her was too disgusting and unbearable for words. Extended to other cases, the general solution to the problem of hysteria was for the analyst to recreate the painful memory of the incident in the speech of the analysand, thus enabling her to resume her life.

Freud explained hysteria as based on identifications, particularly those formed during the Oedipal stage. The development of a painful hacking

cough in a young girl mimicking that suffered by her mother is explained as indicative of a hostile action, where she unconsciously desires to put herself in her mother's place as the object of her father's affection. On assuming the painful cough, she experiences guilt at her desire to take her mother's place: 'You wanted to be your mother, and now you are – anyhow as far as the pain goes.'³ Alternatively, the symptom might imitate the one who is loved, as was explained in the case of Dora, who imitated her father's painful cough.

On account of their painful symptoms young neurotics paid a high price for entry to the symbolic. Their symptoms betrayed its lack of efficacy in constraining their desire, which found expression through the body. Like *la belle bouchère*, whose denial of caviar was linked to denial of her friend/rival's desire for smoked salmon, these girls were emotionally attached to objects they brought into the self in an attempt to master them. Freud describes a third form of symptom formation that occurs where the identification has nothing to do with relations to a specific object such as the mother or father,

Supposing, for instance that one of the girls in a boarding school has had a letter from someone with whom she is secretly in love which arouses her jealousy, and that she reacts to this with a fit of hysterics; then some of her friends who know about it will contract the fit, as we say by means of a mental infection. The mechanism is that of identification based on the possibility or desire of putting oneself in the same situation. The other girls would like to have a secret love affair too, and under the influence of a sense of guilt they also accept the pain involved in it. It would be wrong to suppose that they take on the symptom out of sympathy. On the contrary, the sympathy only arises out of the identification, and this is proved by the fact that infection or imitation of this kind takes place in circumstances where even less pre-existing sympathy is to be assumed than usually exists between friends in a girls' school.⁴

Not long ago a similar event occurred in upstate New York, where a group of cheerleaders developed symptoms similar to Tourette's syndrome.⁵ There is no emotional relation to a person in such instances, nor is the object brought into the ego so that it can be mastered. Instead, each of the subjects involved in the hysterical episode put herself into the shoes of the girl who receives the letter, perceiving a quality that they share in common with her by reasoning, 'If it happened to her, it can equally happen to me!' This is especially so given the prestige involved surrounding the presence of a romantic other. Such 'epidemics' seem strange but are merely visible signs of what people do on countless occasions every day, which is to identify with someone they take as a model by putting themselves in the other's shoes. For instance, the research discussed in [Chapter One](#) on the reactions of

dieters and non-dieters to the size of the person serving them is a quotidian example of the same process.

Lacan widens hysteria beyond the clinical setting, positing it as the discourse providing the surest route to learning. Showalter equates hysteria with his entire project, by arguing he sought to 'hystericize' psychoanalysis by restoring the playfulness, wildness and mystery characteristic of its early days.⁶ The subject in Lacan's formulation is always in the dark about her desire, which centres on recognition and love and is never captured by demand. For Lacan, desire is elusive, referring to a 'lost' object that was never really there in the first place but is constituted retroactively. Consumers can be placed in the role of master signifier for marketing. Products and services are crafted in their name, in response to their ostensible demands, (as opposed to the hysterical questions posed by the consumer as split subject). Desire is caused by *objet a*, summoned by anxiety and formulated into demands. The demands articulated in language are anticipated by the signifier, which prefabricates a response and so falls wide of its mark.

In discussing Lacan, the subject must be distinguished from subjectivization. The person is subjectivized, being occupied by the garrison of language and culture and by assuming a position with respect to the prevailing ideologies in society. However, the desire of the subject exists above and beyond ideological interpellation. Desire may be 'canalized', to borrow a term from Walkerdine, but does not necessarily flow calmly along the channels cut out for it. Sometimes it floods over the dykes to follow another course entirely. Tom Wolfe in *The Purple Decades* (1983) imagines the consternation of the Bauhaus architects catching sight of the reality of the American working man. They modelled his character according to their image: 'Hudson Bay shirt, flannel trousers, briarwood pipe, good books, sandals and simplicity.' Compared with this, the reality of what working men actually wore just didn't *look* right. 'The Joe Namath-Johnny Bench-Walt Frazier superstar Qiana wallpaper sports shirts for a start'. The Bauhaus plans didn't fare any better when it came to housing; '(t)hey had imagined houses of a simple design with pure beige rooms stripped of all mouldings, wallpaper, drapes and knicknacks.' Wolfe notes ironically that in contrast; 'incurable slob as they were', the workers avoided Bauhaus style Worker Housing, 'as if it had a smell', and:

'headed straight for the suburbs instead – buying houses with clapboard siding and pitched roofs, gaslight style porch lamps and all sorts of unbelievably cute and antiques touches and they loaded their houses with "drapes" such as baffled all description and wall-to-wall carpet you could lose a shoe in and they put barbecue pits and fish ponds with concrete cherubs urinating into them on the lawn out back, and they parked twenty-five-foot-long cars out front and Evinrude cruisers up on tow trailers in the carport just beyond the breezeway.'

Wolfe notes that by the 1960s the common man became quite interested: 'in this business of "realizing his potential". But once again he crossed everybody up! Once more he took his money and ran – determined to do it himself!'⁷

Baudrillard argues that hysteria comprises the model for capitalist consumption. Rather than thinking that individual products fulfil individually expressed needs as the economist Galbraith does, he argues, 'consumers play with needs on a keyboard of objects' (Baudrillard, 2005: 42). The rationalist theory of needs is for Baudrillard as naive and disabled as is traditional medicine when confronted with hysterical symptoms. The system resembles hysteria or psychosomatic illness because, just as for the hysteric, the same underlying cause may provoke a wide range of symptoms; so for the consumer, one underlying cause may provoke those symptoms of which her demands are the expression. Objects may be non-substitutable at the functional or denotative level (e.g. a washing-machine is not a substitute for a refrigerator), but they are substitutable at the level of connotation; for example; in connoting 'prestige'. In an organic illness, there is a necessary relation between the symptom and the organ (in the same way that there is a relation between a washing machine and the function of washing). However, in the hysterical or psychosomatic case, the symptom is relatively arbitrary in that it may manifest itself as migraine, colitis, lumbago, angina or general fatigue, all of which are interchangeable.

Elaine Showalter shifts focus away from the market to discuss the disappearance of hysteria from formal medical classification systems, such as the DSM-IV, and its reappearance as socially sanctioned forms of madness existing beyond it. It is argued by some that hysteria disappeared because of sexual liberation, the implication being that no one need be neurotic in today's liberated society! In addition to this, symptoms thought typical of hysteria have been reclassified as organic disorders or in relation to psychoses or psychoneuroses.⁸ Leader and Corfield point out, on the other hand, in *Why Do People Get Ill* that a high proportion of supposedly organic illnesses presented by patients to general practitioners conform to a hysterical structure.⁹ Showalter, too, argues that hysteria today is if anything more contagious than ever. People who are suffering but cannot articulate their feelings to others or perhaps even admit them to themselves seek comfort and solace by identifying with one of a variety of cogent cultural narratives sanctioned by experts and retailed through mass media.

Showalter discusses witch trials, neurasthenia and shell shock before moving on to more controversial ground to argue that a range of late modern syndromes provide cover for hysteria, including chronic fatigue syndrome, alien abduction, recovered memory syndrome, Gulf War syndrome and anorexia. She argues that in order to become successful, these 'hystories' require the juxtaposition of certain key factors. Approval by experts is important in conferring legitimacy, as is the compilation of a clear and

concise narrative to explain a troubling and inchoate condition. The mass media play a crucial role in transmitting this narrative to millions, including prospective candidates for diagnosis, who find their symptoms to be bewildering and troubling. Finally, she argues that the environment needs to be conducive for the 'hystory' to develop and gain traction.

Whilst Showalter clearly has no intention of demeaning those whose suffering is real, she is aware of the stigmata that attach hysteria in the public mind to an overemotional and irresponsible female condition. She distances her approach from that taken by many of the books written about the conditions she discusses, which seek scapegoats for a complex phenomenon. For instance, changes in sexuality, a collapse in family values and Freud are frequently singled out for blame for the arrival of the 'recovered memory' movement.¹⁰ Interestingly, although she discusses elsewhere the links between hysterical epidemics and witch hunts as involving an escalating cycle of panic and vengeance, she does not discuss these in relation to scapegoating. There are interesting parallels between Showalter's explanation and the mimetic theory offered by René Girard, which is discussed next.

Mimesis and hysteria¹¹

Whilst René Girard acknowledges Freud's genius and penetrating insight, he contends Freud did not sufficiently recognize the truly radical significance of his theory, blinded by his commitment to the fixed notion of the Oedipus complex. Girard's theory follows closely alongside the 'objectless' hysterical identifications described by Freud in his example of hysterical identification in relation to the schoolgirls, where each of the subjects identifies with an Other in pursuit of an object that is eminently desirable. In the case of the group, each of the companions readily identifies with the one who receives the letter from her lover, imagining herself in the same situation. There is thus a triangular relation between subject, model and object, involving an admixture of love, prestige, hatred, rivalry and guilt. Girard does not refer to imitation but to mimesis. Humans are not only adept imitators; recent research shows they are much more likely to precisely mimic rather than to emulate the actions of a model.¹² Girard's concept of acquisitive mimesis refers to the specific capacity that humans share with other social animals, which is to imitate the desire of another.

If one ape observes another reach for an object, it is immediately tempted to imitate the gesture. It also happens that the animal visibly resists the temptation, and if the imitative gesture amuses us by reminding us of human beings, the failure to complete it, that is the repression of what can nearly be called a desire, amuses us even more. It makes the animal a sort of brother to us by showing it subject to the same fundamental rule

as humanity – that of preventing conflict, which the convergence of two or several avid hands towards one and the same object cannot help but provoke.¹³

The ape in the example is tempted to imitate the gesture of the other but then resists this temptation. Girard contends that this is because animals quickly learn to restrain attempts to imitate the actions of others by being called into line as part of a hierarchy, or pecking order, where the strongest prevails. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud tells the story of the murder of 'Old Orang', the leader of the primal horde, by his sons, which simultaneously founds the twin prohibitions against incest and eating the totem animal. Girard, agrees that murder is centrally important to explain human origins. He disagrees with Freud's story, arguing that a more compelling account of human origins emerges from his own extensive research of human myths. These invariably describe a social group caught in the throes of growing turmoil instigated by an escalation of contagious mimesis, which at one point threatens to engulf the entire group in a cataclysm of collective violence. An outbreak of violence that would immolate the entire group is forestalled by the arbitrary seizure and murder of a scapegoat, after which a peaceable state of affairs ensues.

Mimesis is discussed in relation to institutional theory in management, where DiMaggio and Powell and others argue it is used as an organizational strategy.¹⁴ It is certainly a powerful strategy used by management scholars who write journal articles on mimesis, whereby 'classic works in a field are often cited and discussed without being carefully read (or read at all)' but simply followed mimetically.¹⁵ None of the papers in management approach Girard's conception of acquisitive mimesis, which describes the pervasive tendency in humans to believe that the 'grass is greener on the other side', when in actuality it is exactly the same in every way. For very young children, aged less than eighteen months, an object such as a toy is not attractive in its own right, but rather assumes significance because of its association with a model.¹⁶ When one child manages to wrest a toy from the possession of another, the child often abandon this in favour of the next toy contacted by a peer.¹⁷ One study describes a child happily and quietly engrossed in playing with a wheelbarrow when another child, who has the identical toy, runs across the room, discards the identical wheelbarrow in its possession and seizes that of the first child.¹⁸ Young children quickly learn the importance of sharing and also the related demand of reciprocity. A child knows, too, that to avoid this obligation, he must avoid eye contact with the other, preferably by turning his back on the other child.¹⁹

The above observations have important implications for the understanding of consumer desire. It is often assumed that consumers act as autonomous agents who act rationally to form beliefs about what they want prior to acting upon these. The mimetic argument is quite different. Consumers

are generally uncertain about their desire, looking to models for cues of what this might be. The object possessed by the model is thought to lend the model prestige; so we consequently form the belief that if we had the same object, then we, too, could attain that same level of prestige. To begin with, the object is not prized for its own sake but solely because it appears desirable to the model (later I shall discuss how its importance changes as the mimetic scene unfolds). The desire for anything is thus always to be understood within what Girard refers to as the 'inter-dividual' context. This draws attention to the limitations of traditional explanations of trade that go along the lines of 'if I have two axes and you have two shovels, if we each exchange our surplus, we will both be the better for it.' Whilst this can indeed be the case, the lesson learned from observation of children is that even if we *each* had two axes and two shovels, we would *still* be interested in acquiring those held by the other person! The development of reciprocity is comprehensible as a means to forestall the actions of others who may be jealous of what I possess. By freely parting with the object, I demonstrate my prestige, and the receiver is now in my debt.

