

Postgraduate English

www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english

ISSN 1756-9761

Issue 33

Autumn 2016

Editors:

Arya Aryan and Douglass Virdee

‘Interpreting (with) Freud’: Laplanche, Hoffmann and the Copernican Birth of Unconscious Drives

James Wills

University of Warwick

‘Interpreting (with) Freud’: Laplanche, Hoffmann and the Copernican Birth of Unconscious Drives

James Wills

University of Warwick

Postgraduate English, Issue 33, Autumn 2016

Is Freudian thought a perfectly constructed edifice? Must we accept it in its totality or must we be selective? The answer, of course, is: neither one nor the other.¹

Even when [René Cardillac] was very young, sparkling diamonds, golden jewellery, *meant more to [him]* than anything else. It was held to be in normal taste for a child.²

The ‘answer’ French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche gives to the questions above fundamentally illustrates the drive of his work as one of the most original post-Freudian thinkers. It is certainly straightforward – and somewhat populist – to repudiate Sigmund Freud: the oscillating thoughts in his writings and theories are often problematic for those who attempt to interpret his theoretical meta-narrative. Laplanche, however, deviates from such a well-trodden post-Freudian path, instead aiming to ‘understand Freud’s thought in its totality’, allowing for the ‘detect[ion] in it [of] the spurious or unstable equilibria’.³

¹ Jean Laplanche. ‘Exigency and Going-Astray’. *Seductions and Enigmas: Laplanche, Theory, Culture*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2014. p. 71.

² E. T. A. Hoffmann. *Das Fräulein von Scuderi. Tales of Hoffmann*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982. p. 64 (emphasis added).

³ Laplanche, ‘Exigency and Going-Astray’, p. 71.

Appraising Freud through Laplanche's work permits the mapping of a shift regarding a central tenet of psychoanalysis: the unconscious drives. Starting with Freud's metapsychology of 1917 and his so-called 'Copernican Revolution', this evaluation will reassert the theoretical paradigm created at the earliest stages of psychoanalysis, which saw Freud grapple with the very essence of 'otherness': traumatic seduction. This trauma enters the mental apparatus from an 'external' source, often causing inexplicable physical symptoms.⁴ While Freud renounces his seduction theory in a letter of 21 September 1897 to Wilhelm Fliess – 'I want to confide [a] great secret . . . I no longer believe in my neurotica [theory of the neurosis]' – his drive to find a solution quickly sees the generation of a new theory, formed around the postulation of a 'universal event in early childhood', whereby every infant impulsively conceives the fantasy of loving the mother and so being jealous of the father.⁵ Initially introduced in 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905), Freud's revised metapsychology of the unconscious drives is born. More importantly, despite this model being developed in subsequent published work, Freud's theoretical foundations obstinately settled on such drives being born *within*.

The core of my evaluation will focus on Laplanche's revision of these unconscious drives in 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution' (1992). In his repositioning of Freud's metapsychology, it is essential to comprehend Laplanche's cosmic metaphor: 'the other' is aligned with the Copernican repositioning of the sun at the center of the solar system in the sixteenth-century, while Freud's psycho-sexual paradigm is metaphorically affiliated with Ptolemy's geocentric model, where earth is central to the cosmos.⁶ In evaluating Laplanche's

⁴ See, for example, Freud, 'Case Study of Katharina'. *Studies on Hysteria*. 1895. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 2*. London: Vintage, 2001. pp. 125-34.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, 'Letter to Wilhelm Fliess: 21 September 1897'. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess: 1877-1904*. London: Harvard UP, 1985. p. 264; 'Letter to Wilhelm Fliess: 15 October 1897'. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess: 1877-1904* London: Harvard UP, 1985. p. 272.

