PSYCHOANALYTIC RESEARCH: HOW TO LOCATE SUBJECTIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

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Abstract: This paper makes an argument for psychoanalysis in academic research, setting out four main components – the unconscious, speech, sensuality and defences – that form the basis of psychoanalytic research. The use of psychoanalysis in this paper is contrasted with reductionist approaches, and it elaborates instead a style of analysis that will be able to attend to the way psychoanalysis operates as part of discourse. An example of analysis organised around analytic steps is given which focuses on scenes from the film *Spartacus*, and connections are then made with Lacanian perspectives. Psychoanalytic research can be used to illustrate how what feels to be so deep inside us is actually a symptom of life under capitalism.

Keywords: psychoanalysis; discourse; culture; method; *Spartacus*.

PESQUISA PSICANALÍTICA: COMO SITUAR A SUBJETIVIDADE NA CULTURA CONTEMPORÂNEA

Resumo: Este artigo argumenta em prol do uso da psicanálise na pesquisa acadêmica, definindo quatro componentes principais – inconsciente, discurso, sensualidade e defesas – que formam a base da pesquisa psicanalítica. O uso da psicanálise é aqui contrastado com abordagens reducionistas. Em seu lugar, elabora-se um estilo de análise capaz de contemplar a maneira pela qual a psicanálise opera como parte do discurso. Dá-se como exemplo uma análise de cenas do filme *Spartacus*, organizada segundo os passos analíticos e articulada com perspectivas lacanianas. A pesquisa psicanalítica pode ser usada para ilustrar de que maneira aquilo que parece estar tão profundamente arraigado em nós é, na verdade, um sintoma da vida no capitalismo.

Palavras-chave: psicanálise; discurso; cultura; método; *Spartacus*.

Introduction

Psychology has had a long-standing relationship with psychoanalysis, with figures like Luria and Piaget members of psychoanalytic organisations and drawing on Freudian ideas to develop their own research. For many years that relationship has been carefully avoided by psychologists, we might even say that the psychoanalysis was "repressed" (Burman, 1994). It is only recently that the emergence of qualitative research put psychoanalytic ideas back on the agenda, with feminist accounts of subjectivity in heterosexual relationships (Hollway, 1989) and of the development of masculinity (Frosh et al., 2001).

Psychoanalysis has also been popularised by Hollywood films, for example, as an attempt to address why we are unhappy by looking deep inside ourselves, when the problem is precisely that it was the separation of people from each other and from the products of their labour in the waves of industrialisation during the eighteenth century that caused neuroses experienced as forms of individual misery and unconscious protest (Parker, 1997). Instead of taking psychoanalytic descriptions for granted, then, we have to analyse how they work and how psychoanalysis itself became part of the disease it claims to cure. This means that "*psychoanalytic research*" *is an analysis of contradictory pathological experience as itself already interpreted by psychoanalysis*.

What psychoanalytic research can do, then, is to turn psychoanalytic knowledge around against itself so that we understand better the way that psychoanalytic ideas have themselves encouraged us to look for things deep inside us as the causes of social problems. Psychoanalytic subjectivity – our sense of ourselves as having hidden childhood desires and destructive wishes – is the perfect complement to economic exploitation in capitalist society, for both succeed in making the victims blame themselves. This paper shows how we can make these elements of individual subjectivity explicit, locate the elements in social relationships and so render them into things that can be broken open and transformed.

Four key ideas in psychoanalytic research

Psychoanalysis makes a number of assumptions about the nature of human experience, of which we describe four here ("the unconscious", "speech", "Oedipus" and "defences"). We must read these assumptions as arising from certain historical circumstances – the rise of capitalism and the privatisation of relationships – rather than as underlying universal truths about psychology that were "discovered" by Freud.

First, psychoanalysis opens up a domain of experience – the unconscious – that runs beneath and around what we are immediately aware of, patterns and forces that we cannot control and which determine and shape our conscious thoughts. This conception of the unconscious appeared during the eighteenth century during a time when Europe was thrown into the maelstrom of industrial development that wrenched peasants away from the land and reconstituted them as workers who were indeed then subject to relationships with their new employers that were systematically mystified. In the unconscious we find patterns of relationships we are driven to repeat – in "transference" to others. An attention to emotional reactions to relationships and unbidden "investments" in certain ideas or outcomes of research – in "countertransference" to those who may have transference to us – can be useful (Hunt, 1989). At the very least we may fathom some limits of a "neutral" stance toward our research topic.

