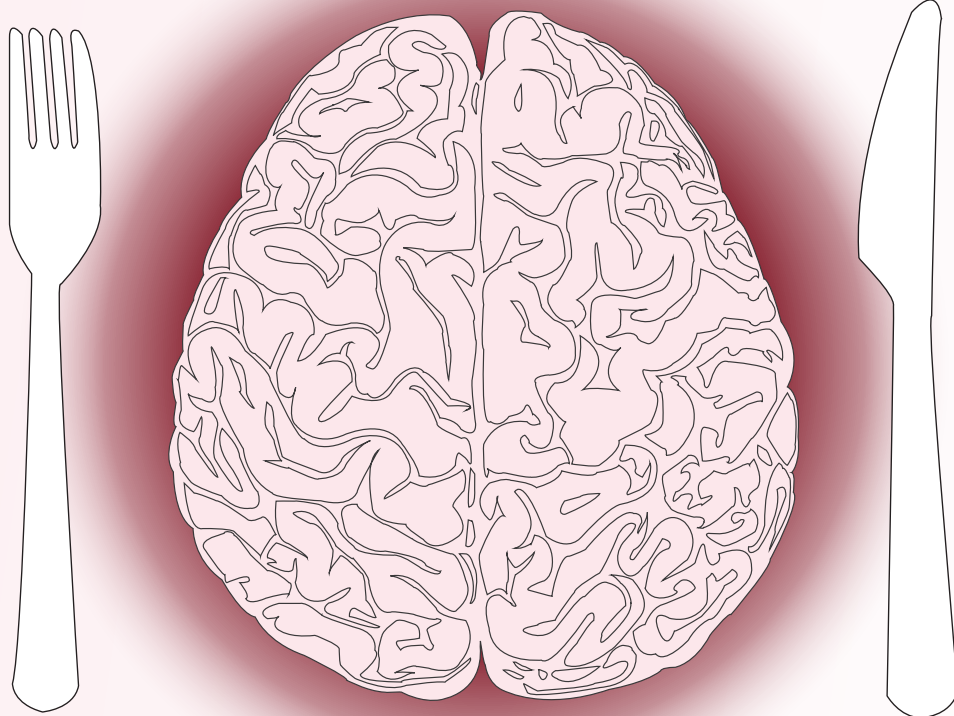


the self industry

therapy and fiction



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The Self Industry Therapy and Fiction



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The Self Industry Therapy and Fiction

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Introduction

The present book comprises articles based on the papers delivered at *The Self Industry. Therapy and Fiction* symposium held in Ustroń, Poland, 21–24 September 2011, one of the annual conferences organized by the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures of the University of Silesia, Katowice. In the conference call for papers we argued that:

“The last 200 years have produced a staggering wealth of writing on the Self, at first mainly belles-lettres, later also non-fiction. Whether we take into consideration the High Romantics, such as Edgar Allan Poe, E. T. A. Hoffman, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, pursuing the Self through archetypes of the Self, or George Eliot’s fiction of apparently social concern (*The Mill on the Floss*, *Middlemarch*), or D. H. Lawrence’s and William Faulkner’s narratives, we are confronted with dramas of consciousness. The advent of analytical psychology afforded not only insights into the workings of the literary text, but also pointed to its frequent therapeutic meaning for the author, individual reader, and community. The work of Carl Gustav Jung and Stan Gooch, exploring the duality of man and stressing the need to foster a new consciousness by integrating the feminine and the masculine, Viktor Frankl’s doctrine of overcoming the ‘tragic triad’ (suffering, guilt, and transitoriness) and inner void by affirming *Urvertrauen zum Dasein* (‘the basic trust in Being’) in existential acts of the ‘will to meaning’, provided two frameworks for therapy. Sigmund Freud’s system provided another framework, but what is perhaps as significant, it was admired for two different reasons. Hermann Hesse admired the clarity of Freud’s thinking combined with the beauty of language, while Thomas Mann – his literary characteristics: structure and form. This interface of writing and therapy, much as in such famous accounts as Augustine’s or Rousseau’s *Confessions*, constitutes an intellectual challenge in that its paradigms of exposure and suppression follow both tangled personal and rhetorical agendas.”

The conference contributions provided an array of insights into the field suggested above that seemed to us to merit publication. For the purposes of clarity we have decided to divide the texts submitted into four parts.

The first one, headed “Narcissists and Neurotics. Writing of Dissent,” begins with Niclas Johansson’s article studying the relation between narcissism as a literary concept and its use in early psychoanalysis. Likewise, drawing on Freud’s theory, Maria Korusiewicz analyses the Ajase complex formulated by Kosawa Heisaku, a myth of opposite psychic forces leading to positive resolution based on three interconnected ideas: mutual love, forgiveness, and “great compassion.” Tadeusz Lewandowski’s contribution discusses the communitarian philosophy of Michael Sandel as a response to John Rawls’s liberal project in *A Theory of Justice*. Invoking Protestant radicalism and what he terms “the buccaneer tradition,” Stephen Dewsbury in his article on Hakim Bey’s anarchist thought “The Self in Temporary Autonomous Zones” argues that self-creativity flourishes in places of non-permanence, historical, discursive, and psychological lacunae emerging at the interstices of established structures. Benjamin Betka’s “De-Pressed Masses: Affective Dissonance in Melancholy, Disease, and the Screened (American?) World” focuses on the “selving” processes in American culture which emerged in response to Freud’s theory. The article posits the self as text while realigning the neuroscientific concepts of “patient,” “health,” and “therapy.” The last article in this section is Tomasz Gnat’s “Narcissus’s Narcosis: Formation of Self, Disintegration of Self: A Question of Interactive Entertainment and Player-Character Identity Correlation” which discusses the questions of self formation and disintegration in interactive entertainment.

