

## **PSYCHOANALYSIS MIRRORED IN THE GALLANT LITERATURE OF THE XVII – XVIII CENTURIES**

*The article is devoted to analyzing the reflections of the classic French literature in the Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. The hidden liaisons are stressed, which connect Jacques Lacan with the French rococo tradition.*

**Keywords:** psychoanalysis, rococo, desire, unconscious, pleasure.

Psychoanalysis, especially Lacanian, is not only one of the methods of humanitarian cognition. It is also a product of culture, and not only the culture of its days. How to fit Jacques Lacan in the cultural context of his own time is well described in a fundamental book by A. V. Dyakov [3]. To fit him in the historical context, the work of E. F. Labbie about ‘Lacan’s Medievalism’ might be used. More precisely, the word “medievalism” is not an exact one [17]. It is most likely to name it a sympathy to the Middle Ages than real ‘Medievalism’.

The author of these words has a previous experience of researching the verification of Lacan related to the ancient texts he used to draw on. Lacan wrote about himself: ‘It stands to reason that my narrative is called as a baroque style’ [10, p. 135]. And he denied Carthusian cogito ergo sum [6, p. 7-20].

In addition, he authenticated his dependence on Kant and Sade – the leading figures of the late XVIII-th century. The special piece of Lacan’s writing as well as a considerable part of seminar 7 ‘The ethics of psychoanalysis’ are devoted to these eminent personalities [8].

Kant – is the philosophy, whereas Sade – is the literature.

Finally, the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud, who got the Goethe Award in 1930 for his contribution to science and literature, considered A. Schnitzler and V. Jensen almost his ilks. Methods of writer and analyst differ, they

might disavow each other that used to happen with Jensen, but ‘the unescapable conclusion is whether both the artist and the doctor understand unconscious correctly or do not understand it at all’ [16, p. 176].

Freud is inscribed in his own tradition, and Lacan into his own, the French one. Eventually, what is his Symbolic if not that inscription? And, it is defined not only through such eminent names as Moliere, Sade, Laclos, or Prevost. The French heritage contains so many things that nobody remembers at once or even does not intend to remember but which most probably included into the unconscious and/or simply not reflected Symbolic chain.

Now we intend here to consider, almost in the etymological sense of mirror reflection, some psychoanalytical concepts via the texts from the XVII – XVIII centuries which constitute the main stream of French literature currently named *rocaille* or *rococo*. Most simply, this kind of literature can be seen as “gallant” – the term we use in the title. However, a different sort of gallant literature existed much earlier in the form of endless *precieux* novels, starting from the post-renaissance Honore d’Urfe (1567 - 1625), ending by the baroque Madeleine de Scudery (1607 – 1701). But it was extinct even before the *rocaille* emerged. The baroque excess characteristic to such a romance, in no way necessary for a psychoanalytic understanding of man, was submitted to an important correction by the *rocaille* authors. And the knowledge of love relations did not lose anything from such a correction, it even bettered. We do not mind the sublime or desexualized relations represented by the Scudery’s romance.

Charles Augustin Saint-Beuve regarded the year 1669 as a turning point in the development of the French literature. We do not enter the complicated discussion between the researchers in the realm of literary criticism (the contrasting opinion of A. Mykhailov may be seen in [1, c. 228-229]). One must consent that the abovementioned year is remarkable due to the appearance of two small texts: “Portuguese Letters” by Gabriel-Joseph Guilleragues (1628 – 1685) and “Love of Psyche and Cupid” by Jean de La Fontaine. The first item was printed anonymously, and the authorship of the book was hard to establish.

Nevertheless, we have several hoax sequels, responses etc., from the same year. As to the second one, (“Les amours” means “love relations” exactly), it was printed with a conspicuous dedication addressed to the duchess of Bouillon who took La Fontaine under her protection after the fall of the Superintendent Fouquet. Both the texts may be considered as the beginnings of literary rocaille, as well as of the knowledge to be reflected later in the psychoanalysis.

And that psychoanalysis would be not only the Lacanian one. When La Fontaine’s heroine intends to commit suicide, we read such a passage: “If you are submitted to a common law, that law consists in two points. From the one hand, we really want to die, from the other we strive to preserve our lives as long as possible. We are born for both, and one may say that a human being is subject to two contrary movements at once: it is constantly forwarded to the death and no less constantly runs from it. We are not allowed to break this instinct. Animals do not do that” [18, p. 114-115].