Second, psychoanalysis conceives of a tool – speech – that may simultaneously identify and dissolve the work of the unconscious, and it was only through the notion of the "talking cure" that Freud was able to develop his ideas. Speech became a medium through which the analysand (the subject undertaking psychoanalysis) could connect things that had been separated and made unspeakable by the strictures of bourgeois morality capitalism demanded of its workforce and its managers. Speech is the place where what has been pushed away as a condition for being well-behaved can be unlocked, examined and made part of the real stuff of human psychology; that is, symbolic activity with other human beings

(Forrester, 1980). This notion calls for research and writing as publicly accountable activities. Even if psychoanalysis is treated with suspicion, it does add its voice to critiques of individualised expert knowledge.

Third, psychoanalysis homes in on the way human sensuality is moulded, compressed and replicated in a certain shape – through the Oedipus complex – so that we experience that sensuality as sexual desire locked up inside us and at certain zones of the body. Oedipus, as a triadic relationship between someone who loves, who they love and who stands in the way of that love, is reproduced in such a way that certain kinds of sexual desire – that of the "homosexual" for example – became prohibited. Eighteenth-century capitalism needed to keep this sexual desire restricted to engines for the production of new workers, but psychoanalysis noticed how all of human activity is suffused with desire. Some feminist researchers have read Freud as someone who gave a detailed description of how the nuclear family functioned as a modern factory for the production of masculinity and femininity (Mitchell, 1974), and so how those gender positions could be changed. Psychoanalysis as a prescription for how things should be is bad research, but it can be a useful ally for researchers who want to question how things have come to be the way they are and how we feel these things so intensely.

Fourth, psychoanalysis specifies the different strategies – defences – that are used to keep the truth at bay and which lock together certain kinds of relationships and ways of talking about them efficiently enough to make everything seem under control. The "defence mechanisms" used by individuals and by social systems will not necessarily be deliberate, but these little structures can be named at least, and employed by a researcher alongside other descriptions of psychoanalytic processes (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988). The reduction of human experience to the level of the individual and the illusion that people labour for others and consume what is produced out of their own free choice requires the operation of many overlapping defence mechanisms, strategies of defence at the level of the individual as complex as those needed by the nation states born at the same time as capitalist society.

Description of defence mechanisms as conceived of by psychoanalysis is a first step to describing the social conditions that gave rise to them.

Freud was important to our understanding of how things come to feel so deep inside us because he was one of the first psychologists to notice how pathology is produced within certain kinds of social relationships. Psychoanalytic research can now explore how social relationships under capitalism brought into being new collections of symptoms. These symptoms, as little eruptions of unconscious protest at life in a dehumanising social system, also draw attention to the way that the psychoanalysis so ideally suited to name those things is itself "symptomatic" of capitalist society. We can treat psychoanalysis dialectically, as part of the problem and part of the solution; it is our way in and out of the contradictory shape of contemporary subjectivity and social relationships.

Beware reductionism in psychoanalytic research

Psychoanalytic ideas have recently made a bid for power in qualitative research by way of the "free-association narrative interview method", which posits a "defended subject" as the object of research for "understanding the effects of defences against anxiety on people's actions and stories about them" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 4). Here "meanings underlying interviewees" elicited narratives are best accessed via links based on spontaneous association", in which "free associations follow an emotional rather than a cognitively derived logic" (Ibid.: 152). Unfortunately, in this case it is psychoanalysis rather than qualitative research that is in command, and the problem is fourfold:

1. *Individualising* – when the focus of the research is an individual life story and the hidden underlying reasons why people do things. Common "themes" are derived from different "profiles", and the research ends up with society conceived of as the aggregate of individual psychological processes.
2. *Essentialising* – when the researcher thinks they really know what the "emotional logic" of the free associations is pointing to. The "cognitive logic" of associations in the interview is avoided,

and the researcher then makes it seem like they have actually found the emotional drivers under the surface.

3. *Pathologising* – when the outcome of the research is a description of why people did things as a result of certain unconscious processes. Certain past events or family constellations are used to build up a picture of someone in a "psychosocial case study" that unearths the truth about them.
4. *Disempowering* – when the approach has the necessary consequence that for "ethical reasons" the interviewees will not be told what the interpretations made by the researchers were. The researcher is the expert who only tells other experts what has been discovered.

