

A Psychoanalyst in the Classroom



Character Studies in the Human Condition of Education

As a psychoanalyst I must take a greater interest in affective rather than intellectual processes, more in the unconscious than in the conscious life of the psyche.

—Sigmund Freud, “On the Psychology of the Grammar-School Boy”

Necessities

A sixty-year-old Freud (1914b) declared his abiding interest in the unconscious a few paragraphs into his brief essay on memories of his childhood schooling, a contribution to a celebration of the fifty-year anniversary of the founding of his elementary school in Vienna.¹ He was asked to write on his influences in choosing a profession. It must have been a strange assignment since he discovered not only the impossible profession that affected him but also its theory made to question the destiny of the human’s utter susceptibility to the other. Influence, for Freud, is a middle term, somewhere between unconscious impressions and the address of the transference. It would be the unknown influence that binds the urgencies of the inner world to our relations with the external one, and this affects not only the psychoanalyst but also what can be said about the vicissitudes of education. Is this the reason Freud must care more for the unknown than the known, more about the unconscious than the conscious?² And why for the psychoanalyst is education an exemplary frame? Freud tells us there are undercurrents that destroy

the progression of time: “It gives you a queer feeling if late in life, you are ordered once again to write a school essay. . . . It is strange how readily you obey the orders, as though nothing in particular had happened in the last half century” (1914b, 241). How then does one grasp uncanny influence if it is both conscious and unconscious? In looking back on his childhood of education and feeling again the ripples of affective affairs as if they have never left, he remembers his intense studies of the teacher’s character and cannot decide what impressed him the most: the teacher’s knowledge or what the teacher was like. He admits that the roots of both desires were already entwined in earlier relations and the phantasies that arise from the family romance. His essay concludes by assigning his schoolmasters a little memory lesson: to understand your own student learning antics, return to the nursery. Only then will you too be able to ask, but what then influences the desire for an education one knows nothing about?

Learning antics are almost impossible to imagine in university life, though the oddest details of our earliest years seem to repeat in the currency of students and the professor’s feelings toward teaching and learning. The indivisible influence behind the scenes—the unconscious education—that Freud pulls this reader closer to is unexpected: namely, the human’s utter susceptibility to love’s impressions and its loss enacted in forgotten scenes of learning and teaching. So the psychoanalyst in the classroom must care more for the elusive impressions of education, not as culmination but as ongoing dynamics composed from our human condition. It is these intimacies—of being influenced by both psychoanalysis in the clinic and a life in education—that bring me to write from the excess of their affective matters. Pathos and pleasure with the subject of learning leads to my thinking more about Freud’s other understanding of influence: long after the events of childhood recede into memories and fracture in forgetting, the shudder of our earliest education persists. It has a second act in the drama and comedy of teaching and learning, and over the course of this chapter I introduce its third act: the psychoanalytic difficulties and pleasures of writing toward unconscious life in education. The work is a little like reading Luigi Pirandello’s (1921) play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, that begins with the first line of complaint, “I can’t see.” The psychoanalyst receives this negation and takes away the “no.”

When Freud looked back upon his affective world, he had to admit something he could not see. The present seemed to vanish and the past too was felt as a rather strange land. Freud (1914b) called childhood and youth an “extinct civilization” (241) akin to a buried archeological site containing fragments left behind in the form of side-by-side contrary feelings, termed “emotional ambivalence” (242), that we all require to detach from the childhood sense of the father and mother as omnipotent. It is at

this crossroad of emotional life that Freud is sent to school to meet his teachers, who oddly resemble his emotional attitude toward his parents. Teachers appear as already complete, all knowing, and as mind readers. His study of influence as both a goodnight kiss and a wake-up call reckon with what could not be acknowledged at the time: that the play of love, hate, and ambivalence created in family life are transferred into any relation of learning. Freud names this practiced emotional logic as the rough draft of our psychology, another word for influence. So the dynamics of psychical reality and external demands meet without invitation. Their interplays are felt before known and learned before they can be understood.

For the contemporary psychoanalytic field, contentious and diverse as it is, good and bad influences come in many guises: from the other, the unconscious, the touch of communal bonds, the transference love and hate, the advent of guilt, the mysteries of the dream, the misheard words, gaps in theory, the history we have never lived but may wish for, and our vulnerability to and recoil from dependency in self/other relations. Influence, it turns out, carries on what we cannot see coming. It is a delicate matter that quickly turns on anxiety, paranoia, mania, phantasies, and the urge to act that continues to be a difficult venture for thinking about any narrative. More than a few psychoanalysts ask what inhibits their invention of psychoanalysis and how they may face the play of their unconscious education. Why, more often than can be admitted, does learning stall midsentence? At what point does the touch of the other's words feel heavy-handed? How does the desire to be original leave us in tatters? And what to make of our school assignments? When analysts today write about school memories, they consider their transference to education through new approaches to their old conflicts with dependency, helplessness, authority, knowledge, and love and hate.

