The Idea of a Psychoanalytic Criticism

If psychoanalytic literary criticism has been with us at least since 1908, when Freud published his brief essay, "Creative Writers and Daydreaming," the enterprise hasn't on the whole made a good name for itself. It's in fact most often been something of an embarrassment. The notion of psychoanalysis applied to literary study continues to evoke reductive maneuvers that flatten the richness of creative texts into well-worn categories, finding the same old stories where we want new ones. I find myself resisting the label "psychoanalytic critic" – though no doubt I am one, in some sense still to be defined – and worrying about the legitimacy and force that psychoanalysis may claim when imported into the study of literary texts. If the enterprise has recently been renewed in subtle ways by post-structuralist versions of reading, under the aegis of Jacques Lacan, a malaise persists, a sense that whatever the promises of their union, liter-ature and psychoanalysis remain mismatched bedfellows – or should I say, playmates.

The first problem, and the most basic, may be that psychoanalysis in literary study has over and over again mistaken the object of analysis, with the result that whatever insights it has produced tell us precious little about the structure and rhetoric of literary texts. Traditional

psychoanalytic criticism tends to fall into three general categories, depending on the *object* of analysis: the author, the reader, or the fictive persons of the text. The first of these constituted the classical locus of psychoanalytic interest. It is now apparently the most discredited, though also perhaps the most difficult to extirpate, since if the disappearance of the author has been repeatedly announced, authorial mutants ceaselessly reappear, as, for instance, in Harold Bloom's psychomachia of literary history. The biographical continues to hold a perennial interest in our culture, and provides grounds for the deployment of psychoanalytic approaches, from the professional to the most amateur.

Like the author, the fictive character has been deconstructed into an effect of textual codes, a kind of thematic mirage, and the psychoanalytic study of the putative unconscious of characters in fiction has also fallen into disrepute. Here again, however, the impulse resurfaces, for instance in the moves of some feminist critics who want to show how the represented female psyche (particularly, of course, as created by women authors) refuses and problematizes the dominant concepts of male psychological doctrine. Gender-based criticism has in fact contributed to a new variant of the psychoanalytic study of fictive characters, a variant one might label the "situational-thematic": studies of Oedipal triangles in fiction, their permutations and evolution, of the roles of mothers and daughters, of situations of nurture and bonding, and so forth. Work of this nature can be methodologically disquieting in its use of Freudian analytic tools in a wholly thematic way – though this is of course part of its contestatory force – and in its implicit claim that the identification and labeling of human relations in a psychoanalytic vocabulary is the task of reading. The third traditional field of psychoanalytic literary study, the reader, continues to flourish in ever-renewed versions, since the role of the reader in the creation of

textual meaning is very much on our minds at present, and since the psychoanalytic study of readers' responses willingly brackets the impossible notion of author in favor of the acceptable and also verifiable notion of reader. The psychoanalytic study of the reader may concern real readers (as in Norman Holland's *Five Readers Reading*) or the reader as psychological everyman (as in Simon O. Lesser's *Fiction and the Unconscious*). But like the other traditional psychoanalytic approaches, it displaces the object of analysis from the text to some person, some other psycho-dynamic structure, a displacement I wish to avoid since – as I hope to make clear as I go along – I think psychoanalytical criticism can and should be textual and rhetorical.

If the displacement of the object of analysis has been a major failing of psychoanalytic literary criticism, it has erred also in its inability to rid itself of the underlying conviction that it is inherently explanatory. The problem with "literature and psychoanalysis," as Shoshana Felman has pointed out more effectively than any other critic, lies in that "and."[1] The conjunction has almost always masked a relation of privilege of one term to another, a use of psychoanalysis as a conceptual system in terms of which to analyze and explain literature, rather than an encounter and confrontation of the two. The reference to psychoanalysis has traditionally been used to close rather than open the argument, and the text. This is not surprising, since the recourse to psychoanalysis usually claims as its very *raison d'être* the capacity to explain and justify in the terms of a system and a discourse more penetrating and productive of insight than literary critical psychology as usual, which of course harbors its own, largely unanalyzed, assumptions. As Simon O. Lesser states the case, "no 'common-sense' psychology yet employed in criticism has been helpful"; whereas psychoanalysis provides a way to explore "the deepest levels of meaning of the greatest fiction."[2]

Why should we reject such a claim? Even if psychoanalysis is far from being a "science" with the formal power of linguistics, for instance, surely certain of its hypotheses are so well established and so universally illustrated that we can use them with as much impunity as such linguistic concepts as "shifters" or "the double articulation." Yet the recourse to linguistic and to psychoanalytic concepts implies a false symmetry: linguistics may be universalistic, but its tools and concepts are "cool," and their overextension easily recognized as trivial; whereas psychoanalysis is imperialistic, almost of necessity. Freud works from the premise that all that appears is a sign, that all signs are subject to interpretation, and that they speak of messages that ultimately tell stories that contain the same *dramatis personae* and the same narrative functions for all of us. It is no wonder that Freud called himself a "conquistador": he extends remarkably the empire of signs and their significant decipherment, encompassing all of human behavior and symbolic action. Thus any "psychoanalytic explanation" in another discipline always runs the risk of appearing to claim the last word, the final hermeneutic power. If there is one thing that post-structuralist criticism has most usefully taught us, it is the suspicion and refusal of this last word in the interpretive process and history, the refusal of any privileged position in analysis.