A major problem with psychoanalysis is that it demands absolute obedience once it has been allowed in. Psychoanalysis is not content with being a culturally-specific historically-located tool, and those who use it all too often find themselves being used by it and made to evangelise on its behalf. It is a short step from using psychoanalytic ideas in interpreting what interviewees tell you to believing that you really do have "knowledge of the way in which their inner worlds allow them to experience the outer world" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 4). Perhaps it is better not to use psychoanalysis to carry out and analyse research interviews, and not to let it get a grip either on you as a researcher or on your more vulnerable victims.

We turn next to show how psychoanalytic ideas can be used to identify mechanisms that hold together social relationships and the forms of subjectivity that inhabit them, and how those mechanisms can be re-described in relation to broader societal processes.

Noticing and characterising pathological differences

One way of tracking the analysis is to focus first on the way certain individuals or relationships are pathologised within a psychoanalytic frame of reference, are characterised as deviant from an assumed norm, and then to shift focus to the way this psychoanalytic frame sets up positions for the participants. This section will concentrate

on the first aspect. The following section will shift attention to the psychoanalytic frame, and the way certain "defence mechanisms" can be identified in the research material that are organised by psychoanalytic "discursive complexes".

Psychoanalytic research does call for some fairly wide-ranging reading of psychoanalytic texts, and the analysis starts to take shape through a to and for between the research material (as the "topic") and psychoanalytic material (as a "resource"). As the analysis proceeds we move on to treat the psychoanalytic motifs in the research material also as a topic. A first research question, then, will be What do you recognise from psychoanalysis in the research material? And, following on from this, a second question is What could be said about the way the psychoanalysis characterises individuals and relationships? The third research question takes its cue from the way psychoanalysis is concerned with "pathology", and here we would ask What is marked out as different from the norm in this material?

An example of research material

In the film *Spartacus* (Kubrick, 1960), there is an interesting sub-text. The story of Spartacus has been an inspiration to many of those rebelling against capitalism, and the film itself has a radical image. For example, the film credited the leftist screenwriter (Dalton Trumbo), and in doing so was the first major studio film to rehabilitate one of the victims of McCarthyism in Hollywood (http://pages.prodigy.com/kubrick/kubsp.htm). Let us turn to the sub-text.

Crassus (Lawrence Olivier), who is manoeuvring to become absolute dictator of Rome and so crush the Spartacus slave rebellion, chooses Antoninus (Tony Curtis), a 26-year-old Sicilian "singer of songs", to be his "body servant". This episode is followed by some significant scenes, which include one in which Spartacus (Kirk Douglas) is reunited with Varinia (Jean Simmons) and rides off with her into the sunset, and another in which the present senate leader Gracchus (Charles Laughton) relates to Julius Caesar (John Gavin) this confidence, which contains a damning characterisation of Crassus; "You know, this republic of ours is something

like a rich widow. Most Romans love her as their mother, but Crassus dreams of marrying the old girl, to put it politely".

A short while after is a "bath scene", which was cut from the original film and the soundtrack for it lost. The restored version, released in 1991, has Antoninus' lines redone by Tony Curtis, and Crassus dubbed by Anthony Hopkins (http://pages.prodigy.com/kubrick/kubsp.htm). The scene opens with Crassus in the bath. He calls to Antoninus "Fetch a stool Antoninus. In here with it. That will do. Do you steal, Antoninus?" "No master." "Do you lie?" "Not if I can avoid it." "Have you ever dishonoured the gods?" "No master." "Have you refrained from these vices out of respect for moral virtues?" "Yes master." Now the questioning moves onto another topic as Antoninus washes his master's back. Crassus asks "Do you eat oysters?" "When I have them, master." "Do you eat snails?" "No master." "Do you consider the eating of oysters to be moral, and the eating of snails to be immoral?" "No master." "Of course not. It is all a matter of taste is it not?" "Yes master." "And taste is not the same as appetite, and therefore not a question of morals is it?" "It could be argued so, master." "My robe, Antoninus. My taste includes both snails and oysters." Crassus then gets out of the bath and walks into the main room, with Antoninus following him, and faces the window. He then continues, "Antoninus look, across the river. There is something you must see. There, boy, is Rome. The might, the majesty, the terror of Rome. There is the power that bestrides the known world like a colossus. No man can withstand Rome. No nation can withstand her. How much less so a boy, hmm? There is only one way to deal with Rome, Antoninus. You must serve her. You must abase yourself before her. You must grovel at her feet. You must love her. Isn't that so Antoninus? Antoninus? Antoninus?" He turns around to find that Antoninus has gone.