"Few of us feel," write Gabbard and Ogden, "that we really know what we are doing when we complete our formal psychoanalytic training" (311). We can also add that during the learning of psychoanalysis, or learning anything for that matter, few of us feel we know what we are doing. Nor are we really clear about what we imagine our teachers or their theories are doing to us. Gabbard and Ogden suggest that learning reminds us of our immaturity, dependency, vulnerability, and precocity. And in the learning relation, phantasies of the other's knowledge involve anxiety over what the other holds back from us. It is indeed a curious dilemma. If we imagine we are only being told what to do, we feel impingement. If we are left too long in our regard, we feel abandoned. Gabbard and Ogden stay close to these affective dilemmas by exploring how the unconscious force of being educated throughout their lives affects the rules they thought they had to follow and note how difficult it is to break these rules open and live creatively with doubt. It is a brave admission to trace their many years of education with

the force of their phantasies of learning and with their defenses against being affected while wondering more how the desire to be influenced collapses into fear of compliance and not measuring up. Gabbard and Ogden recall a stringent comment Wilfred Bion made to other analysts during one of his many clinical seminars:

It is only after you have qualified [as an analyst] that you have a chance of becoming an analyst. The analyst you become is you and you alone; you have to respect the uniqueness of your personality—that is what you use, not all these interpretations [these theories that you use to combat the feeling that you are not really an analyst and do not know how to become one]. (Qtd. in Gabbard and Ogden 311, with their added comments)

So there really are complexes of qualifying problems that urge us to over-use our theories of self-doubt. And much boils down to the subjective fact that personality leans on taking personally the self's difficulties in trying to know. The analyst learns more about the self than is wanted, and some of the defenses against psychoanalysis include a range of resistances: clinging to idealizations of theory or clinical experience, getting a headache from the pounding voice of previous analysts, and falling into a phantasy of an indigestible education and an empty self.

One might consider these conflicts in learning as a crisis between affects and ideas. But they also take us to a question of time. Quinodoz and colleagues (2006) extend the becoming of an analyst to the capacity to influence the future of psychoanalysis that

depends, to a great extent, on us psychoanalysts and our ability to transmit in a lively way both to our patients and colleagues the specific nature of the psychoanalytic experience. This demands of us a great deal of inner freedom; how are we to find the courage necessary to acquire that liberty, to hold on to it and pass it on? . . . [and] to find the audacity to be a psychoanalyst. (329–330)

It is a paradoxical demand that inner freedom be assumed before it can occur. And how to express the frustration that keeps company with that liberty? There are, after all, inexplicable times when freedom itself is destroyed by one's emotional logic and phantasies of irreparable loss. And yet, these analysts write from their everyday audacity as notice to the future of inner freedom. Only by accompanying their difficulties can they create a new relation: "the fact of freedom of expression goes hand in hand with the ability to listen attentively to what others have to say" (330). Much depends

upon the liberty of listening for what is not said but nonetheless conveyed. Jurgen Reeder (2008) places this future of conflicts into the presence of our political scene: "The fate of psychoanalysis is inextricably bound up with the future development of democracy" (121). That fragile freedom makes way for the right to a symbolic and the fate of democracy too must call upon the audacity of free association.

Now these demands for the capacity to be a self, for a subjective position in the work, for an interest transmitting all that work, and for the audacity of freedom of expression as tied to the other's care, are not so far away from Freud's essay on the difficulty of remembering his schoolboy psychology and our inquiry into the stirrings of depth education. Inside each view one can find the insistence on the situation of the human condition, susceptible as it is to what is most incomplete and difficult for us to know. And what insists is our vulnerability, often experienced as depression, anxiety, inhibition, and fear of emotional life. In university education symptoms of affect go unremarked, and what is unspeakable is brushed under the vagaries of mental health without wondering why. More than a few professors feel helpless. Some may believe that by the time one comes to the university, all of the problems of emotional life should have been solved, and they turn away from pressing intimacies of learning with the defense that only their knowledge is important or, when their knowledge fails, complain that no one prepared them to be in contact with the difficulties of teaching and learning. Still others believe that education is impersonal. Few would consider these complaints as well-schooled emotional attitudes and as symptoms of our educational malady, flowering as crisis between affective relations and intellectual engagement in university life.

Freud's statement that opens this chapter gives us a clue as to one dimension of the difficulties we in university education face. His insistence may be understood as anticipating an intellectual and affective crisis that tears the soft tissue of both psychoanalysis and education. It concerns questioning what people learn about the life of the mind as human condition by asking how the genesis of learning may be apprehended, and then, whether any theory of learning can make something more from the dissipations of unconscious life and its relation to lost love, memory, desire, and phantasies of authority. Accepting a greater interest in affective processes challenges our understanding of the social bond, what we believe happens in the exchange of knowledge, and what must be disillusioned to meet the other. It brought Freud to an affectionate theory of learning. In his "autobiographical" study of his work, Freud (1925c) noted what changed for him:

Even the most brilliant results were liable to be suddenly wiped away if my personal relation with the patient became disturbed. It was true that they would be re-established if a reconciliation

could be effected; but such an occurrence proved that the personal emotional relation between doctor and patient was after all stronger than the whole cathartic process, and it was precisely that factor which escaped every effort at control. (27)

Freud's choice for a greater interest in the destiny of his psychical life however begins with a narcissistic blow: lovely knowledge is "suddenly wiped away" with the other's reply. And it is the challenge of creating a new relation with the other that escapes controlling knowledge.

