

# **L'Après-Œdipe: The Future of Psychoanalytic Criticism in an Era of Cognitive and Evolutionary Psychology**

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## **Abstract**

This article examines the use in literary analysis of competing understandings of human psychology emerging from psychoanalysis, cognitive science and evolutionary theory. The validity of each as a model of human nature and as a tool for interpreting literary representations is considered. From this analysis, a case is made for a pluralist approach in the arts, demonstrating that, despite the mutual antipathy with which psychoanalytic and cognitive critics sometimes regard each other, there is a role for these and other approaches to understanding the representation of the human mind in literature. This is particularly the case, the article argues, where the representation itself forms part of a constructed fictional world that need not entirely mirror the contemporary scientific understanding of our own.

Psychoanalysis has always had a difficult relationship with alternative approaches to the understanding of the human mind, particularly those emerging from scientific disciplines such as neurology or clinical psychology. Divisions appear early. In 1913, the psychologist Pierre Janet, whose career, like Freud's, had begun under the tutelage of Jean-Marie Charcot, and who had cited and been cited by Freud throughout the preceding decade, put a definitive end to the association of psychology and psychoanalysis with his lengthy denunciation of 'the exaggerations and illusions' of the latter in *La Psychanalyse de Freud*.<sup>1</sup> He labels the methods of psychoanalytic interpretation 'strange and very dangerous', the discourse of psychoanalysis 'vague', 'metaphorical' and 'semi-mystical', and concludes that it is 'first and foremost a

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Janet, *La Psychanalyse de Freud* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), p. 113.

philosophy’ which ‘unfortunately wants to be a medical science at the same time and has pretensions of applying itself to the diagnosis and treatment of the ill’.<sup>2</sup> The following decade, in 1925, the psychologist John B. Watson, who founded the behaviourist movement that would set the course of scientific psychology for much of the twentieth century, declared that psychoanalysis was ‘based largely upon religion, introspective psychology, and Voodooism.’<sup>3</sup> Francis Crick, the discoverer of DNA, later turned to the study of the mind from a neurological perspective, and wrote in his book on the subject that ‘Freud can hardly be regarded as a scientist’, that psychoanalysts’ ideas on the mind were popular ‘especially in literary circles’, ‘mainly because of the sexual flavour they gave to them’, and that psychoanalysis itself should be regarded as a ‘cult’.<sup>4</sup> In recent decades the backlash against psychoanalytic theories of mind has gathered pace, entering general culture through popular science books like those of Steven Pinker, Antonio Damasio, V. S. Ramachandran and Daniel Dennett. Pinker’s *How the Mind Works* (1997) introduces psychoanalysis through a comparison of an evolution-based explanation for pregnancy sickness with Freud’s own speculation, which he mockingly refers to as the ‘barf-up-your-baby-theory’, but saves his greatest ammunition for the Oedipus complex which he declares ‘preposterous’ and ‘evolutionarily improbable’.<sup>5</sup>

Disaffection with psychoanalysis has grown more slowly in France, where the discipline is more culturally ingrained than in the English-speaking world. 70% of French psychotherapists employed psychoanalytic methods at the end of the twentieth century,

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<sup>2</sup> Janet, pp. 65, 111, 112.

<sup>3</sup> John B. Watson, *Behaviorism* (London: Kegan Paul, 1925), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: Norton, 1997), pp. 446, 165.

compared with 12% in the United States. Yet here too, psychoanalysis is now quickly falling from favour, with Catherine Meyer's *Livre noir de la psychanalyse* (2005) and Michel Onfray's *Le Crépuscule d'une idole* (2010) becoming bestsellers, and the *Nouvel Observateur* twice in seven years asking on its front cover if it might be time to be done with psychoanalysis.<sup>6</sup> Meyer's edited volume proposes in its subtitle that we can 'live, think and be better without Freud', and includes historical research into the fates of patients reputed 'cured' by psychoanalysis, as well as comparative studies of the efficacy of psychoanalysis and other forms of psychotherapy, including cognitive behavioural therapy. Michel Onfray sets out to defend five theses hostile to psychoanalysis, including that the discipline is not a science, but a philosophical autobiography of its creator, and that its methodology is magical thinking.