The first task of psychoanalytic research is the *identification and representation of the research material (Step 1)*. The material in italics here is quite long (about 500 words) and it includes some background to the film *Spartacus* and some portions of transcript. The material

presented in a report – to be included at the beginning of the Analysis section – should include sufficient detailed description, and perhaps (as here) bits of verbatim quoted text, so that the reader is able to make sense of it as it stands. (Other more extensive background material could be included in an Appendix.) Next (*Step 2*) we need to *note aspects of the character or relationship that seem strange*. We might note, first off, that the master-slave relationship does not permit a symmetrical open conversation between the two men, and Crassus' power over Antoninus already frames the scene as something strange, strange to us as viewers of the film. The questioning of Antoninus is rather peculiar, and Crassus himself is commenting upon some issues of pathology. It is not, he says, "immoral" to eat snails, for it is a matter of "taste" and not "appetite". Is the disappearance of Antoninus strange, or is it the behaviour of Crassus? In this case we see a series of metaphors being used to suggest something of a relationship with Antoninus that makes the homosexual desire of Crassus into something pathological.

Step 3 is to take forward that question of why a character or aspect of the relationship might seem odd by focusing on how *the difference between the characters renders one or both of them as pathological*. In this case, Crassus controls the course of the conversation, and shifts topic from stealing and lying to a taste for snails and oysters and then to abasement before Rome. Now, what is at issue here is *not* whether this might be a seduction scenario but how the seduction is being carried out in such a way as to position Crassus as pathological in some way. The psychoanalytic focus here is on what drives Crassus, and how he manifests his desire for Antoninus so that his desire is located in the frame of taste for snails and to be the figure of Rome before which Antoninus will abase himself. We then move on to look at *how the abnormality might be characterised in psychoanalytic terms* (*Step 4*). In this case, the dominant position that Crassus speaks from, and maintains in his "identification" with Rome, means that he does not simply appear as "feminine". The picture is more complex than that, and it draws attention to something of the nature of Crassus as more perverse.

However, we need to take care to attend to how the relationship is *constructed and moralised about* (*Step 5*) rather than making the mistake of moralising about it ourselves. We are not using psychoanalysis to pathologise, but analysing how phenomena that are already interpreted by psychoanalysis frame them so that they appear as pathological. In this example we already have some clue as to how Crassus is set up to be pathologised from the comment of Gracchus to Julius Caesar, and it is already done in classic psychoanalytic terms. We are told that unlike the "normal" love that Romans show toward the republic of Rome, a love that is as if Rome were their mother, Crassus "dreams of marrying" her. And his dream is more than that, Gracchus implies, for to speak of "marrying" Rome is to "put it politely". The Oedipal dream of the boy child to have the undivided love of his mother is invoked here, and a moral frame is already placed around Crassus through which we will be invited to interpret his reference to Rome when he tries to seduce Antoninus.

The five steps outlined here need not be followed in a linear fashion, and you may need to loop back to the earlier steps again. The identification and representation of the research material, for example, is a first step that may be modified as the analysis proceeds (in this example when other aspects of the film may need to be included).

From defence mechanisms to discursive complexes

One useful way of identifying pathological character traits or relationships is to use descriptions of "defence mechanisms" from psychoanalytic literature. There are accounts of these mechanisms in standard "dictionaries" of psychoanalysis (e.g., Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988). The dominant forms of psychoanalysis in the English-speaking world often make explicit the connections between defences and ways of moralising about character traits, developmental deficits or pathological lack of insight, and so descriptions of "defence mechanisms" in this literature are especially rich as a theoretical resource. Here we can use some of the detailed definitions of defence mechanisms given by Vaillant (1971) to make explicit what seems to be wrong with Crassus.

The task here is to show *how the defence mechanisms are used to structure pathological processes* (*Step 6*). One way into this part of the analysis is to dwell for a moment on the "mature" defence mechanisms Vaillant describes – "altruism", "humour", "suppression", "anticipation" and "sublimation" – and to use these as test cases to see if it would be possible to make sense of Crassus. The "mature" defence mechanisms are supposed to be common in "healthy" individuals from the age of twelve (until age 90 Vaillant says). The other groupings of defence mechanisms ("Neurotic", "Immature" and "Narcissistic") are clearly not as desirable. Crassus does not seem particularly "altruistic", for there is no direct goodwill or benefit being shown toward Antoninus. On the contrary, Antoninus is being told to "abase" himself before Rome and, by implication, to Crassus. There is, perhaps, some humour in the line of questioning, but not as a direct expression of feeling. There is an agenda here for Crassus, and the word-play then reveals itself to be actually a form of "wit", which might indicate some "displacement" from the real thing that Crassus is getting at. The use of witty metaphors to set little traps for Antoninus, particularly when he does not have the right to challenge Crassus, also draws attention to the pathological tinge to what might otherwise be seen as relatively innocent "suppression" (postponing things that are too difficult to deal with immediately), "anticipation" (careful realistic planning) or "sublimation" (the channelling of instincts into cultural pursuits).