The post-structuralist versions of psychoanalytic criticism have attempted to move out from the impasses of an inglorious tradition, to make psychoanalysis serve the study of texts and rhetoric rather than authors, and to stage an encounter of psychoanalysis and literature that doesn't privilege either term, but rather sets them in a dialogue that both exemplifies and questions how we read. The work of such critics as Felman, Neil Hertz, Leo Bersani, Sarah Kofman, Malcolm Bowie, Jane Gallop, Jacqueline Rose, Toril Moi – to give only a very partial list of those who have renewed the enterprise

seeks to make the meeting of psychoanalysis and literature unsettling to both, a kind of interference of two systems productive of insight into each. Lacan's "return to Freud" in a trajectory through structural linguistics has pointed the way toward a rhetorical engagement of psychoanalysis and text. Lacan – not alone, but with the greatest panache and high-priestly drama – has taught students of literature to understand the basic operations of the "dream work," condensation and displacement, as the master tropes of rhetoric, metaphor and metonymy, reconfigured as fundamental psychic manifestations presented to analysis: symptom and desire – and thus to initiate a rereading of Freud attentive to his semiotic imagination, to the role of language as the medium of psychoanalysis and the structuring agent of the psyche.

But if we refuse to grant psychoanalysis any position of privilege in criticism, if we refuse to consider it to be explanatory, there may be reason to ask what we have left, and what its uses are. What is the status of a deauthorized psychoanalytic discourse within literary-critical discourse, and what is its object? If we don't accord explanatory force to psychoanalysis, what is the point of using it at all? Why do we continue to read so many critical essays laced with the conceptual vocabulary of psychoanalysis? What is *at stake* in the current uses of psychoanalysis?

I want to begin this inquiry with the flat-footed (and unfashionable) assertion that I believe that the persistence, against all the odds, of psychoanalytic perspectives in literary study must ultimately derive from our conviction that the materials on which they exercise their powers of analysis are in some basic sense the same: that the structure of literature *is* in some sense the structure of mind – not a specific mind, but what the translators of the *Standard Edition* of Freud's Works call "the mental apparatus" (*psychischer* or *seelischer Apparat*), a term which designates the economic and dynamic organiza-

tion of the psyche, to a process of structuration. After all, it was Freud himself who readily admitted that "the poets and philosophers" had anticipated all he had to say. We continue to dream of a convergence of psychoanalysis and literary criticism because we sense that there ought to be, that there must be, some correspondence between literary and psychic process, that aesthetic structure and form, including literary tropes, must somehow coincide with the psychic structures and operations they both evoke and appeal to.

The belief in the possibility of such a correspondence of course depends on a more general belief, or intuition, that the psychoanalytic version of the human psyche is somehow "true," that it corresponds to one's own experiences and insights. Particularly, where aesthetics is concerned, it implies that the psychoanalytic view of humans as radically determined by sexuality has a general validity. By sexuality, I do not mean simple genitality, but rather large conceptualizations of the self as a sexual being, both deriving from and producing issues of gender difference, origins, and self-definition. Sexuality belongs not simply to the physical body, but to the complex of phantasies and symbolizations which largely determine identity. Sexuality develops as a swerve from mere genital utility, it is driven by infantile phantasies of satisfaction and loss, it involves a dynamic of curiosity which is possibly the foundation of all intellectual activity, as Freud suggests in his explorations of "epistemophilia," or the drive to know. Human desire emerges subject to the "laws" dictated by the castration complex and the Oedipal triangle – emerges, that is, as desire inhabited by loss and prohibition, which means that it is channeled by rules, including those of language, and subject to forms, including narrative plots. Human desire is from the outset always engaged in a struggle with trans-subjective forms and laws by which it is governed. And this may

have something to do with our intuition that aesthetic form harbors an erotic force.