As the humanities have embarked on something of a cognitive turn over the last decade, alternative theories of mental life have begun to supplant psychoanalysis even in literary studies. In some cases, the cognitive turn amounts to a movement to drive psychoanalysis out of the humanities. Joseph Carroll, for instance, declares that the use of psychoanalysis in the arts has rendered twenty years of scholarship void; Brian Boyd promises that the new evocriticism 'will consistently call into question readings from biologically untenable positions, such as those that insist that reality is only culturally constructed, or that the human

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<sup>6</sup> *Le Livre noir de la psychanalyse: vivre, penser et aller mieux sans Freud*, edited by Catherine Meyer (Paris: Les Arènes, 2005); Michel Onfray, *Crépuscule d'un idole: l'affabulation freudienne* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), pp. 411–37. *Le Nouvel Observateur* devoted the cover of its issue of 1 September 2005 to the question, 'Faut-il en finir avec la psychanalyse?' to mark the publication of Meyer's volume. On 19 April 2012 it returned to the issue with the cover-question, 'Faut-il brûler la psychanalyse?', for an edition in which Alain Badiou and Elisabeth Roudinesco responded to further attacks on the discipline, including those in Onfray's book.

mind can be explained by psychology in the speculative Freudian tradition'.<sup>7</sup> In the face of such hostility, it seems that those of us who study the representation of human nature and the human mind in literature are being asked to take sides. Even if the cognitivists don't wipe out psychoanalysis as a valid approach to literary analysis, we would seem to be looking at a two-cultures scenario within our own discipline, with the two sides ranged against each other in mutual incomprehension and disdain. Is there any more positive outcome for psychoanalysis in literary criticism to be envisaged?

Both psychoanalysis and cognitive or evolutionary approaches have vulnerabilities as models of the mind and as methods of critical analysis, vulnerabilities which are rarely juxtaposed for comparison. Critiques of psychoanalysis largely stem from its incompatibilities with Darwinian theory and discrepancies with evidence from clinical psychology or neurology. Evolutionary theory rules it unlikely that humans would have developed innate psychological faculties that harmed their fitness to survive and produce viable offspring. Freud's theory of the death drive is one idea to have difficulty in being reconciled with Darwin on these grounds; another, more seriously for psychoanalysis as a discipline, is the 'cornerstone' of Freudian theory, the Œdipus complex as an explanation for parent-offspring conflict. The existence of 'Œdipal' tensions within families, in the sense of a son's possessiveness towards his mother and coolness towards her partner, is widely accepted, and included among the list of human universals proposed by the anthropologist Donald Brown.<sup>8</sup> However, the interpretation of these attitudes as repressed incestuous desire for the mother and patricidal feelings towards the father

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory* (St Louis, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1995), p. 468; Brian Boyd, *On the Origin of Stories* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 390.

<sup>8</sup> Donald E. Brown, *Human Universals* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991).

runs into conflict with evolutionary theory. Firstly, any such fundamental elements of the human psyche ought to be at least partly shared with some of our close primate cousins, with whom we hold many of our most fundamental sexual and familial instincts in common. Without our more advanced cognition, or, in the psychoanalytic view, our inhibiting super-ego, these species might be expected to exhibit some evidence of father-son conflict over sexual access to the mother, which is not the case. Secondly, and more importantly, Darwinian theory predicts that any propensity towards Œdipal urges would be swiftly removed from the gene pool long before human civilization appeared. A gene combination that gives sons an innate desire to initiate fatal combat with their father risks wiping itself out through the death or maiming of one or other of them, plus the loss of the father's potential future offspring, while genes predisposing the bearer towards incest would be unlikely to thrive, given the increased risk of recessive genetic disorders in the progeny of such unions.