So let us turn now to the slightly more pathological defence mechanisms. "Displacement" is one of the "neurotic" defence mechanisms Vaillant describes (along with "intellectualisation", "repression", "reaction formation" and "dissociation"). The neurotic defence mechanisms are pictured as starting at about three years of age (and lasting until about age 90). They are, Vaillant says, also common in "healthy" individuals, but they may strike observers of the individual in question as a little odd. Perhaps there is not much evidence of "intellectualisation" at work here, for that one to be present we would have to have evidence that Crassus was using formal abstract terms to cover over his emotions (as academics often do). If

we take Gracchus' comment seriously, that Crassus "dreams of marrying" Rome, we might interpret the reference to "the might, the majesty, the terror of Rome" as indicating some "repression"; that is some forgetfulness of what his desire is to Rome and its symbolic replacement by an image of Rome to which one must "abase" oneself, an image of Rome with which Crassus identifies himself. There is more than a simple symbolic representation in place of what is "repressed", then. Perhaps there is something of the neurotic mechanism of "reaction formation", in which one may deal with some threatening figure by modelling oneself on them. The triumphal aspect of the identification with Rome, in Crassus admiring description of her power, might also indicate something of "dissociation" (as a temporary out-of-character delirium).

There are some worse, "immature" defences – "projection" (including prejudice and suspicion of others), "schizoid fantasy" (private make-believe scenarios), "hypochondria" (afflictions modelled on others ambivalently invested), "passive aggression" (failure or passivity designed to have a negative effect on others) or "acting out" (immediate dramatic behaviour to gratify wishes) – that could be at work, and these are the kind of defences that individuals use between ages three and sixteen. If Crassus was portrayed as using these defences we might view him badly, but we might also agree that they could be ameliorated or cured by, for example, "personal maturation, a more mature spouse, a more intuitive physician, or a fairer parole officer" (Vaillant, 1971: 116). Notice how every specification of pathology in a psychoanalytic frame includes specifications for how the person might be brought into line with what psychoanalysis takes to be normal. Already, though, we have been led to expect that Crassus is a far worse case, and we need to move down a level, to the "narcissistic" defences, to get something that fits the bill.

The "narcissistic" defences are those that are used by individuals before the age of five. One of these is "delusional projection", in which the subject experiences their feelings inside another or another's feelings inside themselves. Perhaps the direct identification of Crassus with

Rome is of this kind, and what he then demands is that Antoninus should be as obedient to him as he, Crassus, is to Rome. Another is "distortion" where there is a reshaping of external reality, and perhaps identification to the point of fusion with another admired person. Crassus' identification with Rome might be understood in this way perhaps. (The third mechanism is "psychotic denial", which does not seem so immediately relevant here.) The defence mechanisms identified so far characterise certain of the characters and relationships in the research material as "pathological" in some way. We are taking a risk here, for this kind of analysis could be carried out just as easily by someone who really believes that psychoanalysis was always true and that Freud gave us the keys for opening up the secrets of any and every personal and cultural phenomenon. For them, the psychoanalysis would be a theoretical "resource". We have to take care, therefore, to reframe the analysis in such a way as to turn the psychoanalytic shape of the material itself into a "topic". One way to do that is to treat the material as itself already interpreted by psychoanalysis, and to show how the psychoanalysis that is woven into the research material is organised around "discursive complexes". A discursive complex is way of describing something (an object) and someone (a subject) in such a way that "the object simultaneously looks like an item in a psychoanalytic vocabulary and the subject is defined as a psychoanalytic subject" (Parker, 1997: 69).