Girard argues that the recurrence of stories featuring escalating mimetic conflict and its resolution by scapegoating points to the obvious fact that the events they describe once occurred. Mimesis attained a deadly aspect for those hominids who developed into humans because they possessed something lacking in other species, an opposable thumb. This enabled any group member the ability not only to manipulate and use tools but also to employ them as weapons. The stability of the group could not rely on the physical prowess of the leader because even its weakest member had the ability to seriously wound or even kill the strongest if he put his mind to it.

Girard argued such events happened many times over the course of evolution from the hominid group to human society and were not always successful. We are descended from those lucky groups which developed the scapegoating mechanism and so avoided the paroxysms of mimetic violence that destroyed others.

Mimetic desire in a context of internal mediation

The example below describes an ideal-type of the situation Girard hypothesizes will arise in a context of internal mediation, where the subject unwittingly copies the model's desire. Key aspects of the development of the process are illustrated by the arrows joining the concepts on the left-hand side of [Figure 8.1](#).

Mimesis

Mimesis specifies imitation based on appropriation. Girard does not use synonyms, such as imitation or copying, which do not carry this implication. Uncertainty plays a major role in that the subject not only is unsure about how to achieve his or her desire but, more profoundly, is unsure of what to desire in the first place. In a move similar to Lacan's, Girard describes as

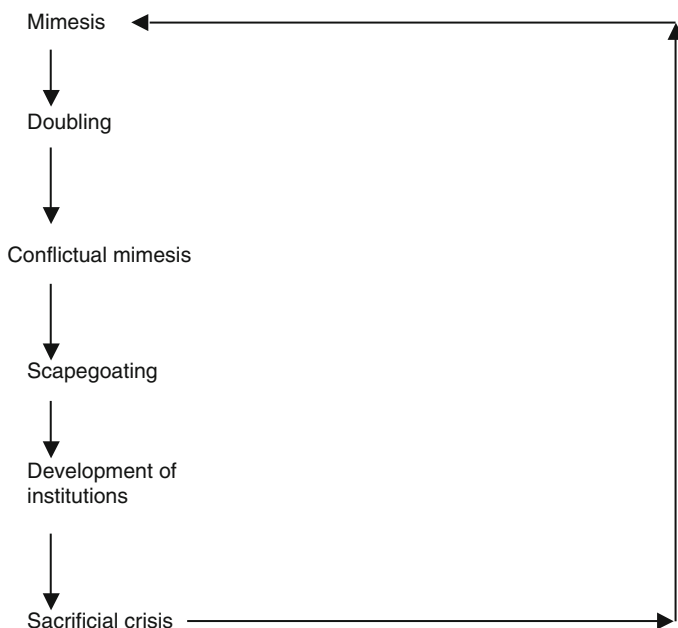


Figure 8.1 A simplified model of the mimetic process, under conditions of internal mediation: after Girard

‘ontological sickness’ the subjective feeling of incompleteness in relation to the apparent mastery and self-control of the model. Mimesis involves a process concerning three elements:

- The *subject*, who is conceived of as chronically uncertain, in relation to desire;
- The *model*, who appears supremely confident to the subject in respect to the object of desire;
- The *object* of desire (a thing such as a toy, a person or an abstract concept). This holds no innate appeal, which changes when the subject observes this to be the object of attention of and desire for the model.

The subject misidentifies his desire by conceiving this as his own autonomous creation and not based on the mimetic process. From the discussion of Lacan, this can be understood as being akin to a person refusing to believe or to acknowledge something that he knows to be the case. Lacan describes misrecognition as akin to the act of refusal a person experiences on being told that someone is dead.²⁰ In Girard’s explanation, misrecognition occurs

because the subject refuses to believe something that is in fact true, that one has copied the desire of another. This may occur for a number of reasons. For example, the primary focus of the subject may be on the object of desire, and so he may be only dimly aware that the model possesses or desires the same object. On the other hand, the subject may be conscious of the model's desire for the object but may deny this to himself. It seems to suit the subject's purpose that he would intentionally prevent himself from fully recognizing the model's aims, and by so doing, he keeps himself from fully recognizing the role mimesis plays in the formulation of desires that he takes to be his own autonomous creation. The example of *Where There Is Nothing* is a case in point.

*Where There Is Nothing: A Case of Mis-Identification?*²¹

In early 1902 the celebrated poet and playwright William Butler Yeats and his friend, the fellow poet George Moore discussed the idea of basing a play on the life of Philip Francis Little. Little was a larger than life character who harangued anyone who passed within earshot of the sea-wall at Bray, about the evils of following the canons of a respectable bourgeois life. In July 1902 Moore produced a draft scenario about a young intellectual who, despising respectability, adopts the life of an indigent, seeking to turn the world upside down. The subject of the play arose in August when Moore and Yeats met, but with Yeats declining further involvement in the project with Moore. In early September Moore 'allegedly' wired Yeats that he was now writing a novel on the theme and 'will get an injunction if you use it.' Yeats then entered into a ferment of activity and by 26th September had completed the play, which he called *Where There Is Nothing*. The plot describes the story of Paul Rutledge, a successful landowner who reneges on this lifestyle, preaching against the settled respectable life, who is subsequently killed by the local peasantry for his trouble. Yeats' biographer notes that despite the resemblances to Yeats' earlier work, 'the family resemblance to Moore's July scenario is undeniably close.' Moore was outraged and issued legal threats. Yeats attempted to copyright the play in the USA and shortly had it published in the 'United Irishman' with the following note:

Where There Is Nothing is founded upon a subject which I suggested to George Moore when there seemed to be a sudden need of a play for the Irish Literary Theatre; we talked of collaboration, but this did not go beyond some rambling links. Then the need went past, and I eventually put so much of myself into the fable that I felt I must write it alone, and took it back in my own hands with his consent. Should he publish a story upon it some day, I shall rejoice that the excellent old custom of two writers taking the one fable has been revived in a new form. If he does I cannot think that my play and his story will resemble each other. I have used nothing of his, and if he uses anything of mine he will have so changed it, doubtless, as to have made it his own.²²

Following the copyright reading of the play in October 1902, Moore subsequently let the matter rest. Yeats rejected the play from his *Collected Works* that were published six years later.

Misidentification is reinforced in contemporary consumer culture, which socializes consumers to believe that their desires are their own. Consequently, both subject and model each believe that their actions are justified because of their mutual misrecognition of desire. Each party thus perceives the other's attempt to appropriate the object as being unjust.

Doubling

As the mimetic process escalates, the subject's initial flattery of the model turns to more open expressions of disdain. The subject's opening gambits may be treated whimsically by the model, but as the process unfolds, so the model responds seriously to the subject in a manner that rapidly comes to assume the dimensions of a tit-for-tat escalation. Contemporaneously the object, being overvalued, is charged with an intensity linked to the perception that it constitutes the essential difference between subject and model. This transfiguration of the object is metaphysical desire.²³

Cyclothymia describes the oscillation in mood states between subject and model. As the mimetic escalation continues, the distinction between subject and model is blurred and can then reverse. For each victory there is a mood swing towards jubilation, and for each reversal there is one in the opposite direction, an oscillation that becomes more severe as the mimetic crisis unfolds.

De-differentiation occurs with the growing resemblance between subject and model. As rivalry escalates, so subject and model become more similar. This is, first, because they are jointly attracted to the same object and, secondly, due to escalating tit-for-tat reaction. As each aspect of behaviour observed in one party comes to be seen in the other, so they become transformed into monstrous doubles. Girard invites us to think of the grotesquely comic mimetic violence between Punch and Judy.

The skandalon refers to the relationship of the monstrous doubles that subject and model now become, where the distinction between the person who provokes the other and the one who undergoes provocation is diminished. Each regards the other as the obsessional obstacle that stands in his way and prevents him from reaching the object of desire. This creates a scandalous situation where all constraint is broken through in the attempt to reach the object; caution is literally thrown to the wind.

Conflictual mimesis

The potential for conflict is already contained in the situation of mimesis, whereby the subject misrecognizes the source of his desire. As rivalry between the doubles intensifies, so the object that was so recently hypervalued matters less. Rivalry reaches a threshold of the unreal, of psychopathology.

Scapegoating

Scapegoating is pivotal to Girard's explanation, not only constituting a temporary resolution to the contagious spread of conflictual mimesis but also

acting through continuous cycles as the basis for the development of human language, culture and the modes of organization peculiar to humanity. The outcome of the escalating mimetic crisis is not an explosion of violence between subjects and their models but rather the selection of an innocent and arbitrarily chosen scapegoat. Girard postulates a growing contagion of mimetic rivalry within an entire group, threatening its entire existence. Violence endemic within the group is condensed into a single unified purpose, the sacrifice of the scapegoat. Whilst the scapegoat is innocent, those who sacrificed it remain convinced of their guilt. The murderers misattribute the cause of the crisis, the entirety of which is blamed on the scapegoat not on the escalating cycle of mimetic engulfment that preceded it. The death of the scapegoat leads to an immediate reduction in tension within the group. The contagion of mimetic rivalry that posed a serious threat to the group's existence is no more, mysteriously ending with the death of the scapegoat. The scapegoat comes retrospectively to be accredited with possession of a mysterious and terrible power, having achieving the apparently impossible by bringing the cycle of rivalry to an end. The one who was initially blamed entirely comes to be sacralized as divine. Stories develop around the event that are passed down in the form of myth, and rituals are performed to re-enact the original scapegoating incident.

Development of institutions

In response to repeated instances of scapegoating, primitive societies evolved a number of prohibitions against mimetic rivalry. Myths and rituals formed the foundation for religion (and ultimately law) to stave off the likelihood of future crises. Myth acted to warn of the implications of mimetic violence, while ritual substituted for it.

A system of symbolic differences and hierarchy was erected to eliminate the social undifferentiation that formed the first stage of the process of internal mediation. This religious and legal hierarchy was much more robust than that prevailing under the simple terror exercised by the rule of 'Big Orang'. Just as the scapegoat was seen as the source of all order and disorder being retrospectively imbued with superhuman strength, so its sacrifice conveys an aura of prestige to political and religious rulers.²⁴ The sovereign ruler installed after acts of scapegoating thus came to be linked to the power of the original scapegoat. The sovereign rules under licence, or as Girard would have it, they are under a suspended sentence. Scapegoating, in Girard's view, thus explains the authority and sacred character accorded to all leaders.

Legal authority is coincident with that of the king or ruler, being based on the submission of powerful interests to a sovereign abstract justice which all respect. The law comes to have a spiritual or theological dimension insofar as it requires faith in a system of meaning that decrees the necessity of the hierarchical order. For instance, the 'basic right' to own property is better understood, from a Girardian viewpoint, as a 'basic prohibition' invoked

to inhibit the conflict that acquisitive mimesis would otherwise engender. Another way in which violence is contained is by its transmutation into rivalry for highly symbolized objects whose very existence is made possible by symbolic institutions.