Part of the attraction of psychoanalytic criticism has always been its promise of a movement *beyond* formalism, to that desired place where literature and life converge, and where literary criticism becomes the discourse of something anthropologically important – where it teaches us something about the nature of human fiction-making, of both the banal everyday and the artistic sort. I very much subscribe to this urge, but I think that it is fair to say that in the case of psychoanalysis, paradoxically we can go beyond formalism only by becoming more formalistic. Geoffrey Hartman wrote a number of years ago – in *Beyond Formalism*, in fact – that the trouble with Anglo-American formalism was that it wasn't formalist enough.[3] One can in general indict Anglo-American "New Criticism" for being too quick to leap from the level of formal explication to that of moral and psychological interpretation, neglecting the trajectory through linguistics and poetics that needs to stand between. This was certainly true in traditional psychoanalytic criticism, which regularly short-circuited the difficult and necessary issues in poetics. The more recent – rhetorical and deconstructive – kind understands the formalist imperative, but I sense that it too often remains content with formal operations, simply bracketing the human realm from which psychoanalysis derives. Given its project and its strategies, such rhetorical/deconstructive criticism usually stays within the linguistic realm. It is not willing to make the crossover between rhetoric and reference that interests me – and that ought to be the *raison d'être* for the recourse to psychoanalysis in the first place. We need, I think, to make a psychoanalytically informed literary criticism serve to enhance an understanding of human subjects as situated at the intersection of several fictions created by and for them.

Daydreaming, Phantasy, and Narrative

One way to try to move out from the impasse I discern – or have perhaps myself constructed – might be through a return to what Freud has to say about literary form, most notoriously in the brief essay, "Creative Writers and Daydreaming" (1908). Recent psychoanalytic criticism has suggested that Freud speaks most pertinently to literary critics when he is not explicitly addressing art: such criticism has tended to draw more on *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the metapsychological essays, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and the essay on "The Uncanny," for example, than on *Delusion and Dream*, *The Moses of Michelangelo*, or the essays on Leonardo and Dostoevsky. "Creative Writers and Daydreaming" in fact gives an excessively simplistic view of art, of the kind that allows Ernst Kris, in his well-known *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, to describe artistic activity as regression in the service of the ego.[4] Yet the essay may be suggestive in other ways.

Freud sets out to look for some common human activity that is "akin to creative writing," and finds it in daydreaming, or the creation of phantasies. Freud then stresses the active, temporal structure of phantasy, which

> hovers, as it were, between three times – the three moments of time which our ideation involves. Mental work is linked to some current impression, some provoking occasion in the present which has been able to arouse one of the subject's major wishes. From there it harks back to the memory of an earlier experience (usually an infantile one) in which this wish was fulfilled; and it now creates a situation relating to the future which represents a fulfillment of the wish. What it thus creates is a daydream or phantasy, which carries about it traces of its origin from the occasion which provoked it and from the memory. Thus past, present and future are strung

> together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them.[5]

Freud will promptly commit the error of making the past evoked in the construction of phantasy that of the author, in order to study "the connections that exist between the life of the writer and his works" (251) – an error in which most critics have followed his lead. For instance, it is this phantasy model, reworked in terms of Winnicott and object-relations psychoanalysis, that essentially shapes the thesis of one of the most ambitious studies in literature and psychoanalysis, Meredith Skura's *The Literary Use of the Psychoanalytic Process*; but Skura, too, ultimately makes the past referred to in phantasy a personal past, that of author or reader, or both.[6] Yet the phantasy model could instead be suggestive for talking about the relations of textual past, present, and projected future, in the plot of a novel, for example, or in the rhyme scheme of a sonnet, or simply in the play of verb tenses in any text. I would want to extrapolate from this passage an understanding of how phantasy provides a dynamic model of intratextual temporal relations, and their organization according to the plot of wish, or desire. We might thus gain a certain understanding of the interplay of *form* and *desire*.

Freud is again of great interest in the final paragraph of the essay – one could make a fruitful study of Freud's final paragraphs, which so often produce a flood of new insights that can't quite be dealt with – where he asks how the writer creates pleasure through the communication of his phantasies, whereas those of most people would repel or bore us. Herein, says Freud, lies the poet's "innermost secret," his "essential *ars poetica*" (153). Freud sees two components of the artistic achievement here:

> The writer softens the character of his egoistic daydreams by altering and disguising it, and he bribes us by

> the purely formal – that is, aesthetic – yield of pleasure which he offers us in the presentation of his phantasies. We give the name of an *incentive bonus*, or a *fore-pleasure*, to a yield of pleasure such as this, which is offered to us so as to make possible the release of still greater pleasure arising from deeper psychical sources. In my opinion all the aesthetic pleasure which a creative writer affords us has the character of a fore-pleasure of this kind . . .(153)

I am deliberately leaving aside the end of this paragraph, where Freud suggests that the writer in this manner enables us "thenceforward to enjoy our own daydreams without self-reproach or shame," since this hypothesis brings us back to the *person* of the reader, whereas I wish to remain on the plane of form associated with "forepleasure."