Throughout this chapter I use Freud's greater interest in the unconscious and the conflicts entailed in encountering the emotional world of self and other to introduce the emergence of education as human condition and to ask why matters of teaching and learning rely on the fragilities of a social bond, largely conveyed in the transference. As both a psychoanalyst and university professor, I wonder what else occurs behind the curtain of any education and why, when working with others, a change of heart becomes our greatest challenge. The graduate and undergraduate students and the professors I meet are curious about this combination of professions, though at first many worry what I will do to them, only asking how they feel and ignoring what they know and want to know. These sticky anxieties are not such a far cry from what I felt during my many years of learning in a psychoanalytic institute. There is no easy technique for taking our teaching and learning personally. Nor is there an easy method for transmitting to the other how it is that our work is taken personally. Also difficult to convey is my interest in psychoanalyzing phantasies of education—the fate of the ideas we love and hate, the presuppositions unconsciously exchanged in knowledge, authority, and our transferences—that do go on to affect our reading and writing lives and our sense of self with others. Freely associating with these interests does, however, invite phantasies of education onto the couch.

I must wonder how the mix-up of a history of ideas and personal events made from trying to learn affects me. I must be curious about my role in pedagogical catastrophes and ask what else is being communicated when relationships to students feel significant or insignificant. As a psychoanalyst in the classroom, my associations to teaching and learning occur during times when anxiety irrupts in the other's unexpected reply, with accidents of desire, and with the wish to write of education psychoanalytically. While clinical and pedagogical work may not be equated, each may be taken personally. Both activities depend upon getting to know the emotional situation of trying to narrate the human condition. And characters enter and exist in these rooms. The psychoanalytic field provides me with some vocabulary to sensitize the feel of contact; words such as libido, phantasy, transference, countertransference, and desire and neurosis, open the ritualized meanings

of my psychological events to new beginnings. And the archives of clinical case studies that document this work serve as my model for writing. Here too conflicts emerge between affective and intellectual yearnings that play as emotional ambivalence toward affective life in university learning and teaching and that seems reparable in writing from this emotional life.

Let us concede that in presentation, logic, style, and reach the unconscious is difficult to know. It is one of those thorny terms André Green (2005a) names as “an epistemological break” (97). Psychoanalysts still lean upon Freud’s dynamic definition for the unconscious: that *it* comes without the cover of intentions; follows the emotional logic of the wish and the pleasure principal; welcomes contradictions; works through equation, substitution, and displacement; and is timeless. There are also the procedures of condensation, where objects lose their boundaries and displacement creates new signs (Türcke 2013). Even if the unconscious is in agreement with itself, it takes the other to do its work. The unconscious, then, is not a possession but a relation to both intrapsychic affairs and the currency of intersubjective ties. When we are requested to say what is furthest from the mind or asked to name what we would never think, a fight is sure to follow or rather an improbable conflict occurs for the psyche between memory and forgetting, reality and phantasy, self and other, and between the work of lifting forgotten meaning and repressing intolerable thoughts.

Keep in mind that when questioning the density of well-worn and tattered desires, a greater investment in the unconscious does not abolish consciousness. Conscious life, after all, is an instance of the psychical, ostensibly closest to the world of others near and far, yet also partly unconscious. The psychoanalyst’s obligation is to accompany these passions for knowledge and ignorance wherever they lead. “As a psychoanalyst, I must . . . ,” writes Freud (1914b, 355). And his patients demanded this of him. For words to give birth to a new narrative, Freud must change his affections, tact, and style of communication. He must learn to wait. It is no longer a matter of deciding what is wrong with someone else and telling the person how to fix it. “The procedure,” writes Freud, “is laborious and time-consuming. It presupposes great interest in psychological happenings, but personal concern for the patients as well” (Freud and Breuer 1893–1895, 265). We have as well a good enough description of education.

The writing also takes time and, as “psychological happening,” the writer must care for words and their deferrals. Freud (Freud and Breuer 1893–1895) admitted as much quite early in his studies in hysteria. These case studies read like short stories, or unfinished dreams. They have the feel of a poetical undertaking. Something happens to language, and, indeed, throughout his opus readers join a lively parade of unforgettable characters. They transform his theory and his mode of practice and have their say. Yet

as figures of writing, the characters are not immune from the writer's conflicts. Sometimes they turn up in Freud's dreams, only to appear as composite characters on improbable missions and serve as emissaries of garbled words. Colleagues too appear and disappear. There are friends and enemies, patients and collaborators, family members and lost loves. Some are banished in a few sentences, while others, even when erased, hover in the margins of his ideas. The case is never closed.

With hysteria come the characters called Fräulein Anna O., Frau Emmy Von N., Miss Lucy R., and Fräulein Elisabeth Von R. The phobias, the obsessions, infantile sexuality, and the psychosis follow from the *I must* of Little Hans, Dora, the Rat Man, the Wolf Man, Schreber, the nameless female homosexual, and Professor Freud. Concepts as well have character: his majesty the baby, the royal family, the crumpled giraffe, and the hat, for instance. And all of them stand in for something else. There are also casts of characters borrowed from creative writers, poets, artists, theater, ancient myths, and more than once, the biblical figure of Moses. In an early defense of the necessities of taking a literary approach as his model for writing, Freud (Freud and Breuer 1893–1895) wrote:

I must console myself with the reflection that the nature of the subject is evidently responsible for this, rather than any preference of my own . . . [but] to obtain at least some kind of insight into the course of that affection . . . namely an intimate connection between the story of the patient's sufferings and the symptoms of his illness. (160–161; italics added)

Yes, Freud had to disguise the actual identities of his patients, though even if today many of their names are known, their destiny, now as archive figures, holds more in store. But it is not much of a question to ask who each patient really is. No one can answer to that and besides, each character stands in for someone else and there are too many of him or her. Each treatment is unique and unrepeatably, while much is lost in the ether of exchanging words. The clinical reports themselves become character studies of “psychological happenings”—accounts of where frustration erupts, the method fails, the patient walks out, and an impasse is noticed too late. And the case studies may offer a sense of the dimensions of reparation made when people are understood as more than their symptoms or walking instances of a theory. The more interested question is why our cast of characters must rummage through their personal effects, why we worry about what has gone missing, and how, in speaking to another, we too transfer memories from the inside to the story yet to be told.