In modern society, mimetic conflict does not normally degenerate into a fight unto death. In Girard's view this is because social organization has reached a level of refinement such that it can permit and encourage mimetic rivalries which otherwise would be forbidden. However, 'if the transcendence of the judicial institution is no longer there, if the institution loses its efficacy or becomes incapable of commanding respect, the imitative and repetitious character of violence becomes manifest once more'.²⁵

Sacrificial crises

Sacrificial crises occur because the sacrificial model upon which religion is constructed is imperfect. Powerful though religion based on sacrifice may be, it lacks the perspicacity necessary to discern the true reason for the sacrifice of the scapegoat. Girard argues that religions based upon a sacrificial understanding actively mask the scapegoat mechanism, attributing the violence of the scapegoating event to God and not to human agency and wickedness. He argues that Christianity comes closest to understanding the true nature of foundational violence but is obscured in traditional sacrificial readings of the Gospels, where Jesus is portrayed as being selected by God to atone for the sins of mankind. In Girard's interpretation this enables some (Christians) to place the blame on others (Jews) for the death, thus missing the fundamental point that is being made, which is that all are responsible.

Over time, the tenacity of religious values loses its grip on society, leaving open the prospect of a return of murderous rivalry.²⁶ Girard explains that violence is sacrificial to the extent that it excludes the legal exercise of violence from within the community to a space beyond it. There evolves a distinction between 'good' ritual violence and 'bad' criminal violence, where the former is perceived to protect the group and the latter to threaten it from within. When religious values begin to decay, so the dividing line between ritual and criminal violence is blurred, and the former loses its potency, being polluted. As social values are eroded, so also are cultural distinctions, leading to their collapse and a return to social undifferentiation and internal mediation, where each and every member of society can take any other as his or her model and rival. Girard resorts to apocalyptic language:

In this situation no one and nothing is spared; coherent thinking collapses and rational activities are abandoned. All associated forms are dissolved or become antagonistic; all values, spiritual or material, perish.²⁷

Subjects are captivated entirely by fear, to do (kill) or die (be killed), with the tendency for the individual to lash out, to get his or her retaliation in first, the normal state of affairs.²⁸ In this situation there is no difference between paranoia and objective reality.

Girard's critique of Freud

In radically rereading Freud, Girard attacks what he sees as the 'twin pillars' of the Oedipus complex and narcissism and on the way dismisses concepts such as 'masochism' and 'homosexuality' in his rampage through Freud's theory of sexuality. He is fond of quoting Dostoyevsky's *Eternal Husband* to illustrate his argument. The wife of Pavel Pavlovitch Troussotsky has very recently died, and at her funeral Pavel unexpectedly meets Veltchaninov, a Don Juan who was one of her lovers. Another of Pavel's wife's lovers dies soon after, and Pavel attends the funeral, where he once again meets Veltchaninov, being overly effusive in attending to his erstwhile rival. Pavel Pavlovitch then begins to act strangely, visiting Veltchaninov in the middle of the night, drinking his health, kissing him on the mouth and taunting him with a young girl. Some time later Pavel Pavlovitch is considering marrying once more. He visits Veltchaninov and begs him to accompany him to her house. Veltchaninov relents, and once in the girl's house, he is surrounded by a group of admirers, including Pavel's fiancée. Pavel Pavlovitch makes increasingly futile attempts to gain her attention, which she fails to notice. Girard describes how '[h]e contemplates this new disaster, trembling with anguish and desire.' Years later, Veltchaninov runs into Pavel Pavlovitch once more. The latter is not alone but accompanied by a lovely woman, who turns out to be his wife, and also by a rather dashing young officer.

Triangles everywhere

Girard's establishment of rivalry between himself and Freud is explicable within his theory; it is their similarity that makes all the difference. It is clear to Girard that the triangle at the centre of the Oedipus complex relies on mimesis.

The idea of the triangular relation between mother, father and infant is a recurrent theme in Freud, whose explanation is based on the myth of Oedipus. In a remark that targets Freud's Lamarckianism, Girard notes that in Freud's scheme, the subject must constantly recreate the jealousy of the primal father that existed during that original archaic phase. Freud fails to offer a sufficient explanation for the eternal recurrence of the Oedipus complex, arguing instead that it is a secret of the unconscious linked to the urge of the death drive to repeat unpleasant experiences, the better to master them. In Freud's explanation the father simply acts as a model for 'identification', which means that he is presented as an obstacle to the desire for the

mother. On the contrary for Girard, it would be quite natural for the young child, whether male or female, to take the father as a model, as the theory of mimetic desire explains that the principles leading to the model and obstacle are based on mimetic rivalry. Freud has to fall back on myth to explain this process, which precedes representation and rests on animal appetite.

For Girard, rivalry can never be Oedipal in the Freudian sense because the rival can come into existence as a rival only after being taken as a model by the subject, which means that the father must first have been an object of mimetic desire for the child prior to becoming his or her rival. Girard argues that the Oedipus myth is inert, failing to capture the dynamic triangular quality of mimetic desire that moves from one model to another. In Dostoyevsky's story, it is clear by its end that Veltchaninov has been replaced as a model by Pavel Pavlovitch with the dashing young officer. Girard's argues Freud misses the crucial understanding, that mimesis is itself a form of desire. Because mimetic desire does not need to be represented in any way, consequently the subject is not consciously aware of his or her desire

Contrary to Freud, for Girard the pathology of desire does not arise within the family but lies in the primeval mimetic process against which the family organization acts as a barrier. The family enshrines a set of rules that restrict the potential for mimetic rivalry. Families can become pathological and indeed do so when this relation of external mediation within the family is broken down.

Girard must account for the fact that the idea of the Oedipus complex has been a very successful concept in understanding the human condition. He attacks the basis of Freud's observations, saying that Freud did not base his theory on actual observations of children but rather on his observations of mental patients and his reading of ancient myths. The steps taken by Freud must be retraced to what he thought when he was confronted with triangular relationships that led him to conjecture that there must be an archetypal triangle, a kind of eternal 'Platonic' form, of which all the others are reproductions. In grasping for the Oedipus complex, Freud felt that this was universal, being sufficiently stable to act as the model for all future relationships. To Girard this idea of postulating a triangular relationship based on the Oedipus myth is quite illusory, as the relation between the irruption of mimetic desire and those institutions that are designed to contain it is dynamic and constantly shifting.

Sexuality

Girard argues that Freud's theory of sexuality is too cumbersome. Girard explains masochism as arising specifically out of the mimetic process where a subject wants to reproduce the relation of inferiority that he experiences with a model. The model is of interest to the subject only insofar as he can be perceived to characterize the violence of being a rival. To Girard,

violence and sexual release are not the mainsprings of the subject's desire. Instead the 'masochist' actually aspires to the position of power and control enjoyed by the model. But sexual pleasure detaches itself from its object and becomes attached to the cruelty that is inflicted by the model-rival.

Rather bizarrely, Girard rests his explanation of homosexuality alongside that of cannibalism. In cannibalism, he suggests, the model is seen as something good to eat. Within a sexual context the same obsession is translated into an irresistible temptation to see the model as a possible object for sexual intercourse. He argues that one must eliminate the difference that Freud effects between male and female homosexuality and also the differences between homosexual and heterosexual desire. As Girard explains it, any form of sexual rivalry is homosexual in nature. To Girard homosexuality does not describe an essence but is rather the product of a mimetic relation. This is illustrated by an interlocutor, J. M. Oughourlian, who cites the case of a male subject who was engaged to a woman but then fell in love with an older man whom he took progressively as model, master, and then lover.²⁹ The lover told Oughourlian that he had not been at all interested in the subject until he became aware of his fiancée at a dinner party, where he became titillated at the prospect of a triangular relationship. The subject subsequently deserted his fiancée for his new lover – who promptly cast him aside.

Narcissism

Girard's interpretation of Freud's concept of narcissism tells us much about Freud's mimetic desire. He repeats what Freud tells us in his famous essay on narcissism: that the subject takes as object either himself or the women who looked after him in childhood (1987: 367). Girard reiterates the radical difference between his inter-dividual explanation and that of Freud. For Freud, these two poles, one 'object oriented' and the other 'narcissist', are partly independent, and one always dominates the other. By contrast, from a mimetic point of view it is entirely for the benefit of its ego that the subject submits to the model and obstacle, making itself more and more a slave to the other. Thus, from a mimetic perspective narcissism and submission to the other can only exacerbate each other as they are equally 'self' directed. For Freud, in contrast, the more narcissistic, or self-centred, the less object oriented one is.

The coquette

Girard pays particular attention to Freud's use of literary tropes, where he describes object-oriented desire as 'masculine' and links 'feminine' narcissistic desire to attractive women, children, animals and master criminals. Girard draws attention to Freud, who repeats that the women he describes, while attractive, are particularly fascinating for men, seeming to possess the charm and self-contentment of a child or an animal. Freud says that these women compel the interest and attention of men because they appear

to be somehow unassailable in their self-absorption. Girard explains this from a mimetic perspective. Freud's use of language at once conceals and reveals what Freud does not mention, his own mimetic desire. He thinks he is describing a type of woman that is objectively real and typical – beautiful, cold, impregnable – the eternal feminine. She seeks to attract male desire not so much by means of her beauty as her indifference.

Girard insinuates that what Freud fails to consider is that it is not an essence he has been taken in by but a strategy, that of the coquette. The coquette knows more about desire than does Freud, that desire attracts desire. To be desired, one must convince others that one desires oneself, which is how Freud defines narcissistic desire – as desire of self for self. The supposed self-sufficiency of the coquette is, in effect, the metaphysical transformation of the relation between the model and the rival. The coquette needs masculine desire to feed her coquetry. She is as lacking in self-sufficiency as the man who desires her, but her strategy allows her to maintain the appearance of invincibility because it offers her a desire that she can copy. Desire nourishes the self-sufficiency of the coquette without which she would fall to pieces. As evidence for his explanation, Girard offers the example of the celebrated Célimène, who is the centre of a salon where all admire her in Molière's *Le Misanthrope*. Céleste is the misanthropic loser in this affair, whose strategy has failed and who consequently is captivated by resentment, closing himself off from the world. The game of desire thus turns into a very humiliating, melancholic experience, when its insufficiency meets an obstacle, such as the coquette.

Unsurprisingly, given the potential consequences of loss, we seek to avoid the experience of our desire running up against an obstacle and so impose this experience on others by acting as obstacles to their desire. The strategy of desire thus consists in establishing the illusion of self-sufficiency. We must believe in it a little ourselves if we are to succeed in convincing someone else of it. In a world devoid of objective criteria, desires are devoted entirely to mimeticism:

So each person must feign the most impressive narcissism, must advertise as subtly as he can the desire he experiences for himself, so that he can compel others to imitate this appetising desire.³⁰

The desire under discussion is not just about sexuality. Rather it is because the obstacle that seems to be so self-contained has a seeming strength and self-sufficiency lacking in the subject and so proves to be irresistibly attractive. There is a deadly trap in that the more one is attracted to the unyielding model and obstacle that does not respond, the more dejected one is, becoming enslaved to the model.

Girard argues that the weakness in Freud is that he insists on two forms of desire: object-related desire and narcissistic desire. Freud notes that

the subject feels impoverished when he experiences object-related desire, explaining this as a flowing away of libido from self and to another. Girard argues that the self may indeed feel impoverished in the case of object-related desire, but this does not mean that the self does not cherish the dream of a self-sufficient narcissism. On the contrary, he suggests that it dreams of not having to waste its desire on objects, of not impoverishing itself: 'it dreams of the riches of narcissism – indeed, desire never dreams of anything else.'³¹

For Girard, Freud is a high-minded, serious person who, in his high-mindedness, has given up a part of his narcissism and who thus feels all the more attracted to coquettes. What Freud fails to see is that what is overvaluation of the object in object-related desire is really the same thing that he describes in narcissism. Freud does not detect that a game or strategy of desire is being played here, something that Molière and Shakespeare understood all too well. As such, Freud takes a phantom as being a true being. Narcissism is what object-oriented desire truly desires, and object-oriented desire is what narcissistic desire does not desire. After all, who in their right mind would want to impoverish themselves?

In Girard's view Freud is mistaken; narcissism is, in fact, an illusion. One of Girard's interlocutors, J.M. Oughourlian, draws an analogy between desire and capitalism in explaining the process: the richer you are, the easier it is for you to conduct increasingly lucrative financial operations without really putting your capital at risk, while the poor old object-oriented desire clusters around narcissism and becomes progressively poorer in the process.