We intentionally translate from the French original to escape the effect of “death drive” intrinsically present in the Russian translation of 1964 [13, c. 76]. Nevertheless, the word ‘instinct’ could be related both to the longing for life and the longing for death. And we also can see here some premises for the Freudian discovery of 1920 which was so important for Lacan later.

But that is “too Freudian”, all of this. We can find some specifically Lacanian things in the La Fontaine’s text. As we know, Freud did not find much difference between desire and need and, respectively, between pleasure and satisfaction. He even had a term for a “desire satisfaction” (Wunschbefriedigung) [12, c. 139-140]. As to Lacan, he made the notion of unsatisfied desire the keystone of his theory, opposing it to the need which could and should be satisfied. “The desire as such always surpasses the limits of any response at the level of satisfaction, and demands a response of an absolute kind” [7, c. 470]. The same seminar 5 that we cite here contains a piece on “Unsatisfied desire”, as well as on the subject who creates it on his own [7, c. 422]. We can find related contexts in seminars 2 [6, c. 318-319] and 11 [10, c.292]. The desire has to remain unsatisfied

due to its being structured through a fundamental lack (we do not specify it here and now) inalienable from the human condition, contrasted to the animal instinct or even a simple human need. Only after having satisfied the latter and after the subtraction of its satisfaction, the desire emerges.

Presumably we see here Lacan's supplement to Freud. But it is a context to La Fontaine's "Love of Psyche and Cupid". When the heroine wants to see her ideal invisible husband, he gives her a persuasive explanation of the necessity to leave some desires unsatisfied. "If you have nothing to desire ("plus rien a souhaiter", the Russian translation underlines the satisfaction of all the wishes, "as soon as"), you'll get bored. Even gods are bored often, and they are forced to invent desires (des sujets de desir) for themselves" [18, p. 50].

We must remember that Psyche's anxiety is caused through the impossibility of seeing her beloved husband (Cupid); even when touching him, she regards his presence as a totally 'spiritual' one. Which fact makes him laugh, so that he enters the discourse on desire which is to be unsatisfied.

Psyche's fears are understandable. The object – cause of the desire (Lacanian 'objet petit a') may well rest unseen, but the very object of desire is intrinsically connected to the possibility of a regard capable of returning. The gaze is an 'objet petit a', precisely [10, c. 75-130]. The gaze at someone...

La Fontaine did not invent his plot, we know it. He took it from Apuleius who wrote in the II century A.D. But the would-be Lacanian notion of the unsatisfied desire makes its appearance here.

The ending of the fable by La Fontaine, Cupid and Psyche give birth to a daughter named Pleasure (or enjoyment). She is not called 'jouissance' as Lacan would say, here we read the term 'volupte'. The word 'jouissance' meant at that time simply a use of something, meanwhile 'volupte' denoted any kind of sensual or sublime pleasure. La Fontaine includes into it games, music, reading books, even "gloomy pleasure of a melancholic heart", to correct N.Rykova's translation [13, c.119] of the original "Jusqu'au sombre plaisir d'un coeur melancolique" [18, p.

193]. One has not to transpose La Fontaine's proto-sentimentalism into a proto-romanticism.

As to the "Portuguese Letters" by Guilleragues, we regard them as a point of transition from an affectation to a true affection. The original small book is, contrary to the La Fontaine's, not proto-romanticist but proto-sentimentalist. That is an understanding of love most close to the *rocaille*, as well as to the Lacanian concept of the unconscious.

The point is that Lacanian understanding of the unconscious does not imply an unlimited realm of affects. The affection of authentic "Portuguese Letters" which include endless insinuations addressed to a lover who departed, self-accusations and self-justifications, nowadays would be qualified as something erotomaniac. The similar illness of the daughter of Victor Hugo two centuries later was a product of romanticism, if we are allowed to draw parallels between the development of psychological patterns and the stylistics of culture. The discourse of the nun in her letters justifies all of this. On the other hand, the sequel to the "Letters", mediocre as it is from the literary point of view, to A. Mykhailov's opinion [1, c. 240], shows the way both to the *rocaille* and the concept of unconscious in French tradition.

