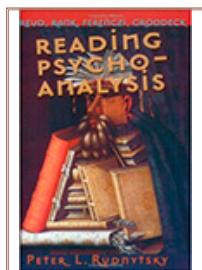


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Reading Psycho-Analysis: Freud, Rank, Ferenczi, Groddeck.



by Peter L. Rudnytsky.

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Reviewed by Coral Houtman. University of Wales College, Newport.

This impressively researched and stimulating book has two rather distinct aims. It is a history of Freud's rebellious sons working in the first part of the twentieth century, and a discussion about the disciplinarity of psychoanalysis and its fragile status poised between a hermeneutic study akin to literary criticism and natural science. Full of fascinating biographical insights, it is nevertheless much more successful in its second aim as a validation of the continuing use of psychoanalysis both clinically and theoretically than its first, where its attempt at what would appear to be the less contentious aspect of his thesis, a hermeneutic and historical account of the psychoanalytic literature of Freud's errant disciples, is partial and assertive.

Starting with Freud's own literary criticism in *Gradiva* (1907), Rudnytsky symptomatically reads Freud to suggest that for Freud literature is the uncanny double of psychoanalysis and vice versa. Freud's treatment of characters from literature and history (*Gradiva* and *Leonardo*) as if they were real and his understanding that his case histories, such as *Dora* and *Little Hans*, read as literature, as short stories, and enable Rudnytsky's own starting point in reading the subsequent psychoanalytic texts through the psychobiographies of their authors. Thus, when he takes up the subject of *Little Hans* (1910), Freud's analysis of phobia in a five year old boy, it is to set out his major argument that Freud's own psychobiography caused him to disavow the role of female sexuality in psychic life and to create the misogyny of the Oedipus Complex with its single signifier of sexuality—the male penis. The excessive patriarchal masculinity and patriarchal role play which Rudnytsky ascribes to Freud is responsible for the 'anxiety of influence' (cf Harold Bloom), in Freud's subsequent followers. It emerges as their cruel expulsion from Freud's analytic circle and their various attempts in analytic practice and writing to redress the sexual and Oedipal balance. Thus Rank moves in his later career to supplant the Oedipus Complex with a pre-oedipal psychoanalysis of birth trauma and resites the mother as the critical role in child development. Ferenczi, Freud's vulnerable yet loyal son, is first treated by Freud (He is the unacknowledged subject of *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* (1937)). He is encouraged by Freud, as authoritarian father, to marry a woman he does not love, rather than her daughter whom he desires. As a result, Ferenczi finds an analytic mother figure in Groddeck, who offers him the sympathy Freud withholds. Ferenczi subsequently forms his own practice and writes against Freud.

Ferenczi's *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality* (1924) predates and influences object-oriented psychoanalysis in its emphasis on the mutuality between analyst and analyzed and the containing and maternal role of the therapist. In chapter eight, Rudnytsky provides the first analysis of Groddeck's *The Book of the It* (1923), arguing that it is a far more coherent and scientific account of the unconscious than Freud's drive theories because it corrects Freud's original misogynistic accounts through its own understanding of womb envy.

Groddeck also criticizes the theology of Freud's empire and his authoritarian policing of its psychoanalytic borders.

There are several problems with Rudnytsky's narrative here. Perhaps the most crucial is the way that he relies on psychoanalytic auteurism to tie down the meanings of the texts too neatly. He fails to do the psychoanalytic work and look at the over determination in the texts and the possibilities of multiple readings.

His disavowal, or at least dismissal, of post-structural literary criticism and psychoanalysis means that he reads the texts and the analysts in schematic, depoliticized, and even hysterical ways. Lacan's key re-reading of Freud with Levi-Strauss revealed not that Freud was a misogynist (whether he was or not is neither here nor there), but that his revelation of the 'asymmetry of the signifier,' (i.e. the notion that culturally there is only the phallus and no signifier of femininity), is itself a cultural critique and accounts for what might be seen as a transhistorical patriarchy. Far from being the agent of patriarchy then, Freudian psychoanalysis can be a tool for its dismantling, a task addressed by a myriad of feminist critics from Julia Kristeva to Laura Mulvey-critics Rudnytsky barely mentions. In fact, his critique is almost exclusively male centred-he dislikes Melanie Klein and does not give Karen Horney a chapter equivalent to his male idols. Indeed, his emphasis on primal father, Freud, and the rebellion of his sons, betrays his own Oedipal anxiety of influence. He also fails to understand how the Third Term in the Oedipus Complex (i.e. the Name of the Father, is the access to law and acculturation).

Without the influence of people other than the mother in the child's life, the child will always be caught in an abject struggle for separation. The neglect of the triad in psychoanalysis is one which reinstates sexism and patriarchy, because it is the hysteria of overvaluing and undervaluing the mother (the Saint and the Whore) that creates women as hysterical projections of male castration. Thus, Rudnytsky performs the patriarchal discourse he would attempt to correct, and his lack of attention to female psychoanalysts supports this. It is in the final discursive section of the book that Rudnytsky comes into his own. His careful tracing of the relationship between psychoanalysis, evolutionary science and hermeneutics is masterful. He traces the scientific flaws in Freud's thinking-his reliance on drive theory and his dependence on Lamarckian biology. He then argues that, despite Freud's habit of backing the wrong theoretical horse, neuroscience is finding the claims of psychoanalysis ever more convincing. The discovery that dreaming is not after all tied to REM sleep, but is an effect of the motivational centers of the brain being unhinged from the rational, makes Freud's dream theory ever more plausible. The increasingly postmodern understanding of brain as function (i.e. synapses and brain connections being made and grown through experience) enables a 'resilience' (Rudnytsky's term for a unified theory of science and hermeneutics) possible, and an acceptance of many metapsychological insights. Finally, recent clinical understandings of anxiety support Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (deferred action), a concept that entirely unites the disciplines of hermeneutics and science. For if *Nachträglichkeit*, described by Laplanche as 'the enigmatic signifier which is translated and retranslated' is a scientific understanding of how we constantly reinterpret the past in the light of the present, then it also accounts for why we might find truths in the hermeneutic work of translating and retranslating our culture through literature and through psychoanalysis.

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