In his essay Freud associates narcissism with certain metaphors such as illness, perversity, egotism and infantilism, which are inferior to object-oriented desire. To Girard, what Freud gives away here at the sexual level is that his erotically charged rivalry is directed towards the other sex (1987: 377). Women appear in his work as objects and as rivals. Girard muses further that Freud had some vivacious and pretty female disciples to whom he wrote 'ambiguous' letters if they failed to show up for his seminars. So for Girard, the reality of the narcissistic myth is not one of solipsism but of the mimetic model and the struggle between doubles (Narcissus-Echo). Metaphysical desire represents the desire for self-sufficiency and wholeness, which creates a violent rancour towards the object of desire that so insolently refuses access. In this respect desire must convince itself that the other's self-sufficiency is merely a superficial deception which has no right to exist. It therefore commits itself increasingly to convincing the other that this is so.

'Fort-Da'

This is the famous episode where Freud observed a child's behaviour when his mother left him. First, he threw the cotton reel violently away, exclaiming 'o-o-o-o-o' in a hostile manner, signifying '*fort!*' (gone), then retrieving it, this time more joyfully, exclaiming '*da!*' (back). Freud explained this as

the child's attempt to master the traumatic absence of his mother by symbolically repeating this absence using the reel as substitute. Lacan attributes great significance to the story, for it illustrates the child's entry into the Symbolic realm, marked by absence of the real thing (the mother). Girard argues both Freud and Lacan miss important elements in the story. First, they play down that this is principally about revenge: the child, who seeks to get back at his mother for leaving him, uses the cotton reel as a sacrificial substitute. The mother is symbolically expelled, or sacrificed, then joyfully retrieved. Freud and Lacan come close to but ultimately misunderstand the crucial relation between violence and ritual in the game. Secondly, Girard picks up on the part where Freud wrote that, although it is likely that the game was initially taught to the child by his mother, this is of little consequence. Girard argues, to the contrary, that the mother acted as the model for the child who imitated her. In this interpretation the story contains all of the elements that are constitutive of mimetic desire: mimesis, revenge and sacrifice of a substitute.³²

Discussion

By the standards of Ockham's razor, Girard provides a more parsimonious explanation than Freud. As redescribed by Girard, narcissism loses its essential nature and instead forms a strategy, followed by the coquette, whose pretence of self-containment is designed to drive others, including Freud, to distraction. Girard enables one to dispense with the Oedipus complex as a prohibition reproduced in the same form and across all societies from the time of the immolation of the primeval father.

Girard shares much in common with Lacan. The process that links mimesis to doubling and violence is strikingly similar to the Lacanian Imaginary. The see-saw of desire described by Lacan, whereby the subject is described as cycling back and forth between omnipotence and despair in relation to his double in the mirror, perfectly describes the oscillations of the subject who is caught in the throes cyclothymia. There are similarities, too, between the excessive qualities attributed to Lacan's concept of *jouissance* and Girard's *skandalon*.³³ That these authors draw radically different conclusions and hold diametrically opposed political views can be explained by their respective theories; in relation to Girard, they can be considered monstrous doubles.

Lacan is seen as champion of a countercultural movement that is anti-bourgeois, antireligious and antifamily. Girard lauds the institutions that this movement deprecates and attacks those they celebrate. He argues that pressures towards egalitarianism in modern state democracies stoke the flames of mimesis. He worries that campaigns for the equality of women and children pose a threat to the social order, not because this is a zero-sum game, where they win and men lose, but because such moves may recreate social undifferentiation. He adopts a strongly contrary position to those who espouse the dissolution of the bourgeois family, who contend

this to be an ideologically biased and narrow social formation privileging heterosexual union and male domination. He argues instead that the family is a relatively pacific grove, providing a bulwark for the individual who is sheltered from the mimetic storms that rage outside. The traditional family is underpinned by values that stress the context of external mediation, allowing for the subordination of children to their parents, whom they are expected to obey, respect and admire, in loosely that order. In Girard's view the worst possible situation occurs when all are considered equal – when mother and daughter become 'sisters' and father and son 'buddies'. Girard makes a similar point in respect to social class. Where others argue for the levelling down of class in the interests of equality, Girard counters that class hierarchies contain the contagious spread of mimesis by limiting desire to that existing between members of a social class.

Girard compared to others

Veblen: emulation

Girard's concept of mimesis is different to the pecuniary emulation described by Thorstein Veblen. The latter argues that after the sustenance of basic needs, emulation is the most important driver of human motivations. He is especially interested to discuss the particular variant he calls pecuniary emulation, to describe that which arose during the predatory phase. In contrast, Girard's concept of acquisitive mimesis, which describes the subject's desire for the object of the model's desire, is wider, amounting to anything that the subject can admire in a model. Girard's explanation focuses on the inter-individual context, while Veblen's is more remote, based on the interaction between classes. Veblen's argument can be argued as paradoxical because, although he posits a dynamic process whereby individuals compete for honour and prestige, he explains the actions of individuals in line with the doctrine of pecuniary emulation as seeking to live up to a standard, or norm, whereby each fraction takes the next one up as its point of reference. Campbell argues that this lends Veblen's account a peculiarly static quality, given the dynamic competition for prestige that informs it.³⁴ Additionally, Veblen's assumptions that the early clan form of organization is largely pacific and that hierarchies arise more or less naturally during the predatory phase seem oversimplistic in light of Girard's arguments.

Elias: internalization of conflict

Girard shares with Norbert Elias (1994) the belief that in the modern era, the stadium for conflict is gradually removed from the social scene to the internal sphere of the psyche. Elias attributes this to the gradual development and influence of the superego. Girard provides a mimetic spin by explaining this as the outcome of successive mimetic cycles, whereby individuals developed the ability to internalize the external mimetic double as an alter-ego which acts as an internal agency for self-reflection.³⁵ The scene in modern

societies is quite different to when archaic mimesis involved 'terrifying epidemics' of collective violence springing from social undifferentiation, followed by the 'cathartic peace' that prevailed for a time after the death of a scapegoat.³⁶ The slow development of religious and other prohibitions led to expressions of desire becoming endemic within the psyche in the modern era, finding expression as symptoms of psychosis or, one might imagine, any one of the proliferation of syndromes defined in the DSM.

De Botton: status anxiety

Alain de Botton takes the internally conflicted and anxious self of late modernity as his subject; he enquires how the demand of all for love and attention can be reconciled within the framework of a stratified society where only a few are recognized, being blessed with wealth and privilege. In answering this question, he approximates Girard's explanation of the origins of external mediation. Monarchs did not rule solely by inspiring fear but rather exercised authority over subjects who willingly accepted their debased position. Like Girard, he highlights the role played by religion, notably Christianity, which inspires a firm belief in the afterlife and ordains that ultimately the poor will inherit the earth by equating the chance of a rich person being admitted to heaven to that of a camel passing through the eye of a needle. There was thus no moral stigma attached to poverty.

De Botton's thesis is that these narratives, which partly sustained unwavering belief in the propriety of class differences up until the eighteenth century, were gradually undermined by the circulation of new stories of egalitarianism linked to democracy, the market and meritocracy. He points to Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), whose values of equality and lack of deference were enshrined into law in the world's first democracy through the abolition of primogeniture and the accordance of equal property rights to mothers and daughters.³⁷ In relation to the market, he describes how Adam Smith famously declared in the *Wealth of Nations* (1776) that the advance of the social good depends not on benevolence but rather on the self-serving actions of consumers and producers. Furthermore, Smith lauded conspicuous consumption as deeply ingrained in human nature, constituting the force that propels human motivation as the source of all human development and civilization. Smith argued that this force should be recognized for its ability to expand not only individual wealth, as individuals are physically capable of consuming only so much, but also social wealth and well-being in general.

Another narrative linked to meritocracy argued that in the modern age with the weakening of institutional constraints protecting traditional status hierarchies, it should be possible for any individual to succeed, no matter how lowly their birth. Importantly, according to the meritocratic principle, status has moral connotations to the extent that the rich are considered deserving, as their wealth is a reflection of their ability. Consequently,

the poor come to be thought to *deserve* their poverty. Belief that material progress would lead to a happier future was accompanied by rapid technological developments which gave rise in the twentieth century to the development of a culture of expectation. Alexis de Tocqueville, who travelled around the United States in the 1830s, observed that, while the Americans had much, they wanted even more:

Americans had much, but their affluence did not stop them from wanting ever more and from suffering whenever they saw someone else with assets they lacked.³⁸

Tocqueville's explanation linked this febrile desire to the egalitarian and meritocratic nature of American society. In the traditional hierarchy, inequality was not only taken for granted but had the divine imprimatur such that huge inequalities were not matters for social concern. But when equality and meritocracy are celebrated as universal values, where any citizen or consumer can take any other as a model and a rival, the slightest variation in fortunes between one person and another can be an acute cause for anxiety. During the twentieth century such pressures were heightened as more people came to work in large organizations, structured on the basis of a pyramid, with a large base of employees and a narrow tip of managers. In this environment, more often than not the narcissist who possessed an easy superficiality and self-promoting pretension was more likely to win out over the more demure and self-effacing character-ideal promoted by religious texts.

My first encounter with 'status anxiety' was reading Vance Packard, who used it to describe the pressures brought by complex hierarchies in demanding that superiors be expert in applying pressure to their subordinates and also regarding the adoption of military-style periodic ratings of employees by their superiors, forcing 'every employee to wonder how successfully he is impressing himself upon the superior'.³⁹ In Packard's time employees could usually count on the likelihood that they would hold down the same job for life. The relative stability of the 1950s changed radically by the 1980s in line with the triumphant spread of the 'New Right' economic thinking that has since led to the wholesale privatization and contracting-out of public-sector services. The parallel rapid globalization of trade led to the flight of capital to cheaper overseas locations as business was subjected to deflationary pressures and rapidly decreasing product life cycles.

De Botton's thesis develops from Tocqueville's observation, asserting that in the twenty-first century, the modern citizen-consumer is everywhere and always haunted by status anxiety. It is worthwhile noting here Girard's argument that another potent reason for the creation of status anxiety is the success of the ideas promoted by intellectuals such as Marcuse, that the institutional structures provided by the family and religion are repressive

and should be done away with. In Girard's view, nothing could be more misplaced than to call for the liberation of desire from institutional constraint:

The more people think that they are realizing the Utopias dreamed up by their desire – in other words, the more they embrace ideologies of liberation – the more they will in fact be working to reinforce the competitive world that is stifling them. But they do not realize their mistake and continue to systematically confuse the type of external obstacle represented by the prohibition and the internal obstacle formed by the mimetic partner. They are like the frogs who became discontented with the King Log sent to them by Jupiter and, by importuning the gods with their cries of protest, obtained more and more satisfaction. The best way of chastising mankind is to give people all that they want on all occasions.⁴⁰

Arguing that religious narratives provide solace for those who are uncertain of their status, de Botton argues that declining religious belief will lead to heightened awareness of inequality. Tocqueville's point, that people who at one time tolerated the greatest inequality are now sensitive to the slightest variation between themselves and some model, reminds us of the differences in context provided by external and internal mediation.

Affluenza: James

'Affluenza', the neologism coined by Oliver James, is the reason why 'we' – and he has in mind here a 'we' that refers most to Anglo-American culture – 'are so fucked up'.⁴¹ James links the outbreak of this social virus to the era he calls 'selfish capitalism' to denote that period from the late 1970s to the present day, stamped by the imprint of neoliberal economic and social policies instigated by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Selfish capitalism has a number of effects, including growing belief in the ability of market forces to cater to every human need. James postulates the USA as the apotheosis of selfish capitalism and Denmark its opposite. He contends that selfish capitalism has had a disastrous effect on human well-being, particularly in western countries, by promoting income inequalities in direct proportion to the level of emotional distress, a composite term reflecting rates of depression, anxiety and substance abuse. The 'affluenza' virus describes an individual mindset that places high value on money, possessions, appearances and fame, which, claims James, place them at high risk of emotional distress.