In combing over Freud's close and missed encounters, many commentators have noted that in order to touch readers, patients, analysts, students, professors, and the general public, Freud had to take the side of affect and go beyond the limits of personal preference and that, "nature of the subject is responsible for this" (Freud and Breuer 1893–1895, 161). To write of psychoanalysis is to write psychoanalytically.³ How else may we explain the desire to write against all odds? Character studies, along with the speculative theories that pressure and release their hold, invite the writer's own character to emerge from the work and thus create a means to grasp the transference and call upon it. Even with Freud's notion of "some kind of insight into the course of that affection" (Freud and Breuer 1893–1895, 160), one may only find the fault lines and latency of intimate knowledge. The influence is too unwieldy to posit a final cause. And so if we readers are to give our attention over to these affective affairs and learn from their affiliations and afflictions, we too must take interest in the unconscious overturning of meaning.

Over the course of this book the overturning of meaning takes many forms: the ego's resistance, the splitting of intellect and affect, the anxieties and phantasies that lean on and agonize the self's defenses against being affected, and the writer's efforts to express what has happened. These revolts bring me to relate our emotional logic in learning to the guts of the human condition of education. Learning with others is, after all, as much a process of digestion as it is vulnerable to regurgitation. And regurgitation, a consequence of feeling force-fed, is one of the central anxieties reported by students in the university. Inside these anxieties one can find what holds the story back. The metaphor of digestion is beholden to Bion (1993), who likened the mind to the stomach and thought that knowledge could then only signify getting to know or tolerate the taste of emotional experience by linking one's thoughts to the apparatus of thinking.⁴ In reconsidering one of his early essays, "On Arrogance," Bion tried again to relate curiosity, stupidity, and arrogance, not from the words of the patient but from the valance of the Oedipal myth. The problem years later was that Oedipus felt as disastrous the ethic of curiosity. He really did not want to know what others thought and in arrogance felt others were liars and stupid. In the clinical setting Bion came to think that arrogance, stupidity, and curiosity are not easily linked, though they are conflated (161) and present as disqualified mental pain when pride and self-respect are equated and when the patient throws out these words as if they are meaningless, or only have to do with others. Bion may be one of the first psychoanalysts to create a method for introducing discontentment into communicating the psychoanalytic experience. The textual descriptions, he maintained, are always more stable than

what the work feels like, and, properly speaking, the case study is not to be used as a security blanket against one's own defense mechanisms. Training to be an analyst, Bion thought, may be the psychoanalyst's greatest defense against the emotional world.⁵ May we say the same about the preparation for teaching?

Three years after writing his schoolboy psychology, Freud (1917) continues to ponder the heart of memory as both the elemental tie to the other and, more surprisingly, as bound up in the forgetting and resistance that form "a difficulty in the path of psychoanalysis" (137). If separation is so difficult for the subject, so too is our other necessity for passionate bonds to others. The queer feelings and estrangements walk hand in hand, and Freud will go so far as to note that the difficulty is between affect and ideation. So while the ideas of psychoanalysis may be intellectually accepted, he thought this must be a way of fobbing off the difficulty that is "an affective one—something that alienates the feelings of those who come into contact with it" (137). All this resistance to resistance will return in one of his (1940) last unfinished essays, written in exile, "Some Elementary Lessons in Psycho-Analysis":

It is not merely that much of what it has to say offends people's feelings. Almost as much difficulty is created by the fact that our science involves a number of hypotheses—it is hard to say whether they should be regarded as postulates or as products of our research—which are bound to seem very strange to ordinary modes of thought and which fundamentally contradict current views. But there is no help for it. (282)

A century later Kristeva (1998) will ask why apprehending psychical life causes such a disturbance. Is the trouble with trying to understand the mind or does the threat belong to the question of what kind of relation is at stake when disquieting imagination meets with the psyche's vulnerability and suffering? For the Lacanian Bruce Fink (2014) understanding is the problem. After all, we may know the cause of our sufferings, but that bit of knowledge may only bring us to our knees. Psychological change is of a different order, far slower, easily reversed, and subject to what we do not know. "The desire to know that a new patient comes to analysis with," Fink observes, "is not yet, in effect, a will to discover where his own satisfactions come from, but rather a will to be provided with and a willingness to be satisfied with already formulated knowledge" (82). How close this feels to our first encounters with students or our own encounter with analysts and teachers. We want and don't want them to tell us what they know. The analyst, however, only has questions and wants more speech. Kristeva

(2000) takes the difficulty from the side of desire and as a matter of revolt: “psychoanalysis ultimately communicates this: happiness exists only at the price of a revolt. None of us has pleasure without confronting an obstacle, prohibition, authority, or law that allows us to realize ourselves as autonomous and free” (7).