In place of the Œdipus complex comes the alternative hypothesis of incest avoidance propounded by Edvard Westermarck in 1891, discussed and dismissed by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*.<sup>9</sup> Westermarck proposed that a process of psychological imprinting leads a child to label those around it who take the role of parent or sibling as its 'probable kin', and that anyone so labelled is permanently immune to becoming an object of sexual desire. Anthropological studies in the century that followed have lent increasing support to the theory, finding that sexual aversion develops in situations where unrelated people grow up in quasi-familial environments (such as a kibbutz), and conversely, that incestuous attraction is most common

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<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by James Strachey, XIII, pp. 122–23. Westermarck's theory is originally propounded by Edvard Westermarck in his 1891 essay, *The History of Human Marriage*.

in cases where family members have been raised apart.<sup>10</sup> Pinker claims that Westermarck's theory has 'out-Freuded Freud' in better explaining both incest aversion in general and Freud's curiously counter-intuitive explanation for it:

The idea that boys want to sleep with their mothers strikes most men as the silliest thing they have ever heard. Obviously it did not seem so to Freud, who wrote that as a boy he once had an erotic reaction to watching his mother dressing. But Freud had a wet-nurse, and may not have experienced the early intimacy that would have tipped off his perceptual system that Mrs Freud was his mother.<sup>11</sup>

Michelle Scalise Sugiyama is one theorist to consider the implications of Westermarck's theory for literary criticism. She points out that *Œdipus Rex* itself is more amenable to interpretation through Westermarck than through Freud, given that its protagonist has no 'Œdipal' feelings towards the people who nurture him through childhood and whom he believes to be his parents, and has no knowledge of his family ties to the man he kills and the woman he marries. She concludes that, 'through its continued use of the Œdipal model, and its disregard of a century's worth of advances in psychological and anthropological science, literary scholarship presents a picture of the human psyche that is both inaccurate and incomplete'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, pp. 458–59

<sup>11</sup> Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, p. 460.

<sup>12</sup> Michelle Scalise Sugiyama, 'New Science, Old Myth: An Evolutionary Critique of the Œdipal Paradigm', in *Evolution, Literature and Film*, edited by Brian Boyd, Joseph Carroll and Jonathan Gottschall, pp. 306–15 (p. 315).

Besides the compatibility problems of evolutionary theory with the Oedipus complex and death drive, scientific approaches to the mind also take issue with the psychoanalytic Unconscious: its discrete boundary and censoring gatekeeper, its semi-autonomous activity and close association with the problematic concept of repression are all disputed by psychologists, so much so that some scientists adopt the term 'nonconscious mind' to avoid association with the Freudian version. David S. Holmes collates sixty years' worth of psychological research into repression to conclude that it does not exist: he cites findings that 'emotionally intense experiences were more likely to be recalled than less intense experiences, regardless of whether they were pleasant or unpleasant'.<sup>13</sup> The stepping stones of words, images, symbols and puns by which psychoanalysis extrapolates the contents of the Unconscious from its outward manifestations are likewise regarded with mistrust by the discipline's detractors, particularly in cases where historical research into Freud's patients has cast doubt on his claims to have identified and resolved the source of a neurosis.<sup>14</sup> In literary analysis, where critics do not have a patient's corroboration or relief of symptoms to guide and limit them, interpretation can lead far from the original expression of the text. Psychoanalytic readings of Jean-Paul Sartre's *La*

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<sup>13</sup> David S. Holmes, 'The Evidence for Repression: An Examination of Sixty Years of Research', in *Repression and Dissociation: Implications for Personality Theory, Psychopathology and Health*, edited by Jerome L. Singer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 85–102 (p. 87).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, 'La Vérité sur le cas de Mlle Anna O.', or Frank Sulloway, 'L'Homme aux rats comme vitrine de la psychanalyse', in *Le Livre noir de la psychanalyse*, pp. 25–32, 95–100. Michel Onfray offers an overview of research into the case histories of Freud's patients that cast doubt on the efficacy of his therapies in *Crépuscule d'un idole*, pp. 411–37.