The main influence behind James's explanation is the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, whose concept of the 'marketing character' he employs to good effect in describing the string of disconnected, shallow, instrumental, hyperactive, sad, wealthy individuals he interviewed in his travels around the world. James shares some features with Girard's account of acquisitive mimesis, including the contagious effects of social comparison, emulation and envy. However, Girard is unlikely to accept that there is a fundamental

dimension of 'being', acting as the rock on which to moor an authentic identity, as opposed to a shallow 'having' mode. Instead he would argue mimesis, not 'being', is fundamental, as the former is common to the behaviour of animals as well as humans. James attributes the growing malaise associated with affluenza to widening income inequality associated with selfish capitalism. However, it is not inequality per se that is the problem, but whether or not this is unquestionably accepted. The profound sadness and anxiety that James links to income inequality can be attributable, in a Girardian reading, to a breakdown of those institutions that create the context for external mediation. Girard might remind James, who pins the blame on selfish capitalism for removing people from the authenticity of being, 'that the real founders of capitalism, and also of the Oedipus complex, are the monkeys';⁴² in other words, mimesis long predates the invention of capitalism.

James raises an intriguing question in relation to Girard's theory. Many of his respondents had reached the pinnacle of success, apparently attaining the object of their desire, being able to manipulate people and objects at will as a means to their added pleasure and contentment. Yet they were generally screwed up and miserable. Girard's explanation is that when the model successfully gains the object he desires, 'possession will be such a disabusing experience that the subject will put all the blame for it on the object, not to mention the model. He will never blame desire as such, or the mimetic character of desire. Object and model are rejected with disdain'.⁴³ Caught up in metaphysical desire, the subject, who courts risk and danger in competing with various models for objects, experiences a profound sense of dissatisfaction when the object is achieved. Both object and model are retroactively construed as being respectively trivial and too easy. But desire itself is not abandoned, being the only game in town.

Violence

While de Botton argues that the modern consumer is subject to status anxiety and James, to affluenza, what role does violence play in consumer society today? Vaughan (2002) argues that the consumer society which finds its purest expression in the egalitarian promise and consumerism imagined by the American Dream is incompatible with the reality that only a few prosper. The question arises as to how people 'prevent their self-image being mired in self-disgust and degradation at their lack of success'.⁴⁴ Individualism is impossible to sustain in a market society because there are more losers than winners. Now and then the anxiety and rage expressed by the losers bubbles over to threaten the hegemony of the state. This is usually displaced by canny politicians onto individuals and groups, such as immigrants, who are blamed for collective problems. Such instrumental scapegoating is more strategic than the primitive scapegoating described by Girard, being useful to the political elite to deflect attention from genuine causes of insecurity to unite civic society by invoking a common threat.⁴⁵ Vaughan argues it is

the most effective means to counter seething dissatisfaction that is characteristic of modern market societies. This is what lies behind the new punitiveness that is to be found in society today, that results in unprecedented numbers being incarcerated in prison in the USA and some European countries. Vaughan directs attention to those who live beyond the Pale in communities scapegoated by mainstream society, condemned to live in the shadow of the ghetto.

Bing: LA street gangs

The story of the youth who was murdered for his trainers is recounted by a cop in the video 'Trainer Wars'. This is nothing new.⁴⁶ In the early 1970s a youth was killed for his leather jacket by a member of the Crips, a forerunner of the Crips.⁴⁷ The differences between the Crips and the Bloods, the LA street gangs described in Léon Bing's *Do or Die* (1991), are marked out in clear dualities: blue vs. red; emblems with BK or CK (to signify Blood Killer or Crip Killer); wearing of bandanas to left or to right or in different pockets; Red Sox or Dodger Blue baseball caps. Although each gang is intensively involved in drug activities, Los Angeles County Sheriff Sherman Block argues that battles over drug territories are not the principal reason for gang killings. Rather,

All they do is, you know, you're walking down the street and they say 'Man, where you from?' And if you ain't from the right place, that's enough to kill you. Or if you happen to wear a Dodger Blue baseball cap and you're in a Blood territory, sitting on a bus on the way home from school, somebody will shoot you.⁴⁸

From Block's perspective the violence has no logic nor any rationale, simply violence for violence's sake. Bing's interviews with gang members suggest that killing 'slobs' (the Crip term for Bloods) is regarded as valuable 'work' for the 'set', constituting the means to gaining the symbolic capital of a 'rep'. The only rule is 'Do' (i.e. follow through, do not back down if you or your set is dissed) or 'Die' (lose face as a nobody, a coward). When a member of one's set is shot, one must retaliate in spades. When O. G. Monster Kody is shot, his brother joins the rest of the set to attack their rivals. He says,

Justice to me would have been killing seven or eight of them...It's like this: if you slap me, I'm gonna hit you with my closed fist. If you stab me, I'm gonna shoot you. An eye for an eye doesn't exist – its one up. One-up is what it is in gang life. You beat our home-boys, we kill yours. One to nothing.⁴⁹

Asked by Bing if any of those he shot were responsible for his brother's death, he replies that they were not. As older gang members see it, the problem with

the younger kids is that they will now do anything to get a 'rep'. Claudia, a long-time Crip member blinded in a drive-by shooting says,

I been a Crip since I was thirteen years old, I'm true blue, but them kids are scandalous. How about a two-year-old baby blasted outta her mama's arms 'cause she wearin' red shoelaces?! The baby wearin' red shoelaces! These kids just shoot anybody. But they gonna learn – the Man upstairs is watchin'.⁵⁰

A.C. Jones, gang member turned gangbuster, teaches a course for convicted gang members, called 'Gang Class', at Camp Kilpatrick. Jones argues that gang life is not all that different from that of the police. A key aspect of his course relates to convincing his scholars of the irrationality of condemning others to death on the basis of the colours that they wear.⁵¹

Explained in Girard's terms, the Crips and Bloods are monstrous doubles, mirroring their rivalry in terms of clothing, colours, consumer brands, weaponry and violence. This is not unmediated but subject to a panoply of state controls and interventions, including the police, the judicial system and social work systems, that each play a role in seeking to contain and channel the violence. If a gang banger is shot, he receives medical care and rehabilitation advice; if he shoots someone, in addition to being sent to detention camp or prison, he is educated about the damage he is inflicting upon himself and his loved ones.

As Monster Kody, an OG,⁵² notes, the gangs consist in the main of black and Hispanic youth, representatives of an American underclass that is distinctly underwhelmed by the rhetoric of equality preached by the American Dream and overwhelmed by the American nightmare they inhabit. In this environment, there is little family structure to speak of and no authority figures beyond the set. Religion, too, has lost its force. Yet there is an appeal to religion, as is reflected in Claudia's mention of the 'Man-upstairs watchin' and also where Monster Kody lambastes Christians who avoid gang members. The set is a clan that acts as an umbrella to protect those within its shelter by deflecting violence to those beyond its perimeter. It is clear from their stories that this is at best a leaky umbrella; some of the younger gang members tell stories of being forced by their older peers to play Russian roulette.

A disturbing aspect of Bing's description is the casual use of extreme violence between siblings. At one stage Bing becomes attached to a vulnerable 13-year-old called Hart, and his older pregnant half sister, Bijou. When Bing first meets Bijou, the latter casually displays a row of stitches on her scalp that she received when some guy dissed her: 'and I got a knife in his shoulder so that he hit me with some damn bat. Shoulda stuck the knife in his stomach'.⁵³ They later meet Hart, who is sporting a freshly stitched wound from a screwdriver at the corner of his mouth. Things then turn ugly

between brother and sister, leading to an all-out fight between them. It is clear that the family has at best, a limited influence. But the picture is by no means clear-cut.

Some gang members belong to extended tribes comprising one parent and an array of siblings from other partners; others come from relatively conventional family structures. The common factor is that in each case the gang member perceives his primary allegiance as being to the set and not to his family. The gangs are organized by informal but rigidly enforced rankings consisting of the 'Tiny' initiates, then 'Gang bangers' and finally the 'OGs', revered for their legendary exploits and material success. The prevailing form of attachment and control is to the 'homies', who, from the point of induction or being 'jumped into' the set, take on the role of surrogate family. As Bing describes it, while loyalty to the homies is a fundamental aspect of putting in work for one's hood, this forms at best an unstable form of community. As G-Roc says, ultimately one has to look out for oneself.

There is the question of the extent to which scapegoating plays a role in gang culture. Gang bangers who shoot and stab each other are not scapegoats. But what of the innocents who are chosen because they have no means to defend themselves, who are only incidentally involved, such as the baby who happened to be dressed in the 'wrong' colours? The casual murder of the baby is in no way equivalent to the archaic process described by Girard where a group pins the blame for the rivalry on an innocent. Her story is more newsworthy as a sacrificial victim of gang warfare than the truism that is the story that the entire community of gang members are scapegoated by society (Vaughan, 2002). As Bing makes clear towards the end of her book, the main response of the mainstream community is to seek to contain the violence within that section of society where it is prevalent, which happens to be disadvantaged and poor.

Mimesis and fashion

In general, when one thinks of fashion, one thinks of *haute couture*, the industry that supplies it and the brat supermodel clothes-hangers who display it. This is unsurprising given the steady production of media output linked to this massive enterprise. Alternatively, there is the countercultural notion of fashion, focusing principally on the disruptive and anarchic activities of disaffected youth subcultures, from punk to hip hop and onwards, that seek to demonstrate that real fashion is first found on the streets, where it is pounced on to be appropriated, reproduced and packaged for sale to the elite market by, guess who, the fashion industry, who are then ripped off in turn by mass-market imitators.⁵⁴

While well and good, this only goes so far to explain the dynamic process by which any attribute that a subject may find appealing in a model, one that signifies an object worthy of mimesis, can become an object for acquisitive

mimesis. Taking an example that is at some remove from our cultural context, Bascom (1950) found that on the Micronesian island of Ponape an enormous amount of activity was spent in growing huge yams, which were then judged in competitions, to the extent that this activity threatened the well-being and survival of the entire community. As Richerson and Boyd (2005) describe it, this fashion developed because the ability to grow yams was at one time a useful indicator of success in Ponape society. However, being subject to mimesis, through the generations this practice escalated in a runaway manner that came ultimately to threaten the way of life of the community. I am not suggesting that *haute couture* is threatening modern civilization but rather that mimetic activity can latch on to anything that may be considered to be of value as an indicator of success in a particular society. Another example from within business culture is the huge industry that is devoted to supply the fashion for business ideas, such as Total Quality Management, JIT, OPT and Lean Manufacturing, where firms compete with one another to become exemplified as the acme of perfection. Whilst management scholars recognize this as a mimetic process, from a Girardian perspective, they do not sufficiently understand its dynamics.⁵⁵

Recent controversies around the use of 'size ten' and then 'size zero' models by the clothing industry illustrate the global value placed on thinness. While the industry is quite rightly blamed for its part in encouraging grotesque levels of thinness, to focus purely on this target displaces attention from the more important battle for prestige waged daily in family homes, in school canteens and in the bathrooms that provide the *vomitoria* for their young hosts. Girard's explanation for the current fashionability of the starvation disorders anorexia nervosa and bulimia is controversial, as one might expect. Compulsive dieters share in common with most people the desire to be thinner. Why then parcel eating disorders almost exclusively in medical, not cultural, terms? Normal consumers use food for comfort when times are hard; at other times they resolve to lose weight, and if successful, they are exhilarated by the experience of control. In the crazy world where a dozen variants of the theme presented by reality television in *Ten Years Younger* mingle with innumerable shows devoted to food, its cultivation, preparation and cooking, not to mention the celebrity magazine industry and the practices of the fashion industry, it is surprising that so many people manage to eat more or less normally. While accepting differences between the oscillations of normal eating and bulimia, Girard insists that these follow the same path towards the same goal, to lose weight. The only thing is that for some the goal becomes so important that the means to reach it no longer matter.