Kristeva (1998) considers “choice” as a question of “freedom of psychical representation” (6) animated through “the fact that human desire is realized in psychoanalysis from within the relational bond” (10). The bonds are many: with actual people, with phantasies, with thought and sexuality, with object relations, with natality, with beautiful apprehensions, and with a history that gives birth to my own, provided that I symbolize the drives, affect, and the other. Her formulation on these ties is elaborate: “Let us say it without false modesty: no other modern experience, apart from psychoanalysis, offers such a prospect for recommencing psychic life, and thus, in a sense, life as such—in the opening up of choices that secures the manifold capacity for relationships (*liens*)” (12).

But we should also ask, can education too recommence psychical life? With our acknowledgment of libidinal bonds and their restraints, we are back to the human condition of education. There, the professor too has a share in the conflicts that belong to recommending psychic life and choosing what matters the most: the student’s attraction to my intellectual ideas, or her or his cathexis to characters in search of learning. Reminiscent of Freud’s memory dilemmas, the professor may wonder: Is something more required for me to be given over to an interest in remembering subterranean, buried matters? Might wishes for the smooth surface of intellectual exchange be just as easily understood as a defense against getting to know the enfoldments of the learning bond? Freud’s obligation to the unconscious and Kristeva’s formulation of choice and freedom are both the psychoanalyst and professor’s challenge: follow the unconscious, permit the freedom of association, and become affected by transference life. Taking these liberties and reading between the lines of presence and absence is our first approach to meeting the characters that make up education as our human condition.

Intimacies

For the psychoanalyst in the classroom fleeting impressions, accidents, and mishearing contain the material that breaks open the cover of a story. Within the intimacies of experience in education, where the flurry of sad and happy associations weigh in as eventuality; where our sense of time, place, situation, and others scatter through the sieve of desire; where the unconscious dream work of condensation, substitution, displacement, and reversal into its opposite permit phantasy and reality to intermingle; and there, where

our susceptibility to the dust of unknown and forgotten events slips into our moods and perceptions, the stray thought whisks away our intentions. The rough drafts of learning are being written, erased, and revised. We are involved in the intensities of the human condition and efforts to picture its object world of mental representations, much of them unconscious.

A psychoanalyst in the classroom greets these catches of psychical life and the vagaries of learning with more questions. In listening to the gap between words, the unmeant reply, the sexual innuendo, off-the-cuff remarks, and inscrutable questions; in watching the raised eyebrows and sudden frowns; in being rattled by the student hiding behind the computer, or, the one madly texting as if communication only happens beyond the seminar; in noticing the intake of breath and the deflated sigh; and, in noticing a great deal is happening but not yet known, a psychoanalyst in the classroom learns to wait. Communication does not give itself easily, and contact comes when least expected. By asking what else is being conveyed when we teach and learn and by becoming curious about what the student or teacher wants, the question occurs to this psychoanalyst, what passes off as education? How does it come to be that the force of education appears through the figure of a subject-supposed-to-know? And might this subject be inseparable from the anticipations, wishes, ideas, phantasies, and beliefs held for education?

At first, when people speak of what education has missed, one may listen for the symptoms of broken stories of learning, through secret plots and lost time. Many narratives of education carry the convictions of paranoia, anxiety, and depression, and one wonders what happened before the story of abandonment could be told. There are stories of a missed future beyond the subject's reach. Setbacks serve as a terrible reminder that nothing can happen. They come in the form of writing inhibitions and guilty worries one will accidentally plagiarize or be accused of doing so. They come when learning is assumed to be an unchanging possession or a thing held back by someone else. They come with the wish for certainty when choosing a profession, or they carry on the anxiety that one mistake or one bad grade will follow the subject into perpetuity. In these broken stories one has the feeling that an injustice is being written as in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, a novel of social ruins, signs of unaccountable cruelty, and moral anxiety over the nature of love. With the phantasy of the eternal grade comes the closed off thought that nothing can ever change and that all of the treasures or jobs have already been taken. In the broken-off stories of education there are only winners and losers.

In imagining the adolescent syndrome of ideality, Kristeva (2009) is interested in how "the incredible need to believe" leads to the wish for perfection, the absolute, or paradise, an area of suffering from ideals: "Thus

impelled, the *narcissism* of the ego, tied to its *ideals*, overflows into the ardently sought love object, making room for the *amorous passion* that, with the partner, idealizes the drives and their satisfactions" (15). Yes, behind these ravages of the self and disparagement of the failed other awaits a story of love, but the story is counterintuitive and battered about by resistance to the emotional situation of education, or what I am calling education as our human condition. Teachers and professors are not immune from the transference since their Eros and the drive to know force learning into places never meant to be education; their adolescent syndrome may take the form of splitting their students into good or bad, critical or stupid, and successful or failed. The ego's splitting of the outside world has a comparable internal process—that something is happening within the speaker when the world is torn into bits and pieces—and it is the professor or teacher that bears witness to a broken pedagogy. For the psychoanalyst, the dilemma is idealization of the object or the magical bestowal of impossible goodness that is then followed by a terrible fear of its loss. The adolescent, Kristeva maintains, is a believer in paradise and has given up her or his interest in research questions. And in Kristeva's view, the bare elements of ideals are also our liens.