*Nausée* illustrate this clearly: Josette Pacaly infers from the ‘quasi-obsessional recurrence of images of the hand’ that the narrator suffered a childhood interdiction on masturbation.<sup>15</sup> Serge Doubrovsky uncovers the same repression, as well as latent homosexuality and paedophilia, in the novel’s opening scene of nausea occasioned by a pebble on the beach: ‘What if Roquentin no longer remembered looking at the sea or the pebble because he was looking at the *boys*?’<sup>16</sup> Puns on the French word for pebble, *galet* (‘gars laids’, ugly lads) and boys, *gamins* (‘gars mains’, lads hands) are adduced by Doubrovsky to support this reading, which relies on the single mention of *les gamins* that introduced the episode: ‘On Saturday the boys were skimming stones and I wanted to throw a pebble in the sea like them.’<sup>17</sup> Both psychoanalytic readings lead away from the ‘surface’ meaning of the text, in which hands represent not masturbation but corporeality and contact with the *being-in-itself* of the physical world, and the boys simply motivate Roquentin to pick up the stone that will trigger his nausea. The use of punning and symbolic readings, and the freedom to read with or against the grain of the narration as required, give the psychoanalytic critic licence to corroborate a Freudian model of characters’ psychology by means of slim textual evidence.

While the battles over psychoanalysis have been going on for some time, the problems with the use of evolutionary and cognitive approaches in literary studies are less well known. Neurology may have revolutionized our understanding of brain function in recent years, but

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<sup>15</sup> Josette Pacaly, *Sartre au miroir: une lecture psychanalytique de ses écrits biographiques* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1980), p.123.

<sup>16</sup> Serge Doubrovsky, *Autobiographiques: de Corneille à Sartre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), p. 112.

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Œuvres romanesques*, edited by Michel Rybalka (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), p. 6.

the relevance of its discoveries to literary analysis remains dubious in many cases. The mirroring of others' perceived actions in the firing of our own motor neurons, or the identification through fMRI scanning of which area of the brain receive extra blood-flow during the experience of various emotions, offer us new understanding of the neuronal activity on which mental states supervene. It is not obvious, though, that literary criticism has any business to be crossing over to the other side of the 'hard problem' separating mind from brain, to let us know which areas of Don Quixote's neocortex are active as he mistakes a windmill for a giant, or what likely neuronal activity underlies Werther's growing passion for Lotte and suicidal despair. Other areas of cognitive science, from cognitive linguistics to clinical psychology to the 'neuropsychology' at its fringes, may give us more relevant insights into conscious and unconscious processes, but here too, the discipline remains something of a blunt instrument. It is already making strides at discussing the typical or universal, beginning to offer new ideas on the processes of creativity in authors generally, or of interpretation in the typical reader. Patrick Colm Hogan's analysis of the mental activity underlying literary creativity in terms of 'defocused attention' and 'remote association' is an example of this, as is Peter Stockwell's exploration of the 'cognitive deixis' of readers' mental projections of themselves into the story they are reading.<sup>18</sup> It will be some time, however, before the discipline has much meaningful to say about the unique creative process of an individual author, let alone about the mental idiosyncrasy of an individual fictional character.

Evolutionary psychology occupies more familiar territory to the arts, exploring familial and sexual relationships, desire and conflict in behaviour, and proposing alternative theories to

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<sup>18</sup> Patrick Colm Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature and the Arts: A Guide for Humanists* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 64; Peter Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 41–57.