The equation of the effects of literary form with forepleasure in this well-known passage is perhaps less trivial than it at first appears. If *Lust* and *Unlust* don't take us very far in the analysis of literary texture, *Vorlust* – forepleasure – tropes on pleasure and thus seems more promising. Forepleasure is indeed a curious concept, suggesting a whole rhetoric of advance toward and retreat from the goal or the end, a formal zone of play (I take it that forepleasure somehow implicates foreplay) that is both harnessed to the end and yet autonomous, and capable of deviations and recursive movements. When we begin to unpack the components of forepleasure, we may find a whole erotics of form, which is perhaps what we most need if we are to make formalism serve an understanding of the human functions of literature. Forepleasure would include the notion of both delay and advance in the textual dynamic, the creation of that "dilatory space" which Roland Barthes, in *S/Z*, claimed to be the essence of the textual middle, through which we seek to advance toward the discharge of the end, yet all the while perversely delaying, returning

backwards in order to put off the promised end, and perhaps to assure its greater significance.

Forepleasure implies the possibility of fetishism, the interesting threat of being waylaid by some element along the way to the "proper" end, taking some displaced substitute or simulacrum for the thing itself, a mystification in which most literature deals, sometimes eventually to expose the displacement or substitution as a form of false consciousness, sometimes to expose the end itself as the false lure. Fetishism indeed seems to be characteristic of literature, perhaps especially of narrative literature in its "realist" phase, where objects, details, metonymies, and synecdoches predominate in the gradual creation of persons, places, and plots. As Freud explains in his essay on *Fetishism* (1927), the substitute or simulacrum comes to be invested with all the curiosity originally directed toward the missing object of investigation, the maternal phallus. The fixation of the fetishist on a certain object is comparable to "the stopping of memory in traumatic amnesia." Freud continues:

> As in this latter case, the subject's interest comes to a halt half-way, as it were; it is as though the last impression before the uncanny and traumatic one is retained as fetish. Thus the foot or the shoe owes its preference as a fetish – or a part of it – to the circumstance that the inquisitive boy peered at the woman's genitals from below, from her legs up; fur and velvet – as has long been suspected – are a fixation of the sight of the pubic hair, which should have been followed by the longed-for sight of the female member; pieces of underclothing, which are so chosen as a fetish, crystallize the moment of undressing, the last moment in which the woman could still be regarded as phallic. (*SE* 21: 155)

One could perhaps tease out the implications of this passage in conjunction with Roman Jakobson's celebrated insights on metonymy as the master trope of

narrative. Fetishism might thus emerge as a key concept in narrative analysis because it accounts for the intense interest attributed to the detail or the accessory, read as signs of things to come, indices of character, investments of affect in things along the way, which must be valorized if reading is not to be a simple devourment of the text in order to reach its end.

Forepleasure includes as well the possibilities, related to fetishism, of exhibitionism and voyeurism, which surely are central to literary texts and their reading. Barthes indeed proposes the strip-tease as a model of reading, a progressive undressing or unveiling of meaning, through delays, feints, enigmas leading to false expectations before they are resolved. He introduces a specifically fetishistic notion when he asks, "Isn't the most erotic place of a body *there where clothing gaps?*" – the piece of flesh seen in the interstices of clothing.[7] Barthes sets such "gapping" in contrast to the strip-tease, where

> all the excitement is concentrated on the *hope* of seeing the genitals (the schoolboy's dream) or of knowing the end of the story (the novelistic satisfaction). Paradoxically (since it belongs to mass consumption), this pleasure is more intellectual than the other: it is an oedipal pleasure (to denude, to know, to learn the beginning and the end), if it is true that all narrative (all unveiling of the truth) is a staging of the Father (absent, hidden, or suspended) – which would explain the consubstantiality of narrative forms, family structures, and interdictions on nudity, all brought together in our culture in the myth of Noah's nakedness covered by his sons.

One may want to reject Barthes' sharp distinction between texts of strip-tease and of gapping, and to see both processes at work in the realist tradition of narrative, which promises an eventual disclosure, but works by way of partial and even unexpected uncoverings along the way. Access to the end – to fulfillment of desire, to

knowledge of truth – usually is difficult and partial, it comes in glimpses and substitute revelations, in the accumulation of a displaced wisdom.

I don't intend to illustrate my general remarks through textual readings here. Let me simply cite, as a suggestive example, the moment from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* when Rodolphe is leading Emma to the scene of their first lovemaking: "But her long riding dress got in her way, even though she held it up by the hem, and Rodolphe, walking behind her, fixed his eyes on the delicate white stocking exposed between the black cloth and the black boot, like a bit of nudity."[8] Rodolphe's voyeuristic forepleasure here figures the reading process in the novel itself, which always presents Emma Bovary as the fascinated object of gazes and consciousnesses that never take her in as a whole, but rather by way of fetishized accessories and features. We never see Emma in her entirety, which may suggest that she is not whole, that she is an incoherent bundle of desires – as her lovers and observers are inadequate registers of desire – but also may allegorize the status of the realist novel as a whole, which sets itself the task of knowing by way of phenomenal presence in the world, and thus limits its capacity to summarize and totalize. The novel offers an approach *to* much more than an arrival *at*.[9]