⁶ As translated by Luke Marston in Laplanche's 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution' (1992) from *Essays on Otherness* (Ed. Fletcher), I will use 'center' and its derivatives, instead of 'centre'.

revision of the birth of unconscious drives, it is also necessary to explore his ‘primal situation’ from *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* (1987), a theory concerning the normal yet enigmatic messages transmitted from ‘seducing’ adult to ‘seduced’ child. Laplanche is, in effect, putting his cosmic metaphor to work, once more giving ‘Copernican thought’ the same originary status Freud did in his earliest metapsychology.

Focusing on the way Laplanche offers Copernican structures to revise Freud’s problematic reliance on Ptolemaic infantile sexuality allows a revised theoretical framework to develop. In this essay, I demonstrate said framework through its application to E. T. A. Hoffmann’s 1818 novella *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*,⁷ proposing to distinctively reposition the enigmatic ‘otherness’ of the jewels in Hoffmann’s novella, focusing on them as the mysterious – yet controlling – internal other. Effectively, rather than Ptolemaic impulse motivating René Cardillac’s behaviour, the internal other instead forms the driver of the Goldsmith’s murderous obsessions. At stake, therefore, is a re-evaluation of the source of our unconscious drives; what is more, the notion that critical evaluation of Laplanche’s appreciation of Freud’s thought ‘as a whole’ – ably assisted by its application to Hoffmann’s 1818 novella – opens an entirely new discursive space; one based on the maxim of simultaneously interpreting Freud and interpreting *with* Freud.

1. Freud’s ‘Copernican Revolution’

‘A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis’ is a revealing paper in which Freud first writes of his ‘Copernican Revolution’. The paper itself is a reflection on the state of psychoanalysis – both historically and in Freud’s own thought; it is therefore important to remind readers of his theoretical concepts, which he believes culminate to strike the most wounding of blows to humanity. In staking such a claim, Freud rightly begins by ‘feel[ing] obliged . . . to go back a

⁷ Henceforth, I shall refer to R. J. Hollingdale’s translation of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s title *Das Fräulein von Scuderi: Mademoiselle de Scudery*.

great distance’, starting with trauma theory and the initial aim of psychoanalysis – ‘the elucidation and removal of what are called nervous disorders’ – as well as his shift towards a theory of infantile sexuality.⁸ Freud’s model of infantile sexuality is crucially bound by the relationship between an individual’s libido and the self-preservative functions; ‘an ‘instinct’ is . . . the psychological representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation’.⁹ Freud’s use of ‘endosomatic’ here suggests the source-object – or the source of the sexual drive – is *inborn*; put another way, his model of infantile sexuality fundamentally relies on the endogenous birth of sexual drives.

In retracing these theoretical foundations, Freud progresses to note that, historically, there have been three blows to humanity’s self-importance. First, the ‘cosmological’ blow: in the earliest narratives of cosmology, man believed in Ptolemy’s geocentric model; a notion Freud argues ‘fits in very well with [man’s] inclination to regard himself as lord of the world’.¹⁰ Copernicus famously destroyed this illusion of man’s significance in the sixteenth-century with a heliocentric cosmological model, declaring not only that ‘earth was much smaller than the sun’, but also that it ‘moved around [the sun’s] celestial body’.¹¹ Second, the ‘biological’ blow of Darwinism: shattering delusions of human supremacy and arrogance, this nineteenth-century discovery removed the distance man had previously attempted to put between himself and the animal kingdom. Lastly, and for Freud most striking, the ‘psychological’ blow: ‘the ego is not master in its own house’; unconscious drives cannot be eliminated and are developed simultaneously with the individual’s ego (or consciousness).¹²

These three blows ostensibly represent acts of de-centering: ‘cosmologically’, man’s dwelling is not central to the universe; ‘biologically’, man’s status as the central, dominant

⁸ Sigmund Freud, ‘A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis’. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 17*. London: Vintage, 2001. p. 137.

⁹ Sigmund Freud. ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 7*. London: Vintage, 2001. p. 168.