Characters

We have already met a number of characters, and their study is the mainstay of contemporary psychoanalysis, literature, and clinical constructions and, in this book, a means to access, hold, handle, and use the human condition of education. But characters are elusive beings due to the fact that they are composite figures of objects in mind and because of their complexity allude to a world of others and the predicaments of knowing one's place. Joyce McDougall (1986) understands the theater of the mind as their stage and scenario: "We do not escape the roles that our unconscious selves intend us to play, frequently using people in our lives today as stand-ins to settle problems of the past" (7). Young-Bruehl (1991) turned to character studies after writing her biographies of Hannah Arendt and Anna Freud. She called this work creative characters, with a focus on individuals' processes and crisis in creativity, and her study provided a style for thinking about learning that can be announced, argued over, and enjoy further transformation. Kristeva's (1995) characters are emblems for "new maladies of the soul." Mothers, fathers, children, lost loves, writers and artists, and even the adolescent novel are agonized by the failure of modern existence, the diminishment of private life, displacement or exile, and perhaps in terms of the symptoms now dominating university life, such internal characters challenge our understanding of attention, attachment, depression, and inexplicable

anxieties over appearance and disappearance that play out in technologies of virtual reality and the obsessionality for answers, updates, news crawl, replays, and self-advertisement.

Another way into the idea of character can be found in Christopher Bollas's (1992) discussion of "idiom" where desire for taking in objects in the world creates an intermediate space for inner play with self-expression. A great deal goes with psychical reality, and Bollas then asks, "However are we to describe the character of the internal world given its dense complexity?" (52). As for how density is transferred into learning, the character stumbles on one of the many paradoxes of education: industrial arrangements of education seem to settle for the generalizability of instruction, transmission, and progress, while the character's vulnerability remains particular and subject to accidents and what is not known. But it is with the transitional space of teaching and learning that the character's predicaments emerge. To write one's way into the abstract qualities of this other education requires picturing character through its evocative textures and as a rough draft that can somehow convey its own erasures. Such an approach opposes character education as found in curriculum efforts, national pressures, and a history of moral anxieties over the subject's formation. Peter Brooks's (2011) exploration of literature argues that character is a slippery notion that does and should defy attempts at systematicity. Still, he maintains that character does have to do with self-knowledge and the problem of identity. But something has to fail for identity to be an occupation.

Antonino Ferro (2011) writes extensively on his method of character study from the vantage of how he listens to "narrative derivatives" (71): urgent emotions involving the stories told and a quality of the patient and the setting often form character scenarios that remind him of novels. And this affects Ferro's impressionistic writing style: "I have always considered the writing of psychoanalysis (and the experience of being inside an analytic session) very similar to the activity of a painter, someone intent on making verbal pictures that undergo constant change, construction and deconstruction both in colours and forms" (94). For Ferro, characters populate the psychoanalytic field and are to be played with. He goes even further: "The way I listen to the presentation of a case history is to treat the story of the case as if it were preceded by the expression, 'I had a dream about this patient'" (122). It is his way into both the enigmas of communicating one's work and treating the case study as a story from its vanishing point.

And yet the idea of character has a stormy history in psychoanalysis⁶ beginning with Freud's turn to the enigmatic characters that overpopulate dreams and then to their reduction into a trait such as "the anal character" that Freud (1916) proposed in his early essay "Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytic Work." We readily use the image of anal-

retentiveness to describe those who hoard and those who obsessively insist on the maintenance of strict order. But we hardly ask why. Freud named three types that emerge from their particular situations: the exceptions, the guilty ones, and those “wrecked by success” (316). The latter type brought Freud to speculate on the frustrations of libido and, more surprisingly, with what can happen when one gets one’s wish. Any of these serve as masks of unconscious conflict. The exceptional character will feel that she or he has somehow escaped the unconscious, the guilty character will have never committed an actual crime, and those wrecked by success will somehow be plagued by the wish to lose. More characters would be created; perhaps the most enduring is the character of the comic arriving in time for the last laugh. For the psychoanalyst, character is as much a composite figure as it is a resistance to or compensation for its own incomplete structure. All these “types” manage to surprise and Freud turns to a “long digression into literature” (331) to sketch the splits that conceal the character’s “multiple motivations” (329).

As used throughout this book, the notion of “character study” draws from both the vocabulary of literary representation that pictures the emergence, shape, style, and contours of the subject’s predicaments from the side of its phantasies and psychoanalytic discussions of object relation theory that picture the internal world as composed from impressions of love and hate associated with actual and unreal others in mind. From the disappearing vantage point of object relation theory, the boundaries between self and other and inside and outside are porous but also soft to the touch and so impressive by design. It is with the literary imagination, as Brooks (2011) so compellingly suggests, that one ponders “the original meaning of character as that which is engraved” (105) and has a tendency to fade with time and use.

Henry James’s ([1897] 1987) preface to his novel of human predicament, *The Spoils of Poynton*, describes the invention of the author as following “little processions” of characters: “A character is interesting as it comes out, and by the process and duration of that emergence, just as a procession is effective by the way it unrolls, turning to a mere mob if all of it passes at once” (30). Just as well, if the idea of education is to become more than a clamorous mob of pushy needs and heavy-handed responses, an effort of writing within the delicacies of education can present symptoms of learning through their emergence. James’s preface is instructive for our character studies in another sense. In ruminating over what pushes him into the desire to write a story, James tells his readers that he waits for a “germ . . . dropped unwitting by my neighbor, a mere floating particle in the stream of talk” (23). There is the matter of overhearing in order to auscultate the story’s heart.