Narratives of approach that fetishize the objects of desire that they present, and thus tell the story of epistemological complexities that are also frustrations of desire, would offer a good field for investigation of how forepleasure structures the text, and becomes susceptible of great variety and complication. An example among many would be Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Le Bonheur dans le crime* (a tale from *Les Diaboliques*, another of which I discuss in chapter 3), where the principal narrator, Dr Torty, comes to scrutinize the very body of Hauteclaire Stassin for a sign of the crime that she and her lover have committed: poisoning her lover's wife. His inspection

of her body fetishizes Hauteclaire as the woman who is impenetrable to the scientific gaze because she has no bodily opening. Torty says of the couple's unpardonable happiness after their crime: "You must believe that I have studied it well, scrutinized it well, rescrutinized it thoroughly! . . . I have put my two feet and my two eyes as much as I could into the lives of these two beings, to see if there wasn't in their astonishing and revolting happiness a fault, a crack, however small, in some hidden place."[10] Hauteclaire, the daughter of a master-at-arms who herself becomes a peerless fencer (and is named for the sword of Roland's companion Olivier), is commonly seen in the fencer's tights and jerkin, which become emblems of her impenetrability. The story thematizes fully a forepleasure which is at once sexual and cognitive, where indeed the quest for knowledge is both "scopophilic" and "epistemophilic," an erotically invested drive to see, to have, and to know, which constitutes the entire plot of the novella. Barbey, a belated Romantic who has reflected on the lessons of such as Balzac, Baudelaire, and Flaubert, gives notable versions of literature that is nothing but forepleasure: where knowing and having are so frustrated that all the drama is invested in approaches, overtures, voyeurism, and display.

In the notion of forepleasure there lurks in fact all manner of perversity, and ultimately the possibility of the polymorphous perverse, the possibility of a text that would delay, displace, and deviate terminal discharge to an extent that it became nonexistent – as, perhaps, in the textual practice of the "writeable text" (*texte scriptible*) prized by Barthes, in Beckett, for instance, or Phillippe Sollers. But we find as good an illustration of effective perversity in the text of Henry James, and in the principle (well known to the New Critics) that the best poems accommodate a maximum of ironic texture within their frail structures, a postponement and ambiguation of overt statement. In fact, the work of textuality may

insure that all literature is, by its very nature, essentially perverse.

What is most important to me is the sense that the notion of forepleasure as it is advanced by Freud implies the possibility of a formalist aesthetic, one that can be extended to the properly rhetorical field, that speaks to the erotic, which is to say the dynamic, dimensions of form: form as something that is not inert, but part of a process that unfolds and develops as texts are activated through the reading process. A neo-formalist psychoanalytic criticism could do worse than attach itself to studying the various forms of the "fore" in forepleasure, developing a tropology of the perversities through which we turn back, turn around, the simple consumption of texts, making their reading a worthy object of analysis. Such a study would be, as Freud suggests, about "bribing," or perhaps about *teasing* in all its forms, from puns to metaphors, perhaps ultimately – given the basic temporal structure of phantasy and of the literary text – what we might call "clock-teasing," which is perhaps the way we create the illusion of creating a space of meaning within the process of ongoing temporality.

A more formalist psychoanalytic criticism, then, would be attuned to form as our situation, our siting, within the symbolic order, the order within which we constitute meaning and ourselves as endowed with meaning. This kind of psychoanalytic criticism would, of course, pay the greatest attention to the rhetorical aspect of psychic operations as presented by psychoanalysis, and would call upon the rhetorical and semiotic reinterpretation of Freud advanced by Emile Benveniste, Lacan, and others, and illustrated by the work of the best post-structural psychoanalytic critics. Yet it might be objected that this more obviously rhetorical version does not automatically solve the problem of how to use the crossover between psychic operations and tropes. The status of the "and" linking psychoanalysis and literary text may still

remain at issue: what does one want to *claim* in showing that the structure of a metaphor in Victor Hugo is equivalent to the structure of a symptom? What is alleged to be the place and the force of the occulted name of the father that may be written in metaphor as symptom, symptom as metaphor?[11] Is there, more subtly now, a claim of explanation advanced in the crossover? Or is an ingenious piece of intertextuality all that takes place?

Something, I think, that lies between the two. My views on this question have been clarified by an acute and challenging review of my book, *Reading for the Plot*, by Terence Cave, that appeared in *TLS*. Cave asks what he calls "the embarrassing question . . . what is the Freudian model worth?"[12] In his discussion of a possible answer to this question, Cave notes that

> Brooks's argument for a Freudian poetics doesn't appear to depend on an imperialist move which would simply annex a would-be science of the psyche and release it from its claim to tell the truth. He talks repeatedly as if the value of the Freudian model is precisely that it does, in some sense, give access to the way human desires really operate.