That Crassus should be depicted as using "narcissistic" defence mechanisms in his attempt to seduce Antoninus is significant here, and draws attention to a pernicious psychoanalytic framing of what kind of perverse being Crassus is. For he is actually perfectly representing what Freud (1914) described the "homosexual" to be in his essay on narcissism. For Freud, the homosexual man takes the position of his mother and tries to find another to love in the same way as his mother loved him. The "femininity" of the homosexual, then, is given a nasty twist by Freud, for it makes the homosexual into a figure who will demand some kind of childish love from another man. We may identify the "discursive complex" of *narcissism*, then, as

the guiding motif in this scene (*Step 7*), and the analysis then calls for a discussion of the cultural images of narcissism and homosexuality that are fused in the film *Spartacus*.

Here we must treat this representation of Crassus and the other characters in the "here and now", as constructed according to certain kinds of cultural and political agendas. The film was made at a time when psychoanalytic ideas were becoming increasingly popular in US America, also a time when there was increasing anxiety about the breakdown of the family. Popular psychoanalytic accounts of this family breakdown included fears that the absence of strong fathers would lead not only to delinquency but also to a rise in homosexuality. The rise of "narcissistic" character types was one key motif, including in later critiques from the Left (e.g., Lasch, 1978). One of the fascinating things about *Spartacus*, particularly bearing in mind that the screenwriter was one of the leftist victims of McCarthyism shortly after the Second World War, is the way that Crassus functions as a kind of fascist demagogue hostile to democracy and this pathology is bound up with his homosexuality. One of the political effects of the film, then, as viewed from the present-day is that Spartacus himself is repositioned from being a kind of socialist revolutionary (as he was for many left groups during the early twentieth century) to being a democrat fighting for good old US American family values.

The analysis of material using psychoanalytic research that looks at how "discursive complexes" shape how the characters are positioned, and how we are then invited to read the material as we too are positioned by it, is also necessarily an analysis of the political conditions in which psychoanalysis makes sense to us (Parker, 1997). That is, it requires a close analysis of ideology in capitalist society.

Stage by stage to psychoanalytic research

Let us summarise some broader stages of the research process, taking the analysis of the psychoanalytic mechanisms and processes forward to locate them as guiding motifs in social relationships. These six stages summarise what you need to do.

1. *Appetite* – where you decide what kind of dish you would like to eat yourself (snails or oysters?) and how you might tempt someone else to enjoy it. The reasons why something is appetising to you, and why it might not be to everyone's taste, also need to be considered. Identify your topic.
2. *Ingredients* – where you select the things that will work well together, and where you make sure that you don't get some bad pre-mixed packets of stuff that contain ideas that will be difficult to digest. Some off-the-shelf products look good but taste very synthetic. Select your material (Step 1).
3. *Recipes* – where you look at earlier instructions for preparing the same kind of dish, so that you have some kind of idea of what you want to end up with and make some decisions about the ingredients you want to add. Find something you can work to as a model and decide how to adapt it (Step 2 & 3).
4. *Mixing* – where you carefully knead together the ingredients so that they blend together, taking care to mix just the right amounts and especially not to put too much psychoanalytic theory in. Don't over-egg the dish. Make sure the original ingredients are still distinct enough to be recognised at the end (Step 4).
5. *Rising* – where you step back and leave what you have prepared for a moment to give yourself time to reflect on what you have done and what your guests might make of it. In what way does it fit into usual items on a menu, and in what kind of establishment? What assumptions are built into this dish (Step 5).
6. *Assembling* – where you divide the mixture into forms ready for baking. The shape of the thing is important, and it is often worth thinking about dividing it into easily digestible portions rather than leaving it in one big lump in the dish. Organise your account into clear sub-headings (Steps 6 & 7).
7. *Tasting* – where you go back to the beginning of the whole report and slowly digest it, savouring the nicely cooked aspects, and making sure that undercooked portions are dealt with. The proof of the pudding lies in the eating, but make sure the menu follows a sensible order.

Consciousness, conversation and repression

The role of subjectivity in psychoanalytic research is crucial. Subjectivity is viewed by psychoanalysis, as with much qualitative research, not as a problem but as a resource (and topic). To draw upon one's own subjectivity in the research process does not mean that one is not being "objective", but that one actually comes closer to a truer account. In psychoanalytic terms, the "investment" the researcher has in the material they are studying plays a major role in the interest that will eventually accrue from the research. In psychoanalytic jargon the analyst's own investments and responses are known as their "countertransference" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988). What follows here are three ways it has been discussed that are relevant to qualitative research in psychology.