Germes of Learning

I follow James's literary advice and wait for what is dropped. Here are some examples, many of which are developed throughout this book. For now, consider their skeletal rattles:

Student "A" hands me a paper with narrow margins, long paragraphs, and sentences that lose their object and undo meaning. The ideas are precocious, thorny, and wise. They are defended yet insightful. Wild romps through poetic images overrun the ideas of others. And in reading this paper, I feel as if I am losing my place, just as her thoughts vie for a place. It is as if she is worried about getting a word in edgewise, that if her words do not cover all the space, someone else will steal them from her. And no room is left for my comments.

Student "B" complains he cannot do independent work just as he asked to have an independent study. He knows independent work is one hallmark of writing a dissertation. And he wanted to do things for himself and prove his worth. But each time he sits down to read, he finds something else to do. He is disappointed but worries he has disappointed me. He wants to be independent but worries whether he can sustain his desire. He wishes to meet more often with me but cannot say why. Sitting in my office, he will close the door and begin crying. He holds in his hands a key chain that he clips and unclips with each complaint. It is as if he is saying that his ideas unclasp even as he tries to fit them together. But it is the clicking sound—his swift doing and undoing of the key clasp—that mesmerizes me. I have the feeling I am caught listening to an urgent telegraph that neither of us can decode.

Then there is group life. An extremely organized, high-achieving group of women students design an unbearable presentation for the class that begins with what they hope will be an exciting warm-up exercise. They change the furniture in the room, put on atmospheric music, and ask each member of the class to go the chalkboard and draw a picture of what they feel. More confusion emerges as each student is given a meager prize. Finally, the group leaders ask the class to discuss the shared text we have all read, titled *Memory*, by Philippe Grimbert (2007). But the class is silent and the leaders become deflated and disillusioned. Their posture goes missing. They were only trying to illustrate transference but forgot they too would be affected. Two hours after the class has ended I receive an email from one member:

Hi Guys

So . . . I "forgot" my copy of memory at the front of the room today I think, along with some brightly coloured chalk that my kids are looking for . . .

I guess if I look at the sequence of events leading up to the time I forgot my book I would have to say that

one not-so-great presentation + one character sketch
 given back = leaving behind the object I need
 for my final paper . . .

if I were to take an psychoanalytical approach to this I would have to say that I needed something to “blame” the mark of my final exam on. I guess what I am trying to say is . . . if I don’t have the book I need to write my paper, then it can’t be my fault if I don’t do well . . . how could I do well if I forgot my book at school? It’s not my fault . . . etc . . . etc . . .

In any case, do you have it? If you do, can I come back to school and get it? If not, if anyone turns it in can someone let me know?

Thanks guys

Conditions

A psychoanalytic approach to character studies of the human condition then begins with a few subjective or psychological facts that entwine character with its study: the human is the only creature that needs education and this need transforms into desire; that as self-theorizing subjects we grow up in school and family life during our most impressible and vulnerable years; that emotional logic, or transference, made from love, hate, and ambivalence plays out in what becomes of our relation to knowledge and the other; and, the work of symbolizing education as our human condition involves interpretation of its aftereffects. I call these processes subjective or psychological facts because, while we do not know their destiny, we can learn more from their duration and emergence in present values and attitudes toward language, others, and knowledge. With psychoanalytic sensibility we can ask, what is disquieting imagination for and how do we come to anticipate asymmetry, tolerate frustration, and accept difference, separation, and incompleteness in learning and life?

The large problem for any education is that the world is subjectively felt before anything else can be known. I consider this transitional space between subject and object as an opening to thoughts on the human condition through a revision of Hannah Arendt’s (1958) expansive claim that we are always in the human condition because whatever the human meets becomes its condition for existence (9). While Arendt was more interested in conscious life and the activities of world reality, and while she took

great care in setting aside human nature, psychoanalysts would understand as the fact of psychological life the condition of being affected. With psychoanalysis we must add the additional factor of emotional experiences of being with others as affected by phantasies of what the other knows, by a tendency to idealize knowledge through the transference, and by defenses against symbolizing emotional pain.

Psychoanalytic theory has its beginnings in the question of our human condition. Its vocabulary is a place of departure and return, handling words as sometimes a shortcut and, at other times, as a means to symbolize the short circuits of thought. Kristeva (1995) maintains that one of the difficulties of depression is that questions suffer from meaninglessness and leave in their wake a persecutory “why” that leads to nothing. “Even if the patient sees the analyst as a ‘subject-presumed-to know,’” writes Kristeva, “analysts know that they are nothing more than questioning and questioned subjects” (89). And in trying to sketch the emotional logic that carries the analyst to wait, Kristeva brings the question into desire:

I want you to tell me. . . . Though analytic interpretation adopts neither the melodic patterns nor the syntactic features of a question, it *adopts the psychological profile of a question*. I think I know something, but I give up and allow you to speak. You are the one who must know, speak, lie, and think. (88–89)

The ethics of therapeutic action may only emerge from putting to words a subjective dilemma (“a psychological profile of a question”), which can bear the weight and anxiety of asymmetrical relations, dependency, and uneven development.

Clinical Characters: “The Dictator and the Scribe”

The human is always subject to the uncertainties of bios, logos, eros, ethos, ethnos, and to the ambiguity of having to interpret reality through the affected psychological body, composed and compromised by the urgency of becoming a subject with and for others. These are the grand intersubjective themes of clinical writing, dedicated to interpreting the latency of communication: what has been held back, forgotten, acted out, displaced, and unconsciously repeated. At the heart of the case study is the literary dilemma of putting to words the transference, thought here as the unconscious desire for the other’s knowledge, authority, and love.