I think this is accurate, and I am happy to be exonerated from the charge of imperialism in the reverse – the imperialism that would come from the incursion of literary criticism into psychoanalysis in search of mere metaphors, which has sometimes been the case with poststructuralist annexations of psychoanalytic concepts. I certainly do want to grant at least a temporary privilege to psychoanalysis in literary study, in that the trajectory through psychoanalysis forces us to confront the human stakes of literary form, while I think that these stakes need to be considered *in* the text, as activated in its reading. As I suggested earlier, I believe that we constitute ourselves as human subjects in part through our

fictions, and therefore that the study of human fiction-making and psychic process are convergent activities, and superimposable forms of analysis. To say more precisely in what sense psychoanalysis can lead us to models for literary study that generate new insight, we might best look toward a concept that lies at the very heart of Freudian analytic practice, the concept of the transference, as it is constituted between analysand and analyst. Here we may find the most useful elaboration of the phantasy model of the text. This is, then, the model that I shall explore in some detail in chapter 2.

Psychoanalysis: Model or Metaphor?

But before turning to the transference, I need to say something more about the "status issues" involved in the meeting of psychoanalysis and literary study. It can be argued – and I have myself argued – that much of Freud's understanding of interpretation and the construction of meaning is grounded in literature, in those "poets and philosophers" he was the first to acknowledge as his precursors. "In which case," comments Cave in his review, psychoanalysis "can't itself provide a grounding, since it is part of the system it attempts to master." Cave continues: "Its advantage (though a precious one) would only be that, in its doubling of narrative and analysis, story and plot, it provides a poetics appropriate to the history of modern fiction." Cave here reverses the more traditional charge that psychoanalysis imperialistically claims to explain literature, to make the more subtle (and contemporary) charge that psychoanalysis may be nothing *but* literature, and the relations of the two nothing more than a play of intertextuality, or even a tautology.

Cave essentially argues that my uses of psychoanalysis, especially the concept of transference as a model for

understanding the interaction of narrative between narrator and narratee, may really be more metaphor than model; and Micke Bal has made the same point in her review of the book.[13] Cave's and Bal's criticisms suggest to me that there may be something to be gained by considering the differing status of the models and the metaphor, in an attempt to say which beast psychoanalysis imported into literary study really is. The critical and theoretical literature on metaphor is of course enormous, and that on models – especially in the philosophy of science – merely vast. But without exploring all possible definitions and analyses of the concepts, I think I can safely have recourse to Max Black's well-known study, *Models and Metaphors*, and mainly to the chapter in it entitled "Models and Archetypes," where Black precisely undertakes to consider the "value of recourse to cognitive models."[14] Black distinguishes among "scale models," "analogue models," and "theoretical models," which are generally continuous and share many common properties. In his terms, use of psychoanalysis in literary criticism – or of any other import from "the sciences of man" – would be first of all an "analogue model," comparable to hydraulic models of economic systems, for instance, in that it is called upon to provide symbolic representations of the original (i.e., literary texts) that are not simply reproductive, but homologous in structure. "The dominating principle of the analogue model," writes Black, "is what mathematicians call isomorphism . . . . The analogue model shares with its original not a set of features or an identical proportionality of magnitudes but, more abstractly, the same structure or pattern of relationships" (pp. 222–3). Psychoanalysis in literary study also has aspects of a theoretical model, which differs from the analogue essentially in that it "need not be built; it is enough that it be *described*" (p. 229). With both analogue and theoretical models, "Explicit or implicit rules of correlation are available for translating

statements about the secondary field into corresponding statements about the original field" (p. 230). The analogue model easily slides into the theoretical model – a kind of hypothesis of intelligibility – when one considers how one translates from model to original: rather than simply thinking *by* analogy, one may – in the manner of a number of the great nineteenth-century English physicists, Clerk Maxwell or Lord Kelvin, for instance – think "*through* and by means of an underlying analogy" (p. 229). Even if one begins with the idea that the model is a heuristic fiction, there generally comes a moment of "ontological commitment" to the model, where "We pin our hopes on the existence of a common structure" in the model and its field of application.

What seems to be characteristic of the valuable model, then, is its force as a "speculative instrument" (to use a term of I. A. Richards' that Black cites with approval): the detailed and systematic consequences that result when one considers A in the light of a model provided by B, where systematic description of the structure of B should open new insights into the structure of A. Should this be taken to mean – in the case of psychoanalysis and literary study, for instance – that B provides a metalanguage for the analysis of A? The search for a metalanguage for literary study was of course a preoccupation of structuralist thinking in its early and most self-confident stage. Roland Barthes' attempt to construct a literary semiology, for example, testifies to this widely shared ambition to found a master discourse of literary discourse. Yet a post-structuralist Barthes, upon his inauguration of the Chair of Semiology at the Collège de France, would explicitly renounce this ambition, conceding that language can have no metalanguage.[15] In fact, use of models may be a way of avoiding the (impossible) notion of a metalanguage. As Black points out (citing R. B. Braithwaite's discussion in his book, *Scientific Explanation*), use of models avoids the " 'difficulties