One approach that is explicitly located in the US American tradition of psychoanalysis is Hunt's (1989) discussion of the use of countertransference in fieldwork. For Hunt, the research process is "hermeneutic" – an interpretative activity that aims for deeper understanding of the research material – and what happens to the researcher in the course of the research will be as important as what happens to the "analysand" (their object of study): "The psychoanalytic narrative thus constitutes an intersubjective construction mediated by the shifting conscious and unconscious mental representations, transferences, and countertransferences of both analyst and analysand" (Hunt, 1989: 29). Here, of course, there is an assumption that such things as conscious and unconscious "mental representations" are really at work. There would be a risk here, for example, of treating the "defence mechanisms" we identified in the Spartacus material as real things that we had discovered.

A second approach has been adopted by the "post-Jungian" writer Andrew Samuels (1993), who enlarges the scope of "transference" and "countertransference" to include all the mutual influences and effects of interaction between someone who wants to understand and change the world and the things in the world that resist understanding or change. Samuels argument here is quite compatible with the position

taken in this paper, especially when he argues that "the subjectivity of the countertransference is not an autonomous, 'authentic' subjectivity – quite the opposite when we recognise that the source of such a subjectivity (politics) lies outside the subject (the analyst)" (Samuels, 1993: 36). There is an attempt to make the analysis into something "therapeutic" (and here I am a little more cautious about the approach for I would treat "therapy" too as a culturally-specific activity). In this light, the analysis of the Spartacus material would be driven by the question as to how we can make sense of it, including how we are affected by it.

A third position is advanced by Michael Billig (1999), who comes at the problem from outside psychoanalysis altogether and whose analysis of "repression" turns it from being something mysterious inside the head to a process that occurs in conversation: "Conversation demands constraints and what is forbidden becomes an object of desire. Language creates these forbidden desires, but also provides the means for pushing them from conscious attention" (Billig, 1999: 254). Billig does not explicitly discuss "countertransference", but there are important implications for how we should see the position of the researcher. The way we craft our account of "forbidden desires" in research material will be profoundly shaped not so much by our own hidden "forbidden desires" as by the way the language of research and report-writing works according to certain conventions. This means that we need to reflect upon how what we write will be interpreted by those who read it, by the "investments" we imagine them to have as well as our own investments. Perhaps it is no accident that the metaphor of "investment" is important to the language of psychoanalysis. After all, psychoanalysis did emerge at the same time as capitalist society in the western world. It is important, then, that our investment in psychoanalysis is itself not too great.

Marking out pitfalls in psychoanalytic research

Things that should be avoided, and which would count against a good evaluation of a report include the following slips:

1. *Taking for granted what psychoanalytic theory says* – This happens when a description of a psychodynamic process seems so accurately to account for something that you are describing that you end up talking about it as if the psychoanalytic account were true.
2. *Telling us what the unconscious motives are* – This happens when a psychoanalytic account is used to disregard what people say because you are sure that you know what they really mean, and worse still that you can explain it because of things deep inside them that they are unaware of.
3. *Describing psychoanalytic pathologies as moral faults* – This happens when the moralising that is often used as part of the labelling of people by psychoanalytic writers is adopted by you because you have started to get drawn into the description as if it really were true of the characters it pertains to.
4. *Discovering developmental deficits or childhood trauma* – This happens when psychoanalytic speculation is used to construct a version of what a person's life must have been like for the psychoanalytic account to be correct, and worse still to construct an account of things that happened then to explain what they say now.

Social representations of psychoanalysis

This paper has argued that we should take psychoanalysis seriously because it is a powerful social phenomenon that structures how we think about ourselves and because it opens up new vantage points on things that we usually take for granted. It has also been argued, just as strongly, that we should not, as a consequence, take psychoanalysis itself for granted. Psychoanalysis is not the truth about ourselves that we have only now discovered but something that has become true, and could once again in the future become untrue. There are number of different vantage points on this process of studying this strange dialectical "truth" status of psychoanalysis.

First, within the tradition of European social psychology an important study by Serge Moscovici (1976) of psychoanalysis in 1950s France illustrated how newspapers and other media were then starting

to use psychoanalytic terminology to describe individual motives and political events. This path-breaking work also showed how these descriptions of the "ego", "unconscious" and suchlike function as "social representations", which operate, like all representations, "*to make something familiar, or unfamiliarity itself, familiar*" (Moscovici, 1984: 24). Social representations of psychoanalysis have continued to increase since the 1950s, of course, and every weird formulation in psychoanalytic theory can be made into something familiar by simplifying it and repeating it in the popular press. Psychoanalytic research includes, of course, research into the spread of the social representations of psychoanalysis and the way that people use them.