The unconscious works similarly to a mechanical device, automatically and without affect. "How many times I restricted my joy when seeing you, since you wanted me to be less affected" [1, c. 52-53]. He wants her less affected, not more. Later, the main feature of the *rococo* would be this sensibility without affect, its automatic predictability.

We do not believe that the *rocaille* sensibility is subject to reason, as some researchers stress [5, c. 314]. The point is that situations where a feeling of love springs up work inevitably, of a mechanical kind. This equals them to psychoanalytic transference. But, here we enter the XVIII-th century. We regard the main figures here Marivaux and Crébillon fils.

Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux (1688 – 1763) interests us as the author of «Le Paysan parvenu» (1734) – the novel the title of which is usually

translated as “A Successful Farmer”. He is really successful, he’s a lucky man, the protagonist, but the word ‘parvenu’ first of all means in French someone who climbed quickly at the social scale. But, not similarly to more contemporary parvenus depicted by Stendhal, Balsac or Maupassant, our hero is completely sincere in his almost mechanical feelings aimed at the women much older than himself, who prompted his career.

The protagonist named Jacob consciously realizes the unconscious motivation of his path. “There are a thousand cases where people act under the influence of ideas coming in an unknown way. They compel you, and nobody thinks on them”. In the original version we read: “...on agit en mille moments en consequence d’idees confuses qui viennent je ne sais comment, qui vous menent, et qu’on ne reflechit pas” [19, p.203]. Namely, one acts without reflection. For us, ideas do not equal feelings, but not for the XVIII-th century. By the way, the Russian translation of 1970 exaggerated the proto-sentimentalism of the passage [14, c.89]. The French original looks like a totally mechanical understanding of the unconscious as vehicle of human behavior.

In the episode cited, the protagonist regards one of his would-be patronesses aged about 50, while he is aged 20. And he loves them all, those patronesses, because he is guided through nobody knows what, and nobody knows how it works. ‘Je ne sais quoi’ is a French term to denote an unknown cause of a woman’s desirableness, the Lacanian ‘objet petit a’.

The creativity of Marivaux is intermingled with that of one of the most eminent rocaille authors, namely, Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (1707 – 1777), also called Crébillon fils, to distinguish him from his father, Crébillon pere, the author of numerous tragedies.

Starting from the year 1731, the “Life of Marianne” by Marivaux is being printed part by part. In the year 1734, Crébillon fils parodies this romance in his ‘Japanese story’ (a hoax supposed to be printed in Peking) titled “Skimmer or Tanzay and Nedarne”. In the same year 1734, Marivaux counters him abruptly in his “Successful Farmer” [14, c. 140-141]. At its turn, this reply makes an obvious

influence on Crebillon's "Delusions (les egarements) of Heart and Mind" (1736 – 1738). We are not so much interested in the literary polemic as in the rocaille philosophy of living represented by Crebillon and denied by his older opponent, and all in vain.

The protagonists of "Tanzay and Neadarne" suffer, turn by turn, from a mystical illness. As a result of the vengeance of a sorceress (we find here fairy tale motifs typical to the rocaille), Tanzay and Neadarne lose their genitals, one after another. To recover their genitals, both of them should commit the adultery.

This most scandalous erotic story which put its author under arrest at Vincennes for a while, turns about a vague concept we could name 'aphanisis', as Jacques Lacan and Ernest Jones call it. That is a disappearance of any possibility of desire. Or, at another level, a neurotic fear of losing the desire as such [7, c. 471].

The most similar situation we may see in Denis Diderot (1715 – 1784), in his "Immodest Treasures" (1748), a mocking on Crebillon fils with a much worse prognosis on the future of the lovers [2, c. 680 - 685].

This situation was interpreted in a different, more naturalistic kind by Crebillon himself, in the "Sofa" (1742). One of the main heroes of that "instructive fairy tale" loses his virility and regains it turn by turn [5, c. 208-296].

And a very similar problem interested one of the founders of British sentimentalism – Laurence Sterne (1713 – 1768) in his "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman" [15, c. 86-87]. We mean the mysterious wound in uncle Toby's groin which complicates his marriage (by the way, the epistolary heritage of Diderot gives a hint at a real wound of the kind). We must admit that Sterne met Crebillon in the year 1762 [4, c. 341]. But the first part of "Tristram Shandy" was printed in 1760, so the relations may be distanced.