The second part headed “Herstories. The Self and Women’s Literature” comprises five articles. Karen Ferreira-Meyers in “Doubling or Dividing the Self: Examples from Autofictional Writing as Influenced by Psychoanalysis” investigates the inevitable link between psychoanalysis and autofiction in the work of Nina Bouraoui and Amélie Nothomb, studying the techniques whereby the two authors bring about a doubling or dividing of the Self into numerous conscious and unconscious sub-selves. Similarly, Anna Bugajska’s article “*Descent Into Hell*. Pauline Anstruther’s Long Way to Her Self” focuses on the idea of doppelgänger in Charles Williams’s novel *Descent Into Hell* understood as the essential aspect of consciousness we learn to give up as part of our socialization, our terror and error, a terrible good, not a menacing shadow but something we sacrifice for the sake of others. Grażyna Zygadło’s contribution “‘I change myself, I change the world’...” analyses the functions of storytelling in ethnic literature, while Sławomir Kuźnicki’s reading of Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* stresses the self-therapeutic context of writing in an oppressive society. The last article in the section, “In the Search for Self: Female Identity and Subjectivity in Doris Lessing’s ‘To Room Nineteen’” inquires into the “othering” processes involved in true self-expression, a discussion relying on Julia Kristeva’s concept of abjection.

In “Therapy through Writing?,” part three of the volume, Łukasz Giezek discusses Peter Ackroyd’s *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, a metafictional novel in which the creation of the past and the self becomes both personal healing and a larger project of conferring meaning on the randomness of existence. Invoking Barthes, Bakhtin, and Jung, Tomasz Markiewka discusses the questions of authorship and self-identity in “*T(h)au for Torture? Writing on Trial in Teodor Parnicki’s Novel The Finger of Threat.*” Eliene Mąka-Poulain offers a reading of one of Heaney’s most important collections of poetry in the article entitled “In Violence and Epiphany’: Seamus Heaney’s *North.*” Wojciech Drąg’s contribution focuses on the therapeutic function of literature in “Writing Cure? Narrating the Loss in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day.*” The article written by Anna Cholewa-Purgał focusses on logotherapy, a school of contemporary philosophy and a therapy based on finding meaning in one’s life, and sets it against contemporary culture of neo-nihilism. Małgorzata Nitka’s “So many pages a day? Writing, Compulsion, and Modernity” discusses George Gissing’s “conscious insincerity of workmanship” against the background of George M. Beard’s *Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences*, a study of neurasthenia. In her contribution, “Unnameable Loss: Melancholy and Postmodern Writing,” Agata Wilczek follows Paul de Man, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Walter Benjamin in pondering the consciousness of loss as one of the primary areas of linguistic expression.

The fourth part is entitled “Searching the Self.” In the first article, invoking Judith Butler’s category of gender performativity and Michel Foucault’s idea of aesthetization of life, Aleksandra Lubczyńska analyses *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* in terms of illness and therapy vis-à-vis gender roles in camp aesthetic. What follows is the article entitled “Therapy or Obsession? Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s Problems with His Self” where Maria Perzyńska analyses the autobiographical aspect of Rossetti’s poetry and painting, especially the influence of his relationships with Lizzie Siddal and Jane Morris on his work. “Trapped in a Vicious Circle of the Tragic Triad... Miltonian Satan and Conradian Kurtz’s Process of Unearthing Authentic Identity” by Jarosław Giza addresses the problem of ensnarement of Milton’s and Conrad’s protagonists in Frankl’s tragic triad perceived paradoxically as a constituent of the process of recovering genuine self. Stephen Harris’s article “Questioning the Cultural Industry of the Self: Fiction, Selfhood and Individualism in Patrick White’s *The Vivisector*,” shows how the author in question explores, in his idiosyncratic way, the possibilities and limits of individual selfhood as imagined against the constraints of Australian society and attitudes. Sławomir Konkol, in turn, conducts a Lacanian analysis in “I Am Not Me. The (Re)construction of the Self in Graham Swift’s *Ever After.*” The focus of the next contribution, “Romantic Legacy in Non-Romantic Times. Two Different-Similar Approaches to Searching for Self-Identity” by Alicja Bembien and Ewa Mazur-Wyganowska, is how Patrick Kavanagh and Robert

Graves exploit spirituality and mysticism in the process of poetic self-definition. In “Frame of Mind. Self Industry in Performance,” Monika Gorzelak uses the Derridean category of supplement to offer her interpretation of *Sketches about Ophelia*, a dramatic performance by Teatr A Part. Last but not least, Wojciech Szymański’s contribution “Venice–Iceland: A Journey to Utopia,” is a study of non-normative sexual identity focused on W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, and Stephen Spender.

We wish to thank all the contributors who made the publication of this volume possible and we hope that the reading of the essays included in this collection will offer new “therapeutic” insights into cultural and literary texts.

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“The term ‘industry’ can be stretched, either towards the conjoined pillars of a society of mass consumption: the production of goods and the necessary production of desire in willing consumers; or towards the fabrication of mind and self among the synapses within the human brain: the spark within our flesh somehow enables an I and an eye to emerge, an identity that can (and should) then be implemented into the processes of the world out there, of the world that is not-I and not-eye.”

(From the essay by Benjamin Betka)

“Fiction” and “therapy” and relation between the two may provoke various interpretations and approaches. The present volume comprises articles based on the papers delivered at *The Self Industry: Therapy and Fiction* symposium held in Ustroń, Poland, 21–24 September 2011, one of the annual conferences organized by the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures of the University of Silesia, Katowice. It is a unique combination of essays written by scholars from Poland, Germany, Sweden, Swaziland, and Australia and a comprehensive collection of insights into texts of culture and their therapeutic functions.

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