Girard argues that slenderness becomes a goal due to the individual's experience of chronic uncertainty in comparing herself to a model. When surrounded by others, most people discover there is always someone else

present who possesses some superior quality in relation to looks, physique, intelligence, wealth and, most importantly today, slenderness. In the competition for absolute thinness, the anorexic has the staying power to reach the goal directly by refusing to eat. The bulimic, on the other hand, lacks this almost superhuman ability and instead resorts to the strategy of bingeing and then purging. Girard notes the banality of such scenes, referring to an episode of *Seinfeld*, where at the end of a meal in a New York restaurant, a young woman steps out to the bathroom and spews up the spaghetti she has just eaten, later casually announcing this to her woman friend 'in the same tranquil and matter-of-fact tone as, in by-gone days, she might have said: "I'll put on my lipstick."' ⁵⁶ Girard strikes an analogy between the girl and the decadent ancient Roman, cautioning that the ancient Roman was by comparison an innocent sensualist who ate and vomited in turn but for himself only.

Food is scary for anorexics and bulimics. For anorexics this is because they know that if they eat one bite, they might never stop eating. The bulimic identity courts danger because she is contaminated by the food she gorges on, which must be purged from her system if she is to remain true to her bulimic goal. She is haunted by the danger that, in a single instant, all of the time and energy spent could be lost. The anorexic, usually a 'super achiever', never realizes her illness. Suggestions that she might be ill are thought conspiracies, concocted by those who would enjoy seeing her veer from her course towards her ultimate goal of slenderness, the one ideal she shares in common with others in our crazy society. ⁵⁷

Many women wish to be anorexics; only a few succeed. Bulimics are would-be anorexics who, despairing of their ability to see the course to its end, go to the other extreme. The bulimic is still a winner in that she can be as thin as fashion demands. Girard argues that others who do not wish to endanger their health exercise, spending much of their time walking, running, cycling, mountain climbing 'and practicing other boring and strenuous activities for the sole purpose of eliminating unwanted calories'. ⁵⁸ He is irritated by the political correctness associated with exercise, linking it to communion with nature. The healthiest and unhealthiest actions – walking and smoking – can have the same goal, which is to lose weight. The reason why most young women smoke or why they do not wish to stop smoking lies in their desire not to gain weight, a fear that the government, paradoxically, does its best to intensify.

In Girard's explanation fashion spreads across the entire gamut of individual mimetic projects, whereby subjects take others as models for the expression of mimetic desire. That successful models are imitated for some aspect of their dress or demeanour is taken as a given in consumer society. Less understood, however, is the dynamic of emulation and rivalry between subjects and their model that underpins this process. Girard is particularly caustic about intellectual fashions and in particular those who contend that

they are not influenced by them. Giving up fashion, he argues, is just as fashionable as taking it up in the first place. There are always those who are opposed to fashions, who are always deserting the reigning fashion in order to imitate what has not yet been imitated, what everyone is only beginning to imitate.⁵⁹

Conclusion

This chapter juxtaposes arguments and authors from a number of contexts to argue hysteria is thriving today. It is also clear that there are major differences between the different authors which I do not address. Overall, it is argued that mimetic processes constitute powerful engines to motivate and sustain consumer desire in particular contexts. In each context the prevailing goal is to gain honour, prestige and respect, valued above all else. From the perspective of the outsider such behaviour is perceived mysterious, incomprehensible, or mad; it is rational to those subjects and models who play out their rivalry within the specific rules of the game, defined within a specific context.

There is also potential for a constructive dialogue here with evolutionary explanations of mimesis. For instance, Zahavi (1975) argues mimesis is centrally important. His explanation focuses on the prevention of cheating in prestige games involving males, arguing that the best signals are also the most costly in relation to their fitness. For example, the peacock's tail operates as a costly signal because its very uselessness demonstrates the high fitness potential of its owner. In humans, generosity can be understood as a costly signal, whether in relation to sharing food with others or giving away money to others. This is interesting, as it indicates how the system can be fixed or arrested. Considered in evolutionary terms, Girard's theory shares more in common with group-level explanations (Richerson and Boyd), as only those groups which learned to deal with primitive mimetic violence by developing the appropriate authority and religious structures survived.

Notes

1 Dreams

1. Roudinesco, (1999: 64–91). Roudinesco refers principally to Grünbaum (ibid.: 73), but similar arguments pertain to Eysenck
2. Freud, ([1900] 1913: 89/90).
3. Lacan, (1988e; 1988f).
4. Bronfen, (1998: 74).
5. Freud, ([1900] 1913: 57). I would re-phrase this to, ‘You must be joking! I wouldn’t dream of doing it!’ In my experience that is what people actually say, which also recognizes the link made by Freud between jokes and the unconscious.
6. See for example Hobson & McCarley, (1977).
7. Lear, (2005).
8. Freud, ([1900] 1913: 261).
9. Lacan, (1993a; 1993b).
10. Freud, ([1900] 1913: 112).
11. Freud, [1905] 1999: 99).
12. Lear, (2005: 4).
13. Freud, ([1900] 1913: 123–128).
14. Ibid.: 116.
15. Freud, ([1905] 1999: 118).
16. Lacan, (2001e: 289).
17. Ibid.: 290.
18. Fuss, (1995: 31).
19. Ibid.: 31.
20. Freud, ([1900] 1913: 207).
21. Ibid.: 212.
22. Freud, (1913: 72; 245–259).
23. Freud, ([1900] 1991: 190).
24. Ibid.: 201–202.
25. Ibid.: 202.
26. Ibid.: 261–264.
27. Belk, (1997) refers to this as the *Goblin and the Huckster* and it was from his paper that I had the idea to use this story.
28. Belk *et al.*, (2003).
29. Foucault, (1990).
30. Freud, ([1900] 1913: 403).
31. Ibid.: 429.
32. Freud, ([1905] 1991: 356).
33. As is discussed in the chapter on mastery, this was a common preoccupation and worry for the middle classes of the time.
34. See Boorstin, (1945) in relation to pseudo-events and also the excellent account of Bernays by Ewen, (1996).
35. See Schwartzkopf & Gries (2010) for various perspectives on Dichter. Tadjewski, (2006a) provides a comprehensive discussion of the development and decline of motivation research.

36. Dichter, (1964).
37. See Gray, (1970) for the story of the 'Tavi'.
38. Zaltman & Zaltman, (2008).
39. Hopkins, (1991: 115).
40. Packard, (1957: 41–42).
41. Bauer, (1958).
42. Reed Jr., (1974).
43. Key, (1974).
44. Rogers & Smith, (1993).
45. Bond & Kirshenbaum, (1998: 92)
46. Eysenck, (1986: 122). This is precisely the point Freud makes (Freud, 1953: 353).
47. Freud, ([1900] 1991: 213).
48. Freud, ([1900] 1991: 320).
49. Eysenck, (1986: 119).
50. Ibid.: 120.
51. Ibid.: 133.
52. Ibid.: 132.
53. See Tadajewski, (2006b) for an in-depth discussion of the internal and external funding pressures that led the marketing academy in the age of McCarthyism, to model itself on a politically neutral empirical and quantitative base.
54. Grünbaum, (1984) admired Freud's philosophical orientation and directs most of his fire at Habermas and Ricoeur for trying to save psychoanalysis from the rigorous demands of scientific proof by arguing it to be an hermeneutic discipline.
55. Ellenberger, (1970) situates Freud's contribution.
56. Bargh, (2002).
57. Freud, (1915). Freud also states this quite categorically in *The Ego and the Id*, part I: ([1923] 1991: 356).
58. Solms & Turnbull, (2002: 72).
59. Ibid.: 93. This argument is largely drawn from 'The Ego and the Id' Freud, ([1923] 1991) and especially from the reading of Solms and Turnbull, (2002), esp. chapter 3: 79–104 where they discuss Freud's relation to Damasio, (1999).
60. Breuer & Freud, (1974).
61. See Minsky, (1981) for a discussion of his idea of framing in relation to the cognitive unconscious and Abelson, (1981) for discussion of scripts. Bozinoff, (1982) discusses scripts in relation to consumer research.
62. Bargh, (2002: 281).
63. Bargh & Chartrand, (1999).
64. See Strahan *et al.*, (2002) study of subliminal priming in relation to thirst and Karremans *et al.*, (2005) for the study on thirst and *Liptons Ice*.
65. Bargh, (2002).
66. Bargh & Morsella, (2008: 74).
67. Bargh, (2002: 283).
68. Laran *et al.*, (2011).
69. Chartrand & Bargh, (1999).
70. Dijksterhuis & Bargh, (2001).
71. Fitzimons *et al.*, (2008).
72. Campbell & Mohr, (2011).
73. Heinrich *et al.*, (2010).
74. Bargh, (2002: 283).
75. See Farrell, Liam, (2000) O Liberty! What Crimes are Committed in Thy Name! *BMJ*, vol. 321: 578. Kent, A., (2000) Not Another Magic Bullet. *BMJ*, 321: 644.

76. In which case I recommend they read Scott *et al.*, (2004) who provide an interesting analysis of the persuasive techniques used in advertising of drugs such as Symbicort and Taxotere.

2 Sexuality

1. Freud, ([1905] 1977: 26).
2. Freud, ([1905] 1977: 386).
3. Freud, ([1905] 1977: 148).
4. Marcuse, (1964: 1).
5. Foucault, (2003: 100).
6. Ibid.: 131.
7. Foucault, (2003: 132).
8. Ibid.: 133.
9. Lawrence, D.H. (1932) Tortoise Shout, *The Collected Poems of D.H. Lawrence*, London: William Heinemann: 367.
10. Lacan discusses *agalma* in Seminar VIII, a term which prefigures his idea of the *objet petit a*, or object-cause of desire (Nobus, 2000: 129).
11. Freud, [1915] (1977: 258).
12. Freud, [1915] (1977: 254).
13. Freud, [1957] (1977: 259).
14. Freud, ([1905] 1977: 213).
15. *Irish Independent*, Tuesday 12 June 2007, World News: 23. One wonders what the DADA group would have made of this!
16. Freud, ([1905] 1977: 194). In footnote 2, Freud says that *Little Hans* made an almost identical remark to this.
17. Ibid.: 195.
18. Freud can be relatively non-specific. He offers up different reasons in other texts (c.f. Dollimore: (1999: 188–190).
19. Freud, ([1905] 1977: 376).
20. Ibid.: 212/213).
21. Ibid.: 149.
22. Ibid.: 153.
23. Ibid.: 251.
24. Freud, ([1905] 1977: 254).
25. Scotland on Sunday, Dec. 7th 2003: 25, International News.
26. Freeman, (1999).
27. Marcuse, (1964).
28. Foucault, (1976: 129).
29. Ibid.: 43.
30. See Beloff, (1970) as an example of the latter.
31. Freud, (1989: 60).
32. Office of National Statistics (2011) *Statistical Bulletin: Families and Households: 2001–2011*. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_251357.pdf. Accessed May 2012.
33. Mosse, (1998).
34. Gay window advertising is attributed to Karen Stabiner. See footnote 6 for reference in, Clark, Danae (1991) *Commodity Lesbianism*. http://cameraobscura.dukejournals.org/content/9/1-2_25-26/181.full.pdf. Accessed May 2012.