involved in having to think explicitly about the language or other form of symbolism by which the theory is represented.' "[16] Black indeed appears to set aside the notion of metalanguage when he speaks of an "analogical transfer of a vocabulary" between model and original, and when he argues that the "memorable models" of science operate in much the same manner as good metaphors: "They, too," he says of scientific models, "bring about a wedding of disparate subjects, by a distinctive operation of transfer of the *implications* of relatively well-organized cognitive fields. And as with other weddings, their outcomes are unpredictable. Use of a particular model . . . may . . . help us to notice what otherwise would be overlooked, to shift the relative emphasis attached to details – in short, to *see new connections*" (p. 237).

At this point, as Black admits, models come very close to looking like metaphors, which are "interactive" according to his definition, which is largely derived from I. A. Richards' definition, in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, of metaphor as a "transaction between contexts."[17] Both require "analogical transfer of a vocabulary"; like metaphor, a model may have "the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other." Nonetheless, Black is intent to maintain a distinction between models and metaphors. In the first place, he claims that the term *metaphor* is best restricted to relatively brief statements; the extended use of a model would find a more appropriate rhetorical analogue in the term *allegory*. More important, Black argues, is the fact that

> a metaphor operates largely with *commonplace* implications. You need only proverbial knowledge, as it were, to have your metaphor understood; but the maker of a scientific model must have prior control of a well-knit scientific theory if he is to do more than hang an attractive

> picture on an algebraic formula. Systematic complexity of the source of the model and capacity for analogical development are of the essence. (p. 239)

Here, Black quotes Stephen Toulmin, in *The Philosophy of Science*:

> It is in fact a great virtue of a good model that it does suggest further questions, taking us beyond the phenomena from which we began, and tempts us to formulate hypotheses which turn out to be experimentally fertile. . . . Certainly it is this suggestiveness, and systematic deployability, that makes a good model something more than a simple metaphor.[18]

Leaving aside for the moment Toulmin's somewhat dismissive notion of metaphor, I think we can safely claim that psychoanalysis on this definition does provide models to literary study. "Suggestiveness and systematic deployability" are precisely the characteristics that make us think that psychoanalytic models offer something of value to the literary critic. A number of suggestive models can be, and have been, systematically deployed in a way that effectively demonstrates the isomorphism of textual and psychic process. And like the theorists in physics whom Black admires, we consider this isomorphism to indicate not merely that the model is a good "heuristic fiction," but that it is existentially connected to its application, for this is how useful models generate understanding in their deployment. In other words, such models are not simply expository devices, illustrations; they are also discovery procedures.

What, in this context, might we say about Freud's understanding of his own use of models? Let me briefly cite two instances. In *An Autobiographical Study*, Freud describes the elaboration of his "topographical model" as an attempt "to picture the apparatus of the mind as being

built up of a number of *agencies* or *systems* whose relations to one another are expressed in spatial terms, without, however, implying any connection with the actual anatomy of the brain" (*SE* 20:32). He goes on to say: "Such ideas as these are part of a speculative superstructure of psychoanalysis, any portion of which can be abandoned or changed without loss or regret the moment its inadequacy has been proved." Freudian metapsychology thus appears to be fully consonant with Black's description of theoretical models in physics which are held to be heuristic fictions but at the same time are the object of an "ontological commitment," since we know that Freud thinks *in terms of* his topographical model, deploys it systematically so that it may provide discovery procedures. My other example comes from near the end of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where Freud offers an apology for the difficulty and the strangeness of the descriptions of psychic functioning he has laid before his reader, and offers the explanation that the apparent obscurity of the processes he has been presenting "is merely due to our being obliged to operate with the scientific terms, that is to say with the figurative language, peculiar to psychology." Freud continues:

> We could not otherwise describe the processes in question at all, and indeed we could not have become aware of them. The deficiencies in our description would probably vanish if we were already in a position to replace the psychological terms by psysiological or chemical ones. It is true that they too are only part of a figurative language; but it is one with which we have long been familiar and which is perhaps a simpler one as well. (*SE* 18: 59)

The equation of "scientific terms" with "figurative language" (*Bildersprache*) appears effectively to abolish any distinction between model and metaphor, to claim that model is "merely" metaphor. Another set of scientific

terms might be preferable as a model because more familiar and possibly simpler, but it would be no less figurative. Freud thus explicitly admits – as Black only does implicitly – that model differs from metaphor only in its readier deployability and comprehensibility. Since Freud claims to be "obliged to operate" with a figurative language, the figure in question must in some manner be a catachresis, the kind of metaphor used to plug a gap in the signifying system. And catachresis is precisely the inescapable metaphor, that which allows of no distinction between "literal" and "figural," that which allows of no escape from the radically tropological nature of language.