Secondly, psychoanalysis permeates everyday life not only through the images of analysts and patients in Hollywood films but also in the increasing influence of psychotherapy as a profession. It could be argued that psychoanalysis has become prevalent as a "representation" of the self while its actual material effect on people is very small. On the other hand, the truth may be exactly the reverse; that the explicit images of psychoanalysis are quite thinly-spread in our culture compared with the power that psychoanalysis enjoys as a practice in therapy, social work and welfare services. The "professionalisation" of psychotherapy, then, needs to be taken very seriously because that is the way that particular versions of psychoanalysis are tightening their grip on the way we are categorised and treated (House, 2002).

Third, and finally, there is a radical critique of mainstream English-speaking psychoanalysis from within the psychoanalytic movement developed by the French analyst Jacques Lacan. The focus on defence mechanisms that would enable the ego to adapt more or less well to society was, for Lacan, a betrayal of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis should concern itself with the impossible gap in human experience that is the unconscious, and he railed against "those active practitioners of orthopaedics that the analysts of the second and third generations became, busying themselves, by psychologising analytic theory, in stitching up this gap" (Lacan, 1979: 23). Lacan's critique draws attention to the way US American psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis in the British

tradition reflects commonsense assumptions about psychology and is of a piece with the culture in which it works. Lacan's take on psychoanalysis, then, makes it the opposite of psychology (Parker, 2003), and there are also some important consequences for psychoanalytic research that includes reflection upon the role of the researcher. There are six elements for psychoanalytic research derived from the writings of Lacan (1979) that flow from these considerations:

1. *Analysis is a process* – The task of the analyst is not to rummage around in the material and dig out the correct interpretation, but to act as a catalyst for the analysis to appear. Boxes and flow diagrams in cognitive psychology, for example, make it seem as if something has been fixed in human thinking, but all that has been fixed is the impatience of the researcher who wants to close the case and stop the thinking from continuing and changing.
2. *Understanding is imaginary* – When the analyst thinks they know exactly what something means, they are most likely to be imposing their own understanding. If relationships between people and the content of their minds was as simple as some humanist psychologists seem to imagine, for example, then it would be possible to produce a clear transparent understanding of what we all mean. But human experience is more complex than this.
3. *Interpretation unravels symbolic material rather than discloses something under the surface* – The analyst does not search for the real underlying meaning of something, but disturbs the meanings that are already there so that something new can emerge. Crass psychoanalytic psychology tries to find out what the secrets are that are hidden inside people, without realising that this will throw no light at all on what secrecy itself is and how that gives meaning to what is hidden.
4. *Resistance is on the side of the analyst* – Although it is much more convenient to blame the object of the research for being "resistant" or using other defence mechanisms, it is the analyst's assumptions and actions that are most suspect. Experimental psychologists, for example, are much happier to refer to

"demand characteristics" and "volunteer traits" as confounding variables in research than to look at how they themselves have set the research up.

5. *There is no metalanguage* – There is no neutral or all-encompassing gods-eye view of things, only commentaries and explanations that are always tied to sets of assumptions and speaking positions. The most bewitching aspect of "scientific" psychology is the idea that descriptions of what human beings are like and how they work have nothing at all to do with the ideological and political positions of those who are doing the describing.
6. *The real is the impossible* – What is most difficult to bear is that there is no representation of the real that is not always already a representation, and that representation is only part of the picture. "Cross-cultural" psychology, for example, only makes sense within a certain set of assumptions about the dimensions that the psychology is being compared "across". What cross-cultural psychology cannot admit is that "psychology" itself may not be dimension other "cultures" will use.

Conclusion

Psychoanalytic research can help us to reach the parts that other kinds of psychology cannot reach, and its attention to the subjective shape of social phenomena is something that mainstream psychology cannot abide (Malone and Friedlander, 2000). There are, of course, some dangers in using psychoanalysis. Although it is treated with contempt by experimental psychology, because unconscious processes cannot be predicted and controlled, it is still quite an important part of the psy-complex (Rose, 1996). Precisely because psychoanalysis delves deeper into us than other approaches it has often worked as a more efficient and dangerous tool for dividing the normal from the abnormal (Parker et al., 1995). What we have to remember when we are using psychoanalysis is that the pathologies that psychoanalysis describes do not lie inside us but in the very process that divides the inside from the outside so that we then come to imagine that if we look "inside" individuals we will find the real causes of the things we do.

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