35. See Branchik (2007) for a good discussion of advertisements targeting gay males in the US.
36. Ewen, (1976).
37. Schroeder and Borgerson, (2003).
38. Julia Roberts Sports Unshaved Armpits on Holiday Again. *Daily Mirror*, 1st September 2010. An article appearing in the *Independent* on 10 October 2007 mentioned Michael Douglas's shock and repulsion to discover that an Eastern European he 'had' aged 16, had hairy armpits. [Thhttp://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/julia-roberts-sports-unshaved-armpits-244820](http://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/julia-roberts-sports-unshaved-armpits-244820). Accessed May 2012.
39. Baumeister, (1988).
40. Phillips, (1998). See Weinberg and Kamel (1983) and McAnulty and Burnette.
41. McNair, (2002) and Schlosser (2003).
42. Comscore World Metrix, provided by the company to a request by the author. Comscore confirmed that this is broadly the same as in July 2007 when they first provided me with this information.
43. Independent Parliamentary Inquiry into Online Child Protection (2012) *Findings and Recommendations*, April. <http://www.claireperry.org.uk/downloads/independent-parliamentary-inquiry-into-online-child-protection.pdf>. Accessed May 2012. Additionally, Livingstone and Bober (2005), found that 68% of 12–19 year-olds had seen internet pornography, with 20% saying 'many times'. More than half claimed not to be bothered by it although 42% either did not like it or reported being disgusted by it. The authors recommended action be taken to restrict exposure. Subrahmanyam and Šmahel (2011), found a wide degree of variation in exposure in the studies they reviewed, with between 23% and 71% of adolescents reporting exposure to sexually explicit materials.
44. Ibid.: 13.
45. Magnanti, (2012).
46. See Dworkin. (1981).
47. Attorney General (1986) Report on Pornography: *Final Report*, July.
48. Wilcox (1987: 941).
49. Department of Justice comment, in Mould (1990: 777).
50. Testament of Donna Hoffman, professor of Vanderbilt University. In the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. 22 March 1996. See also Hoffman and Novak (1995). http://www.ciec.org/transcripts/Mar_22_Hoffman.html
51. Mumsnet (2010) Let girls be girls. <http://www.mumsnet.com/campaigns/let-girls-be-girls>. Accessed May 2012.
52. Linz, Donnerstein and Penrod, (1988), Mullin and Linz,. (1995); McNair, (2002: 54).
53. Paoletti, (1997).
54. See Fink, (1995) *There's No Such Thing as a Sexual Relationship*, chapter 5: 98–155.
55. Baudrillard, (1990: 31).
56. Ibid.: 31–32).
57. Žižek, (1992: 110).
58. Horvath, *et al.* (2011).
59. Lucy Ellman, in Gamman and Makinen, 1994: 143).
60. Source: Gamman and Makinen, 1994: 159.
61. Source: *ibid.*: 132–133.

3 Mastery and Self-Control

1. See, *Liar's Poker* (1989) and *The Big Short* (2010) by Michael Lewis and *Throw Them All Out* (2011), by Peter Schweizer.
2. Vargo and Lusch, (2004); (2008).
3. Hoffman, Kalsbeek and Novak, (1996).
4. Freud, ([1915] 1991: 137).
5. Ibid.: 136.
6. Freud, ([1911], 1991: 41).
7. Freud, ([1920], 1991).
8. Jhally, (1987); Ewen and Ewen, (1992).
9. Freud, (1916).
10. Lacan, (2001f) Seminar XVII: Psychoanalysis turned upside-down.
11. Freud, (1938: 203).
12. Freud, (1938: 205).
13. Freud, (1922: 112).
14. Sulloway, (1979: 373).
15. Elias, (1994: 495).
16. Ibid.: 65.
17. Elias, (1994: 446).
18. In a similar fashion to Elias (1994) who does not mean 'civilisation' to signify 'better', Falk does not intend 'primitive' to signify 'worse'.
19. Reproduced from Figure 2.2, page 17, of Falk (1994), with kind permission of Pasi Falk. Original title 'The constitution of inside/outside and subject-object'.
20. It should be noted that in England the process of confinement did not gather steam until the nineteenth century, when the asylums were built. Additionally in England it was more common for the mad to be kept separate from others (Porter, 1992).
21. Foucault, (1988).
22. Foucault, (1977: 209).
23. Foucault, (2003: 236).
24. Ibid.: 304.
25. Ibid.: 313.
26. Ibid.: 311. This also foreshadows current debates surrounding DSM-V, where Temper Dysregulation with Dysphoria is suggested to replace the controversial Childhood Bipolar Disorder. Strange ways to describe miserable children!
27. Ibid.: 314.
28. Ibid.: 317.
29. Reith, (2004).
30. Ibid.: 286 and 289. Italics are in original.
31. Ibid.: 291.
32. Ibid. 292.
33. Foucault, (2008: 269).
34. Cleveland, (1986).
35. See Ariely, (2009) for an excellent review.
36. From Chapter 1 of Improving Literacy and Numeracy, A Fresh Start Sir Claus Moser <http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/mosergroup/freshsum.pdf>. Accessed May 2012.
37. 'Action Needed to Meet UKs Cookie Tracking Guideline'. BBC News, 18 April 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-17745938>. Accessed May 2012.
38. Bowlby, (1993: 82–93).

39. Freud, (1989: 111).
40. Freud, (1950: 308).
41. Delaney, (2003: 89).
42. Freud, (1989: 44).
43. Ibid.: 86–87.
44. Dichter, (1960: 89).
45. See Miller and Rose, (2008), especially chapter 5: 114–141, for an excellent summary and review.
46. Emery, (1960).
47. Aaker, (1995); Fournier, (1995; 1998).
48. Ibid.: 40
49. Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, (1981: 231).
50. Ibid.: 228.
51. Baudrillard, (1990).
52. Belk, (1995: 86).
53. Bimber, (1994).
54. McLuhan, (1964: 219).
55. In this piece I focus principally on Stiegler (2006; 2010; 2011) and Lemmins (2011).
56. Stiegler, (2006: 4).

4 Narcissism

1. Fromm, (1964): 69. Printed with kind permission of Liepman AG Zurich.
2. Lowen, (1984); Donaldson-Pressman and Pressman, (1994); Vaknin (2001); Golomb (1995); Bywater, (2006); Barber, (2007); Behary (2008); Brown, 2008; Carter (2008); McBride (2009); Twenge and Campbell, (2009).
3. Parker-Pope, (2010).
4. Freud, ([1914] 1991: 65).
5. Ibid.:84, 94.
6. Ibid.: 82.
7. Ibid.: 83.
8. Ibid.: 78.
9. Ibid.: 84.
10. Ibid.: 84.
11. Ibid.: 85.
12. Freud, ([1914] 1999: 94).
13. Sirgy, (1982).
14. Hogg, (1998).
15. *Recours et al.*, (2011).
16. Fromm, (1964: 69).
17. Fromm, (1978: 48).
18. Riesman *et al.*, (1961: 21).
19. Mitchell, (1991: 28).
20. This is usually spelled with a ‘ph’ to denote the difference between conscious fantasy and unconscious phantasy.
21. Klein, (1959: 4).
22. Klein, ([1946] 1991: 186).
23. Ibid.: 182.
24. Dean, (1992: 107–109).

25. `Op. cit.: 8.
26. Segal, (1957: 147).
27. Klein, (1930).
28. Jacobus (1995).
29. Ibid.: 102.
30. Sayers, (2000: 177).
31. Ibid.: 178.
32. Segal, (1957: 142).
33. Bell, (2001).
34. Ibid.: 142–144.
35. Bronstein, (2001).
36. Ibid.: 115.
37. Roudinesco, (1997).
38. Lacan, (1988a).
39. Lacan, (2001).
40. Lacan, (1988b).
41. Lacan, (1988d).
42. Leader, (2011: 52).
43. Ragland-Sullivan, (1986: 141).
44. Leader, (2011: 52).
45. Ibid.: 73.
46. See for example, Bull & Rumsey, (1988); Grogan, (2008).
47. Gladwell, (2005: 72–75).
48. Grogan, (2008).
49. Lakoff and Johnson, (1980).
50. See also Ramsland, (2012) for a discussion of celebrity stalkers.
51. Jones, (1992: 57).
52. Quote attributed to John Hinckley.
53. Ibid: 72.
54. Lasch, (1979: 314).
55. Brennan, (1993: 4).
56. Ibid.: 90–95.
57. Vargo and Lusch, (2004); (2008).
58. Roudinesco, E. (2001). *Psychoanalysis?* Columbia and New York, Columbia University Press: 69
59. Cain *et al.*, (2008).
60. Twenge and Campbell, (2009: 25).
61. Ibid.: 95.
62. Baumeister *et al.*, (1996).
63. Baumeister *et al.*, (2002).
64. See Trzesniewski *et al.*, (2008), Twenge and Campbell, 2001 and Twenge and Foster, (2008) respectively in relation to these arguments.
65. Bushman *et al.* (2003). Twenge *et al.*, (2008); Twenge and Campbell, (2009).
66. Miller and Campbell, (2008).
67. Ibid.
68. Paulhus and Williams, (2002).
69. Widger and Trull, (2007); Krueger, (2010).
70. Katz, (1999).
71. Ibid.: 28–29.
72. Putnam, (2000: 143).
73. Smith, Philips and King, (2010).

74. Girard, (1988: 18).
75. Simpson, Mark (2002) 'Meet the metrosexual.' Salon.com: <http://dir.salon.com/story/ent/feature/2002/07/22/metrosexual/print.html?pn=1>
76. Baudrillard, (1993: 111).
77. Baumeister, Catanese and Wallace, (2002: 94).

5 Death

1. Freud, ([1917] 1991: 252).
2. Ibid.: 96.
3. Ibid.
4. Wikan, (1988).
5. Stephanie Tomasai, *Widows weeds: mourning fashions of the Victorian Era*. <http://www.mourningmatters.com>. Accessed May 2012.
6. 'Political Economy and Death, chapter 5: 125–194, in Baudrillard, J. (1995).
7. Baudrillard, (1995: 131).
8. Ibid.: 136.
9. Coward, (1984).
10. Freud, (1918: 5).
11. Lennon and Foley, (2000).
12. Joy and Wallendorf, (1996: 131).
13. Bernard and Fink, (2002).
14. Parsons (1978).
15. Seale, (1998: 54).
16. Alberry *et al.*, (1993).
17. Parsons (1978).
18. *ibid.*: 165.
19. Freud, ([1917] 1991).
20. Leader, (2009: 116).
21. Miller and Parrot, (2007).
22. Bonsu and Belk, (2003).
23. Miller and Parrot (2007).
24. O'Donohoe and Turley, (2005).
25. Freud, ([1920] 1991: 255).
26. Baudrillard, (1984).
27. Lear, (2005: 170–171).
28. Freud ([1920] 1991: 313).
29. Ibid.: 329.
30. Ibid.: 316, 332.
31. Bowie (1991: 163).
32. Klein, (1993: 1).
33. *ibid.*: 24
34. Connor, Steve (2011) Exclusive: Smoked out: Tobacco Giant's War on Science. *The Independent*, Thursday 1 September. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/exclusive-smoked-out-tobacco-giants-war-on-science-2347254.html>. Accessed May 2012.
35. Becker, (1973: 28).
36. Ibid.: 28.
37. Ibid.: 30.
38. Ibid.: 31.

39. Ibid.: 37.
40. <http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/>
41. <http://www.extropy.com/>
42. Clark, Ginny (1998) Making Healthy Profits Out of Sex and Drugs, *The Scotsman*, Wednesday: 14.
43. De Grey, Aubrey (2011) Dawn of a new age. The first person to reach 150 is already alive and soon we'll reach live to be a THOUSAND says scientist. *Daily Mail*, 6 July. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2011425/The-person-reach-150-alive-soon-live-THOUSAND-claims-scientist.html> Accessed May 2012.
44. Kirsch *et al.*, (2008).