Joyce McDougall’s (McDougall and Lebovici 1969) rich account of a child’s analysis is unusual in the history of clinical writing in two regards. Much of it is written by the patient’s demand for the analyst to write

everything he says in her notebook, and the analyst's character is made into a scribe. It can be read as a commentary on education and dependency that emerges from the clash of words that peppers the social bond with an unconscious history of love, hate, and ambivalence. We find here our vulnerability to language and the other through an interest in the convolutions of psychical life and its affects: anxiety, splitting into good and bad, compliance, resistance, attacks on linking, and ideality. Yet from haphazard events made to fend off profound emotional pain, with the other there can emerge the containment of thinking and a renewed curiosity toward the ongoing work of creating emotional significance (e.g., Bion 1994; Britzman 2011; Joseph 2000; Kristeva 2010a, 2007).

Let's meet the characters. Sammy Y. was nine and a half years old when his parents moved from the United States to Paris and brought him to Joyce McDougall, a child analyst. McDougall's account is already a circus of language (McDougall and Lebovici 1969). The analysis was conducted in English, originally written in French, and later translated into English. It is the first published narrative of a child analysis.⁷ The frame follows their eight-month work through 166 sessions, five days a week. Letters between Sammy and McDougall are exchanged during vacations. The analysis came to a sudden end when Sammy's parents sent him back to the United States to attend a residential school that specialized in the treatment of schizophrenia, a difficult diagnosis subject to a history of psychiatric debate and, for those suffering in its terrors, heartbreak (Leader 2011).

Sammy set the singular conditions for both the analysis and the book that would follow. He said, "Now write what I dictate, I am your dictator!" (1). McDougall was ordered to be the silent scribe, the ignorant analyst. And in the beginning Sammy dictated his bizarre world and McDougall was only allowed to read his exact words back to him. It was not until the seventy-eighth session that Sammy began to write alongside of McDougall. Before that McDougall accepted the position of the ignorant scribe and accompanied Sammy into a world of imprisoned words.

By the fourth session, McDougall writes a note to herself: "He gives the impression of being under the sway of a terrifying fantasy whose intensity disturbs his capacity to communicate" (24). In the fifth session, after Sammy dictates a violent story of a magic face that can do anything it wants, McDougall writes: "At times he is using words as objects rather than as a means for communication" (31). She also realizes that she, the analyst, is the magic face and must hold in her writing all of his bad feelings. Sammy, she believes, has given up on the external word. In the tenth session, McDougall gives an interpretation: "Sammy, I think you are telling me that you have many troubled thoughts in which everything is sad or breaking up and you are afraid I can't do a thing to help you" (39). His reply is to scream out

numbers, list more chapters in his story, and order her to shut up.

The sessions are harrowing to read. Sammy refuses McDougall's thoughts and complains he is bored. He demands more toys. He screams when she makes the slightest movements and continually demands matches to light. He throws water at her and kicks over the furniture. Sometimes he strikes her. McDougall only asks Sammy to use words. But there is no meeting between Sammy's preoccupation with his body and the words he hurtles. His elaborate narratives are full of sexual violence, murder, and angry shit. Eating is the same as being murdered. Many of his stories end with desperate threats. Often when the session is over Sammy refuses to leave. McDougall has to carry him out. In the first five weeks of analysis, he bites her, blows on her cheeks, demands that she only take down his words, tries to see her breasts, and wishes her to be naked. By the twenty-fourth session, McDougall reflects on her helplessness and Sammy's mounting aggression. She changes her approach, brings into the room the toys Sammy has asked for, and takes his lead. In the next session Sammy destroys all of the new toys.

By the thirty-fifth session, Sammy wishes "Dougie" to read his story back to him yet warns her, "Don't read it as though you are in love with your husband!" (76). He becomes preoccupied with her other patients and wishes to be the only one. But he also begins to ask her to read her thoughts about his story and tell him what he is thinking. This is a delicate task; often his sessions are filled with a torrent of words that seem to destroy themselves. Months later, McDougall will give a name to such talk: this is Sammy's special language. In session 63, McDougall begins to think with Sammy's wish to contain meaning and his hopes that her pen will not fail.

Slowly hints of dialogue emerge. In session 106 Sammy tells Dougie that everything is terribly sad, even the buildings are giving him frowns. McDougall says, "Perhaps there are bits of your own feeling that you've put on to the buildings and things outside you." Sammy replies, "This worries me. Do other people have these ideas too? It's bad, isn't it?" And McDougall says, "You seem to think that to have feelings is bad." "Yes, I do. Is it all right to feel things? Does it happen to other people?" (178). McDougall writes in summary: "I tell him there are many ways of imagining things; that many people do it, and we call it 'day-dreaming' because we realize that these things are not true. Sammy is most interested and happy to hear this" (179).

A few sessions later Sammy asks McDougall why he talks in a funny way. McDougall responds: "Yes, sometimes you use a sort of 'special talking.' Can you tell me more about it yourself?" (183). It is not until session 112 that McDougall tells Sammy when he is involved in his "special talking" and that this talk has replaced the work of fantasy and play. Along with the special talking, McDougall gives other names to Sammy's speech. There