many of the interpretations offered by psychoanalysis. Literary scholars may apply evolutionary psychology to the interpretation of texts, either from pre-Darwinian eras (as with the Westermarck Oedipus), or from authors intentionally engaging with evolutionary theory, as in Gillian Beer's celebrated analyses of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy writing in Darwin's own century.<sup>19</sup> Evolutionary psychology also supports broader endeavours in literary theory, such as Joseph Carroll's search for universals of human nature in literary texts, or Brian Boyd's argument for literature as 'stimulus and training for a flexible mind' as well as a 'social and individual system for engendering creativity'.<sup>20</sup> What the discipline gains in relevance to our literary concerns, though, it loses in scientific legitimacy. Evolutionary psychology might offer a helpful alternative to the Oedipal complex in its theory of non-sexual conflict between father and son over the limited resources of maternal attention, but a sometimes over-enthusiastic urge to explain as many aspects as possible of modern human behaviour in terms of adaptation to survive and reproduce in a hazily imagined ancestral environment has led some to raise doubts. Highly publicized missteps, such as the much-derided theory that a supposed innate female attraction to the colour pink evolved as an adaptation to aid hunter-gatherer females in their search for berries, contribute to perception of evolutionary psychology as a collection of just-so stories backed by little evidence.<sup>21</sup> From the 'hard science' perspective of neurology,

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<sup>19</sup> Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 117–28; Brian Boyd, *On the Origin of Stories* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 86.

<sup>21</sup> Anya C. Hurlbert and Yazhu Ling, 'Biological Components of Sex Differences in Color Preference', *Current Biology* 17:16 (2007), R623–5.

Ramachandran opines that evolutionary psychology is ‘so much fun’ because ‘you can come up with an outlandishly satirical theory and get away with it’.<sup>22</sup> More sustained criticism comes from Raymond Tallis, who regards the ‘Darwinitis’ of evocriticism (along with the ‘neuromania’ of cognitive approaches) as misrepresenting the human subject: he argues that evolutionary psychology animalizes human psychology and denigrates the role of consciousness and free will.<sup>23</sup> His critique has validity: enthusiasm in the arts for the new models of human nature and the human mind has sometimes led to an uncritical adoption of scientific claims—such as extrapolations from fMRI scans that emotions have been ‘located’ in a particular sector of the brain—or to over-eager application of neuroscience to literary analysis, as with the sudden preponderance of ‘mirror neurons’ in cognitive interpretations of interpersonal relations in recent years.<sup>24</sup>

We are at a critical point in the analysis of human nature in the arts. The shadows of Freud and Lacan are receding, such that it is no longer compulsory to examine the representation of the mind through the prism of their theories. Nor is it—as yet—obligatory to conduct a psychological analysis of a character with reference to the neural underpinning on which their thoughts are supervening or the evolutionary adaptations underlying their behaviour. For the moment, we find ourselves at a point of unprecedented pluralism. Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalytic readings are welcome in literary criticism, as are cognitive

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<sup>22</sup> V. S. Ramachandran, *The Tell-Tale Brain: Unlocking the Mystery of Human Nature* (London: Heinemann, 2011), p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> Raymond Tallis, *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (Durham: Acumen, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Suzanne Keen, ‘A Theory of Narrative Empathy’, *Narrative* 14:3 (2006), 207–36.

and evolutionary approaches. And within this pluralism, other methods of interpreting the mind, which were sometimes overshadowed by the dominance of psychoanalysis in our discipline, have the opportunity to return to focus. Among these might be existentialist or phenomenological analysis, as exemplified in Jean-Pierre Richard's 1974 study, *Proust et le monde sensible*, which systematically assembles a mental portrait of Proust's narrator by means of the self-world of the novel, exploring the elements of the natural, human and artificial worlds that attract the narrator's attention, and detailing the attitudes and associations linked to substances and textures he encounters, from lumpy to silken.<sup>25</sup>

Philosophy of mind such as phenomenology in fact presents a useful bridge between the humanities and the new models of the mind coming from the sciences. We see this in the philosophers who draw on neuroscience and clinical psychology in their investigations into the nature of consciousness. Most famous among them is undoubtedly Daniel Dennett, the first of the 'neurophilosophers' to achieve a wide audience. In French philosophy too, thinkers such as Catherine Malabou, who works on the implications of neuroplasticity for the stable identity of the self, now engage with neuroscience, while other philosophers draw connections between science and the traditions of Continental philosophy of the mind, notably Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi revisiting the phenomenology of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre in the light of experimental forays into the nature of consciousness.<sup>26</sup> From the scientists too there are some

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<sup>25</sup> Jean-Pierre Richard, *Proust et le monde sensible* (Paris: Seuil, 1974).