6 Lack

1. Lacan, (1988h).
2. C.f. Roudinesco, (1997: esp. 44, 47, 71, 81,179,188–190, 194, 196, 229, 231,251, 397).
3. Cormac Gallagher uniquely brings Lacan to life straight off the page. As he doesn't date this seminar I have arbitrarily attached the date 1987 to this piece, Lacan (1987), as the reading group at St. Vincent's started then.
4. Roudinesco puts us straight on that too; it was Lacan who originally circulated the story, after having a conversation with Jung, although Jung himself never mentioned it and there is a strong suspicion that Lacan fabricated it for his own purposes.
5. Roudinesco, (1997: xv).
6. Ibid.: 408.
7. Lacan builds upon Freud's almost casual mention of the *imago* (Freud [1905], 1977), a term used by the latter in describing how the ego is composed of the residues of object-identifications and how new objects will be chosen on the model or *imago* of the infantile ones. In *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, Freud says primary love-objects are most likely to be the parents. The hated part is in fact a part of the infant's own self that it has separated off and projected into the external world and takes to be hostile (Freud [1915] (1991). Brennan (1993) describes how this anxiety can result in the projection of 'bad internal objects' outside of the self (master) and onto the other (slave), a projective process that in turn generates feelings of persecution about bad objects returning and hence paranoia in the master.
8. Wilden, (1968: 172).
9. O'Neill, (1996).
10. Lacan, (2001b: 76).
11. *ibid.*: 169.
12. Lacan, (1988b: 169).
13. A reference that he attributes to St. Augustine, *Ibid.*: 171
14. (Lacan, 1988b: *The see-saw of desire*: 166).
15. Lacan, (2001a: 22).
16. Lacan, (2001a: 7,24).
17. Lacan, ([1962], 2001b) *Discours du Rome*.
18. Lacan, ([1977] 2004) *Four Fundamental Concepts*.
19. Lacan, (1988f), *The Dream of Irma's Injection (conclusion)*.
20. Molière, (1985).
21. Related to the anamorphic image is the *trompe l'oeil*, which is a figure used to some effect by Jean Baudrillard. Where the anamorphic image does not make

sense when viewed conventionally, the *trompe l'oeil*, when viewed conventionally, tricks the eye of the beholder in mistaking the two-dimensional image, for reality. The illusion does not work when viewed unconventionally.

22. See Žižek, (2002: 64).
23. Dion, Berscheid and Walster, (1972).
24. Clifford and Walster, (1973).
25. Bull and Rumsey, (1988).
26. Grammar and Thornhill, (1994).
27. Alcock *et al.*, (1998).
28. Turkle, 1979: 55.
29. Joyce, (2000: 48–53).
30. Another Perfect World, In search of Virtual Paradise, *More4*, 23/6/09.
31. Joyce, (2000: 67).
32. Proust (1922).
33. See for example Weber, (1991, esp. 20–28).
34. Derrida, (1974).
35. Lacan, (2001d): *Agency of the letter in the unconscious*: 166.
36. Weber, (1991: 27).
37. Lacan, (2001b: 167).
38. Riviere ([1929] 1986).
39. See Turkle, (1979: 57).
40. Butler, (1987: 193).
41. Turkle, (1979: 56).
42. BBC Radio 4 Weather, 24 June 2009.
43. Freud, (1930). This example is discussed extensively by Anthony Wilden, the translator of Lacan's *Rome discourse* and by Samuel Weber (1991: 90–97).
44. Freud, (1930: 8).
45. Ibid. from Figure I: 41.
46. Storr, (1989: 84).
47. Eco, (1979: esp. 68–76). Colette Soler interprets *Finnegan's Wake* as a wilful psychotic experiment illustrating, “the autistic *jouissance* of the pure letter which is unmoored – cut off from the Imaginary, from exterior meaning and thus of any social link.” (2003: 95). In this book Joyce is unreadable, not just difficult to understand. Joyce's puns and wordplay in the book have an affinity with unconscious mechanisms, in resembling slips of the tongue, parapraxes, or jokes. But this is a contrived appearance and Joyce pushes further beyond the joke and the slip of the tongue, with the result that every signification in the book, ‘looks like a projective test that says a lot about the interpreter and nothing about the author’ (2003: 98). It is in this sense that *Finnegan's Wake* puts an end to the great dream of meaning cultivated by literature. Where the *Portrait*, is readable, in *Finnegan's Wake*, the meaning is so ‘powdery’, flashing everywhere, that the reader must decide its sense.
48. Samuel Weber (1991: 108) puts this well in saying: ‘If the arresting images of the imaginary order are effectively inscribed in the force-field of the signifier, the latter would have neither field nor force without the dissimulation of the imaginary. Left to its own devices, the symbolic, like the primary process, would tend to dissolve and to displace the very determinations upon which it, “itself” depends. In short, without the imaginary, the symbolic would self-destruct.’
49. See the seminar on psychosis. Also mentioned in *Écrits*, 2001: 170.
50. Kelly, (1963).
51. Walkerdine, (1986: 172).

52. Žižek's analysis of *Casablanca* is interesting here, particularly his suggestion that radical contingency is more fully appreciated when the film is viewed in reverse. In my view he tends to over-naturalize the naturalness of the flow of events. The audience is always aware of radical contingency: without it, where would the drama be? – see Žižek, (1992: 68–70).
53. Žižek, (2002: 6).
54. Eagleton, (1994: 87).
55. Ibid.: 12.
56. Williamson, (1978: 101–102).
57. Ibid. chapter 3: 71–102.
58. Ibid.: 63–64.
59. Ibid.: 65.
60. Ibid. chapters 4 and 5: 104–137.
61. Ibid.: 13.
62. Ibid.: 102.
63. Walkerdine, (2000: 103).
64. Ibid.: 97.
65. Ibid.: 99.
66. Ibid: 103.
67. Ibid.: 103.
68. Walkerdine, 2000: 105.
69. Leo Baxendale, 2003. Bash Street, the Beano and Me. *The Guardian*, 30 July, 2003.
70. See Eco, 1986, chapter one, 'Travels in Hyperreality'. See also Anderson and Mullen (1998).
71. Baudrillard ([1979] 1986b).
72. Fjellman, (1992, chapter 5. *More Distory, Mostly EPCOT* Center: 85–109).
73. Ibid.: 157.
74. Baudrillard, ([1979] 1990) *Seduction*; ([1985] 1986, *Simulacra and Simulation*).
75. Borghini, (2009: 2).
76. Ibid: 9.
77. Ibid.: 9.
78. C.f: Lacan, (1988d): *The See-Saw of Desire*: 168.
79. Ian Overton, 20/6/2007, 8.48 am, More4 News Blog.
80. Žižek, (2006: 58).
81. Ibid.: 59.
82. Fink, (1995: 26).
83. Lacan, J. ([1960] 1992), *The Jouissance of Transgression*.
84. Lacan, (1988e; (Lacan 1988f).
85. Lacan, (1988e: 159).
86. Ibid.: 154.
87. Lacan (1988f: 164).
88. Ibid.: 167.
89. Fink, 2002.
90. Ibid.: 35.
91. Enjoyment is a topic for a number of prominent authors today including Slavoj Žižek and Bruce Fink. My first encounter with this idea was in reading "Consumer Society" by Jean Baudrillard.
92. Alger, (1868).
93. McGowan, 2004: 25.

94. Žižek, 'A cup of decaf reality.' www.lacan.com. Accessed May 2012.
95. Terkel, (1979).
96. Lacan, 2001: 20.
97. Roudinesco, 1997: esp. 81, 110, 140.
98. Billig, 2006: 3.
99. Stavrakakis, 2007: 132.

7 Freedom

1. Ariely, (2008) provides an accessible summary.
2. Freud, ([1923] 1991: 368).
3. Freud, ([1923] 1991: 369).
4. Freud, ([1923] 1991: 371).
5. Ibid.: 374.
6. Ibid.: 395.
7. Freud, ([1923] 1991: 357).
8. Roudinesco, (2007: 69).
9. Illouz, (2007: 43).
10. Roudinesco, (2007: 71).
11. Illouz, (2007: 45).
12. Maslow in Illouz, *ibid.*: 45.
13. Ibid.: 45.
14. Now known as the Landmark Education Corp. Or the Forum.
15. Turkle, 197.
16. Fink, (1995: xiii).
17. Here using an 'i' in small capitals indicates the lack of power of the subject who is determined by the Symbolic order.
18. Ibid.: 48.
19. Martin Luther King Jr. (1955) "Montgomery Story" Address. Documents of American History II, m2010. the King Centre, Atlanta Georgia. <http://www.thekingcenter.org/>. Accessed May 2012.
20. Becker, (1973: 269).
21. See Portrait d'un imbecile. (Portrait of an imbecile) http://www.mariabuszek.com/kcai/DadaSurrealism/Dada_gallery3.htm. Accessed May 2012.
22. Mundy (2002).
23. Dean, (2002: 227).
24. Mundy, (2002: 28).
25. Howl, (1955: 9).
26. Ferlinghetti, (1974: 9).
27. Since my draft on this section was written an excellent anthology on Ernest Dichter has appeared, edited by Schwarzlopf and Greis (2010). In particular Daniel Horowitz' *Ernest Dichter the Motivational Researcher*, ch. 3: 58–75.
28. Horowitz, (1994: 10).
29. Ibid.: 52.
30. Ibid.: 58.
31. Ibid.: 104–105.
32. Ibid.: 107.
33. Ibid.: 107.
34. Dichter (1964a: chapter 1, The Temptation of Eve: 46).
35. Dichter (1960: 13).

36. Ibid.: 16.
37. Ibid.: 17.
38. Marcuse, (1964: 1)
39. Marcuse, (1966: 57).
40. Ibid.: 48.
41. Ibid.: 50.
42. Marcuse, 1966: 192.
43. Ibid.: 198/9.
44. Ibid.: 201.
45. Byrne, Jerome (1965) Report on the Univeristy of California and recommendations to the special committee of the Regents of the University of California. <http://content.cdlib.org/xtf/view?docId=kt796nc1cw&query=&brand=oac>. Accessed May 2012.
46. Rohan, (1988: 90/96).
47. Ibid.: 90, 96.
48. Turkle, 1979: 83.
49. Ibid.: 84.
50. Lacan, (1974).

8 Hysteria

1. Showalter, (1997: 84).
2. Breuer and Freud, (1974).
3. Freud, (1922: 63).
4. Ibid.: 64–65.
5. Flanagan, Caitlin, (2012). Hysteria and the Teenage Girl. Sunday Review, Opinion Pages, *New York Times*, 29 January 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/opinion/sunday/adolescent-girl-hysteria.html>. Accessed May 2012.
6. Showalter, (1998: 47).
7. Wolfe, (1983: 273).
8. Illis, (2002).
9. Leader and Corfield, (2007).
10. Showalter, (1997: 8).
11. Several of the ideas discussed in this section can be found in Desmond and Kavanagh (2004).
12. Whiten *et al.*, (2009).
13. Girard, (1987: 8).
14. DiMaggio and Powell, (1983); Haveman, (1993).
15. Mizruchi and Fein, (1999: 653–654).
16. Eckerman, Whatley and McGehee, (1979).
17. Hay and Ross, (1982).
18. Caplan *et al.*, (1991: 1515).
19. Levitt *et al.*, (1985).
20. Lacan, (1975: 166).
21. Foster, (2003: 267–269).
22. Ibid.: 268.
23. Girard, (1987: 296–297).
24. Ibid.: 53.
25. Ibid.: 12.
26. Girard, (1987: 51).

27. Ibid.: 53.
28. Ibid.: 57.
29. Girard, (1987: 337).
30. Ibid.: 371.
31. Ibid.: 325.
32. Ibid.: 406–408.
33. Ibid.: 404–406.
34. Campbell, (1987), esp. 49–51.
35. Girard, 1987: 284.
36. Ibid.: 288.
37. De Botton, (2004: 54–55).
38. Ibid.: 52.
39. Packard, (1959: 123).
40. Girard, (1987: 286).
41. James, (2007: xiv).
42. Girard, (1987: 295).
43. Ibid.: 297.
44. Vaughan (2002.: 205).
45. See Bonazzi (1983) for a discussion of instrumental scapegoating.
46. Duell, Mark (2011). Arrests, pepper spray, gunshots, brawls and doors pulled off hinges: Chaos at stores across U.S. as thousands of shoppers scramble for new Nike Air Jordans. Mail Online, 24 December. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2078134/Chaos-U-S-stores-thousands-shoppers-scramble-new-Nike-Air-Jordans.html>. Accessed May 2012.
47. From L.A. Sentinel 2/10/1972. Reported in; Alex Alonso “Black Steet Gangs in Los Angeles: A History, www.streetgangs.com/history
48. Bing, (1991: 274).
49. Ibid.: 257.
50. Ibid.: 105.
51. Ibid.: 120–127.
52. Original Gangster.
53. Ibid.: 174–176.
54. See for example Marcus, (2001).
55. See for instance Abrahamson, (1996)
56. Girard, (2000: 186).
57. Ibid.: 184.
58. Ibid.: 184
59. Girard, (1987: 301).

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