

The End of An Analysis

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I was recently reminded of a dream I'd had following the birth of my daughter. My daughter, now 12, was born about six months before my analysis ended, which was in its 10th year.

The dream was very simple, consisting of nothing but a phrase that occurred to me, without any image at all. The phrase was "A daughter is like a book written for someone else to read." I reported the dream in my analysis and I remember saying that it struck me as true although I was at a loss to say exactly why.

The emphasis on a type of book, a book written for someone else as opposed to oneself seemed to say that daughters are like one kind of book. But what book is not written for someone else to read? The emphasis on the type of book made the phrase seem nonsensical. There was an obvious injunction against incest in the phrase, but it lost authority through the qualification of the type of book with the implication that there were other types of books written for oneself. If a daughter was like a book written for someone else, was a son like a book written for oneself? Was there reference to myself as a son contained in the dream-phrase? The enigma of a "book written for someone else" raises the enigma of the Other, and the question of the desire of the Other. That seemed to be the mystery of the dream. For several sessions I came back to the dream, hoping to discover something further, puzzling about different types of books. Despite my conviction of truth linked to the phrase I couldn't find anything more, and my sessions passed on to other material.

What brought me back to this dream, 12 years later?

While reading a book by Gerard Haddad, "Manger le Livre," I came across the following statement: "If *infant* has for an equivalent signifier *book*, to write, to make a book becomes an acclimation, a propedeutic to paternity, a particular form of incubating" [my translation].

The dream suddenly reappeared. Or rather, it was already there (as it had been all along), and to my surprise, I realized that punctuation was missing from the phrase: "A daughter is like a book colon written for someone else to read." What was left out of the phrase, a space, a pause, a gap, not only disguised the meaning of the phrase but also in some sense IS the meaning of the phrase. That is to say, the phrase has to do with loss; loss that structures meaning.

The lack of punctuation in the phrase made it function like an injunction with implied exceptions. The gap was repressed, thus permitting through the implication of other types of books or other circumstances that could operate as exceptions, the phantasm of an exception to the incest taboo.

Reading Haddad's assertion had somehow functioned as a kind of scansion (*après coup*) in relation to my dream. The focus was shifted away from a question of particular types of books to the question of the equivalency between a daughter and the writing of a book.

Initially, the unpunctuated phrase functioned like a metaphor with two elements:

1) a daughter = 2) a book written for someone else to read.

Punctuating the phrase shifts the emphasis from a specific type of book by clarifying a third element:

1) a daughter= 2) a book: written for 3) someone else to read.

A book is for someone else and so is a daughter. The lure of a book written for oneself to read is no longer viable because the circumstances that implied a possible exemption from the law evaporate.

But in clarifying the third element, the “someone else” for whom a book is written, another shift occurs. Un-punctuated, the dream-phrase seemed to be about whom a book is FOR. Is it for oneself, or for someone else? The *Que Vouï?* of the enigma of the desire of the Other is raised, and the confusion of the unpunctuated dream-phrase offered the fantasy of a respite from that anxiety provoking question (via the possibility of other types of books that would be for oneself.)

The additional shift in the punctuated phrase raises another question linked to passage and transmission. The phrase is not merely an injunction in accordance with the symbolic law, nor only recognition of the desire of the Other as it relates to the law, but also concerns an act, the act of writing. To procreate and to write are linked. Not only writing for *someone else*, but *writing* for someone else.

Haddad asserts that the act of writing proceeds from the function of *etre*

pere, the assumption of paternity as pure symbol linked to death. A book has to do with transmission from one generation to the next, and therefore is written from a “time where my death already reigns.[Gerrard Haddad]” Haddad continues: “To procreate is to accept ones death and the transitory character of existence. But also to accept the interval, short as it may be, of ones own life. To make a pact with life and to accept one’s death is not, despite appearances, contradictory.” [My Translation]

Paternity implies the death of one generation in the inevitable passage to the next. The very act of writing not only invokes, but also fulfills its function in this passage. Thus the real, the impossible real of the primary lost object (the pause or gap that the dream elided) is the motor of the most highly symbolic act: that of transmission.

The confusion produced by the suppression of the punctuation in my dream is the implication it produces that there are also books that could be written for oneself. These would be books that would somehow elude death. These would be books of pure knowledge, closed loops that would be complete. Such a book would contain no surprises for the author-as-reader since the end would be known in advance.

A book written for oneself might be written without sentences --only imagined or merely thought (the obsessional’s favorite pass-time). “Writing” in this manner would never finish --or begin--and it would therefore have to be remembered. In point of fact, to actually write a book (for someone else to read), implies a *forgetting*.

The act of writing concludes. Once written, the book is for others, and can be forgotten by its author who may then write the next book. In this, writing functions similarly to mourning. The lacking object, which is an unforgettable presence, through a symbolizing re-presentation with signifiers associated with it, is eventually transformed into something

lost and by definition no longer present.

It was in returning me to this opaque dream–phrase from a new perspective, in which something new appeared, that I also understood something new about the pass and about the transmission of psychoanalysis.

Something, a punctuation mark, or really a nothing, reached me in the writing of Haddad. This is what passes through the pass: nothing. The impossible nothing. The pass is transmission of this nothing that never the less, by its presence shapes the symbolic. Analysis brings the analysand to a reckoning with the fact that we cannot speak the impossible real. If the relation of a signifier to a signified always produces a gap and the impossibility of absolute knowledge, then it is only in a reckoning with this gap that the function of the loss as cause of desire is assumed. In the punctuation which functions as a pause between two signifiers, the subject appears, only to fade as the next signifier emerges. The subject emerges as the nothing that founds it. At another level, a level that has to account for the real in some way, an act is implied. The act of writing when it functions as transmission is caused by the nothing.

The truth that I felt so strongly was that my dream–phrase located me in relation to the incest taboo, my position in relation to paternity and in relation to death and castration. This is all implied in the “someone else” to whom a book is addressed, the someone else to whom my daughter will address herself (in contrast, think of poor Anna Freud in analysis with her father, and the subsequent consequences for her understanding and transmission of psychoanalysis!)

If in the reading of Gerard Haddad’s book, his writing transmitted something of psychoanalysis, something “between the lines” that allowed me to clarify a twelve year–old dream, his act also transmits a certain call for action. One could say that to accept a loss implies an acceptance that one can “go on.”

In an attempt to accept that challenge, I decided to write this response.