<sup>26</sup> Catherine Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris: Bayard, 2011); Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (London: Routledge, 2008).

who reach out to the humanities, such as the neurologist Antonio Damasio, who engages with Descartes and Spinoza in his writings on embodied consciousness.<sup>27</sup>

With this new pluralism in the arts of approaches to the analysis of the mind, and these bridges constructed between science and the humanities on the topic, is there hope that within this intellectual environment, psychoanalysis and cognitive science might not only flourish individually in the arts, but that they might even be persuaded to collaborate? It is true, as we have seen, that the interaction of psychoanalysis and cognitive science in the arts has most often been characterized by mutual hostility. But these bitter quarrels over differences in outlook can lead us to overlook the various fundamentals of the mind that both psychoanalytic and scientific models hold in common. These fundamentals include the importance of sexual urges in motivating our behaviour and determining many of our thoughts and much of our emotional life. They include the importance of early childhood experience, particularly traumatic experience, in shaping our personality throughout the rest of our lives. And they include the unconscious mind itself: while theorists may disagree on the nature of the unconscious, as we have seen, the suggestion that only a limited part of our mental activity is conscious, and that the parts which are not conscious play an important role in our cognition, emotions and behaviour, is now the received wisdom for all disciplines focused on the mind, with Freud largely to thank as original proposer of this view. We have only to look back to the mid-twentieth-century, when Sartre's existentialist view of the mind still rivalled Freud with

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<sup>27</sup> Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (London: Vintage, 2006); *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (New York: Harcourt, 2003). My own article, 'Bergson, Bauby and the Neuroscience of Emotion' explores parallels between Damasio and the intuitive philosophy of Henri Bergson on the topic of embodied emotion, *French Studies Bulletin*, 121(2011), 73–5.

its model of consciousness having full access to and responsibility for mental activity, to see psychoanalysis more as precursor than antagonist to the current scientific consensus. Ramachandran is one neuroscientist to recognize this heritage. He acknowledges that:

‘Despite Freud’s current unpopularity (to put it mildly), modern neuroscience has in fact revealed that he was right in arguing that only a limited part of the brain is conscious.’<sup>28</sup>

He also endorses the existence of psychoanalytic repression against the scepticism of many psychologists—‘I lean towards thinking the phenomenon is real, for I have seen many clear instances of it in my patients, providing what mathematicians call an “existence proof”’.<sup>29</sup> Conciliatory voices among literary critics are similarly difficult, but not impossible, to discover. David Lodge, for instance, whose *Consciousness and the Novel* in 2002 was a major step in the coming to prominence of evolutionary and cognitive criticism, is enthusiastically pluralist in his approach. After acknowledging that ‘the success of Freud’s ideas as memes depended more on his literary skills than on the hard evidence he provided for their therapeutic efficacy’, and that these ideas ‘have been disseminated and kept in currency largely by literature and literary intellectuals’, he goes on to examine points of convergence between psychoanalysis and neuroscience, and suggests, perhaps a little optimistically, that Freud enjoys ‘considerable respect’ among current scientific researchers into consciousness.<sup>30</sup> His

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<sup>28</sup> Ramachandran, p. 270.

<sup>29</sup> Ramachandran, pp. 270–1.