What is the secret of such an 'eroticism'?

The seminar of Jacques Lacan #10 "Anxiety" describes it well through a notion of 'detumescence', that is, a loss of phallic organ exactly at the moment of the satisfaction of a need. "The fact that the meaning of Phallus in the human living experience is determined not so much by its presence but through the

possibility of losing it tells us that castration owns its legal position in the history of human desire” [9, c. 208]. Precisely it has it in the history of desire, not of the need. The desire remains when the need is satisfied and, respectively, sexual function is temporarily suppressed. Desire drones upon sexuality – the fact well known both to Lacan and the XVIII-th century.

We even find in an early short story by Crébillon fils titled “Sylph” (1730) Lacanian (LaFontenian?) formula of an unsatisfied desire. “We should be allowed sometimes to desire in vain. It happens that the thoughts of possible enjoyments are much better... I would lose the desire of your love if I could not desire it in vain” [4, c. 280].

To be more exact, in Lacanian works we can find a well-known for the classical French literature formula of a desire in vain.

The whole novel by C. P. J. de Crébillon ‘The Delusions of Heart and Mind’ is reposed on putting off and frustration of lust. In this version of ‘emotional education’, a response to more demotic ‘The farmer...’ by P. C. de C. de Marivaux, nothing happens really. The initiation of the protagonist to mysteries of love is reserved to the fourth chapter that was not written at all. His elder patronesses only intimate him, as he does it for the readers that something and somewhere should happen. Nevertheless, nothing happens.

An obvious conclusion offers itself. If Lacan was not merged in the French cultural tradition, he would not have made a contribution to Freudian theory (a separation of desire from need and pleasure from satisfaction).

Finally, it is worth adding that we did not touch another layer of tradition, an older one. It is the dependence of “The Immodest Treasures” by D. Diderot on a medieval fabliau “Du chevalier qui fit les cons parler”, and J. de La Fontaine’s theme of Fortune’s wheel on the “Roman de la Rose”, as well as the change of Psyche’s color of skin also refers to the story ‘Aucassin and Nicolette’ (1215). The Medievalism is common not only for Jacques Lacan but also for his predecessors.

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*Собуцький М.А.*

## ПСИХОАНАЛІЗ У ДЗЕРКАЛІ ГАЛАНТНОЇ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ XVII – XVIII СТ.

*Статтю присвячено аналізу відображення надбань класичної французької літератури у психоаналітичній теорії Жака Лакана. Підкреслюються неявні взаємозв'язки, що вказують на вписаність Лакана у французьку рокайльну традицію.*

**Ключові слова:** психоаналіз, рококо, бажання, несвідоме, насолода.

15 - Psychoanalysis and literature. from PART THREE - MODERNISM AND ITS AFTERMATH, 1918-1945. By Lyndsey Stonebridge. From the science of the psyche and the art of the modern writer emerges a distinctly modern materialism for the dreamworld. But, and this is a paradox that lies at the heart of both psychoanalysis and literary Modernism, the self that both return to endlessly in this endeavour is not, as it were, in full possession of itself, but is rather characterised by a recognition of the limits of its own self-knowledge. What the Modernist poet and the free-associating patient both do, the psychoanalyst and critic Adam Phillips has argued, is inject something irreducibly enigmatic into the culture, some Literature and Psychoanalysis - Free ebook download as PDF File (.pdf), Text File (.txt) or read book online for free. doc. Literature and Psychology. W.R.D. Fairbairn - Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality. Textbook of Psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Literature. Psychoanalytic Criticism. Psychoanalytic Criticism. Early Victorian literature: the age of the novel. Dickens. Thackeray, Gaskell, and others. As a term to cover the most distinctive writers who flourished in the last years of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th, "Romantic" is indispensable but also a little misleading: there was no self-styled "Romantic movement" at the time, and the great writers of the period did not call themselves Romantics. Not until August Wilhelm von Schlegel's Vienna lectures of 1808-09 was a clear distinction established between the "organic," "plastic" qualities of Romantic art and the "mechanical" character of Classicism. Many of the age's foremost writers thought that something new was hap