Freud thus appears to be a more radical rhetorician than Black, to recognize that linguistic meaning depends radically on metaphor and the interaction of contexts. Now, the notion whose use as model or metaphor I will set out to elucidate – the notion of "transference" – is of course itself a representation, perhaps an allegory, of interaction or transaction. In the transference, the analysand constitutes himself as a subject by way of the dialogic and dialectic presence of the analyst, in a dynamic of erotic interaction. Furthermore, the whole relationship is metaphoric, in that it is based on the analyst's role as surrogate for past figures of authority, and the revival of infantile scenarios of satisfaction that are reproduced and replayed as if they were of the present. Freud repeatedly describes the transference as a realm of the "as-if," as an "artificial illness," and as a "new edition or reprint" of an old text. And of course, the word *transference* itself is merely the Latinate version of *metaphor*, as the German *Übertragung* is the Teutonic version. If I argue for a model of reading based on Freud's notion of transference, then, I use as model what is already a metaphor, or perhaps an allegory of metaphor. My doing so may suggest that the relationship I want to establish between psychoanalysis and literature is itself a transact-

ive and transferential one, based on a "transaction between contexts," to refer once more to Richards, and on Black's "using language directly appropriate to the one [domain] as a lens for seeing the other." What this may come down to is an argument that the best – and perhaps the only – model for the *use* of the psychoanalytic model in literary study is the model of metaphor.

Students of literature should by now be convinced that there is no metalanguage available to them. When critics have taken psychoanalysis to be a metalanguage that "explains" literature, they have always been talking beside the point – the point being the structure and rhetoric of texts. We must not, as Black says, use models "metaphysically." But to say that the models available to us in psychoanalysis are "only" metaphors should not be a source of despair on an interactional, transactive, and transferential understanding of metaphor. On the contrary, model as metaphor can in this view be "suggestive" in its "systematic deployment," that is, can function as a tool for both comprehension and discovery.

One can, then, resist the notion that psychoanalysis "explains" literature and yet insist that the kind of intertextual relation it holds to literature is quite different from the intertextuality that obtains between two poems or novels, and that it illuminates in quite other ways. For the psychoanalytic intertext obliges the critic to make a transit through a systematic discourse elaborated to describe the dynamics of psychic process. The similarities and differences, in object and in intention, of this discourse from literary analysis creates a tension which is productive of perspective, of stereoptical effect. Psychoanalysis is not an arbitrarily chosen intertext for literary analysis, but rather a particularly insistent and demanding intertext, in that mapping across the boundaries from one territory to the other both confirms and complicates our understanding of how mind reformulates the real, how it constructs the necessary fictions by which we

dream, desire, interpret, indeed by which we constitute ourselves as human subjects. The detour through psychoanalysis forces the critic to respond to the erotics of form – that is, to an engagement with the psychic investments of rhetoric, the dramas of desire played out in tropes. Psychoanalysis matters to us as literary critics because it stands as a constant reminder that the attention to form, properly conceived, is not a sterile formalism, but rather one more attempt to draw the symbolic and fictional map of our place in existence.

NOTES

1 Shoshana Felman, "To Open the Question," *Yale French Studies* 55–6 (1977); reprinted Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, pp. 5–10.
2 Simon O. Lesser, *Fiction and the Unconscious* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 297; p. 15.
3 Geoffrey Hartman, *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 42.
4 See Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952).
5 Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Daydreaming," *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 9: 147–8. Further references to Freud will be given within parentheses in the text, using the abbreviation *SE* for *Standard Edition*.
6 Meredith Skura, *The Literary Use of the Psychoanalytic Process* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).
7 Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), pp. 19–20; English trans. Richard Miller, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).
8 Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (Paris: Gallimard/Folio, 1972), p. 215.
9 On these questions, see the more extensive treatment in my *Body Work* (Cambridge; Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), ch. 4.

10 Barbey d'Aurevilly, *Le Bonheur dans le crime*, in *Les Diaboliques* (Paris: Garnier/Flammarion, 1967), p. 164.
11 I allude here to an example used by Jacques Lacan in "L'Instance de la lettre," *Ecrits* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1966), p. 506ff.
12 Terence Cave, "The Prime and Precious Thing," *Times Literary Supplement*, January 4, 1985, p. 14.
13 Mieke Bal, "Tell-Tale Theories," *Poetics Today* 7: 3 (1986), pp. 555–64.
14 Max Black, "Models and Archetypes," in *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 219. Future references to this essay will be given in parentheses in my text.
15 Roland Barthes, *Leçon* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978), p. 36.
16 Black, p. 235. See R. B. Braithwaite, *Scientific Explanation* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 92.
17 See Black, "Metaphor," in *Models and Metaphors*; see I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 94.
18 Stephen Toulmin, *The Philosophy of Science* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), pp. 38–9; cit. Black, p. 239.