<sup>30</sup> David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 6, 60.

own approach is founded on the contention that 'literature constitutes a kind of knowledge about consciousness that is *complementary* to scientific knowledge', positioning the fictional minds of literature outside of science's explanatory prerogative, in an area where alternative modes of interpretation may be equally valid.<sup>31</sup>

It is indeed in the possible worlds of fiction that we might find justification for the continued relevance of psychoanalysis to the arts, regardless of its fate outside them. It is not always appreciated that the terms of the debate are vastly altered once we move from discussing the nature of the *actual* minds of writers and readers in the processes of creativity and interpretation to the virtual minds of fictional characters, who exist only in the diegesis of the fiction. Here, we are not looking at minds, but conceptions of minds. Marie-Laure Ryan suggests that the possible worlds of fiction are interpreted by the readers according to a 'principle of minimal departure', meaning that we assume that the storyworld matches our own, except where otherwise specified by the text.<sup>32</sup> Reading Proust, we accept the existence of the (fictional) sea-side town of Balbec on the Normandy coast, but assume unless told otherwise that if the Narrator heads westward out of town he will at some point reach Brittany, that eastwards lie Picardy and Belgium, and that heading north into the sea will eventually bring him to Britain. Where representations of the mind are concerned, however, it is more accurate to say that readers assume that the diegesis matches what was believed to be the case in our world at the time of writing. Psychologically realist literature makes no greater claim than to remain within the bounds of current knowledge on the nature of the mind, and these bounds have always been wide ones. If a Christian author wishes to present the mind as

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<sup>31</sup> Lodge, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Fiction, non-factuals and the principle of minimal departure', *Poetics* 9:4 (1980), 403–22.

an immaterial substance that can commune with the creator of the universe and survive the death of the body, then they are entitled to create a fictional world in which this is factually the case. If a twentieth-century writer wishes to present parent-offspring conflict as motivated by a repressed desire on the part of the child to murder the father and have sex with the mother, then that too, is surely their prerogative. Whether it remains a possible world for the psychological realist of the twenty-first century may be open to debate, but it would be foolish to take D. H. Lawrence or André Breton to task for their espousal of psychoanalytic orthodoxy of the time. Regardless of the fortunes of psychoanalysis in this century and beyond, there will always exist fictional worlds populated by Freudian minds, because they have been created as such.

Finally, if a pluralist approach to the mind, within which psychoanalysis can play a role, is an approach worth nurturing in literary studies, then this is partly due to the pluralism literary studies already nurtures with respect to psychoanalysis. In French theory in particular, psychoanalysis is no Freudian monolith, to be accepted or rejected *en bloc*. Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have ensured that, more than anywhere else, post-Freudian psychoanalysis in the arts has been as much contest as continuation. Through them and others like them, psychoanalysis has been constantly remodelled through the last century from post-structuralist, feminist or Marxist standpoints that prevent the discipline from ossifying into dogma, and hold its tenets up to a questioning from within that can be as harsh and radical as the criticisms psychoanalysis receives from outside. There is a similar openness in psychoanalytically inclined French literature. The psychoanalyst and author Marie Darrieussecq is perhaps the clearest example of this, combining classically

Freudian concepts with an enthusiasm for advances in neurology and psychology that are explored in detail in her fiction.<sup>33</sup>

The future for psychoanalysis in literature and literary criticism may be far from assured, but the flexibility within coexisting traditions of psychoanalysis make it better placed to weather a cognitive turn than it might currently appear. The European novel's long interest in Freud and his successors also give the discipline a firmer foothold in literary culture than it generally has elsewhere. If battle lines are drawn, and literary critics take up arms in the *guerre des psys* that is currently playing out in French psychotherapy between psychoanalysts and cognitive scientists, then the psychoanalysts will lose. If that happens, then the analysis of modern literature, much of which is consciously infused by its Freud-fascinated authors with a deliberately psychoanalytic view of the mind, will also lose out. However, if there is a chance for openness, and psychoanalysis is prepared to take its place as one among several approaches to understanding fictional minds—scientific, literary, speculative, religious, philosophical or introspective—if it is prepared to accept that some aspects of human nature may be better explained in other ways, or that its own interpretations may be a better fit to some literary texts than to others, then it may yet have an vital role to play in a pluralist literary criticism, the better to deal with the immense plurality of kinds of minds that literature offers to us.

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<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Marie Darrieussecq, *Bref séjour chez les vivants* (Paris: POL, 2001), translated by Ian Monk as *A Brief Stay with the Living* (London: Faber, 2003).