¹⁰ Freud, ‘A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis’, p. 140.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 143.

species on earth is nothing more than an evolutionary stage of human development; and ‘psychologically’, the ego is not the center of the human subject, instead being uncontrollably provoked by unconscious drives. In effect, ‘A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis’ reflects the original cosmological model made famous by Copernicus: it appears Freud is entirely committed to de-centering human epistemology, inflicting hurtful psychological wounds in the process.

2.1. ‘Unfinished Revolution’: Laplanche’s de-centering/re-centering paradigm

‘The Unfinished Copernican Revolution’ sees Laplanche returning to and revising Freud; in his own words, he is both interpreting Freud and simultaneously ‘interpreting *with* Freud’.¹³ Fletcher and Ray note the importance of this theoretical process, labelling it ‘[a] labour necessary to loosen and disassemble the agglomerations and sedimentations of [Freud’s] theory’.¹⁴ Laplanche is thus not interested in simply repudiating Freudian thought; instead, ‘*the originality of Freudian interpretation* truly merits being recalled and underlined’¹⁵. Laplanche first illustrates his revised theoretical paradigm through a cosmic metaphor, beginning with Copernicus and questioning the very linguistics of the word ‘revolution’, before taking a brief journey through the annals of cosmology.¹⁶ Of interest to Laplanche is that the geocentric schema of Ptolemy, though ultimately founded on falsity, remained ‘the Bible of astronomy for fourteen centuries’, ensuring this early cosmic model became nothing but ‘overload [and] baggage’, as well as ‘supplementary *ad hoc* hypothesis’ and ‘unexplained detail’.¹⁷ In other words, Ptolemy simply became too complicated to renounce: although new

¹³ Jean Laplanche. ‘Interpreting (with) Freud’. *Seductions and Enigmas: Laplanche, Theory, Culture*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2014. p. 55 (original emphasis).

¹⁴ John Fletcher and Nicholas Ray. ‘Introduction – Seduction and Enigmas: Laplanche, Reading, Theory’. *Seductions and Enigmas: Laplanche, Theory, Culture*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2014. p. 26.

¹⁵ Laplanche, ‘Interpreting (with) Freud’, p. 57 (original emphasis).

¹⁶ Jean Laplanche. ‘The Unfinished Copernican Revolution’. *Essays on Otherness*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1999. pp. 52-5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55 (original emphasis).

problems led to new concepts, theoretical foundations remained untouched and unchallenged. That said, a heliocentric model of the cosmos does not solve the problem simply; for Laplanche, a Copernican paradigm instead ‘opens onto vaster consequences’: ‘The way is open . . . to further progress towards unification; not only simplifications, but also an indefinite number of improvements: the system is no longer “stuffed”. . . ’.¹⁸ In Laplanche’s metaphor, these cosmic discoveries actually open up the question of centering, where excentricity is vital; rather than attempting to locate a universal center, one must in fact concentrate on local centers, absent centers and centers being everywhere. Laplanche therefore proposes that the heliocentric model Freud borrowed for his metapsychological paper of 1917 is not heliocentric at all; it is in fact – if a neologism is permitted – a form of excentric heliocentrism.

Buried within this question of ‘centering’ is a paradigm Laplanche argues must be applied to psychoanalysis; the Copernican cosmic model, and its analogous epistemological residue, is therefore important in re-evaluating Freud’s metapsychology. To comprehend it, we must consider the earliest narrative of Freud’s metapsychology: the simultaneously Copernican discovery of trauma, the unconscious and the effect of the ‘seductive other’ and the Ptolemaic ‘going-astray’ of both his repudiation of and revision to his general theory of infantile sexuality.¹⁹ Furthermore, despite oscillations and resurgences toward Copernican thought in Freud’s metapsychology, Ptolemism remains central: in effect, due to continual Ptolemaic relapses in his own theoretical narrative, Freud’s claim of a ‘Copernican Revolution’ is, for Laplanche, fundamentally flawed.²⁰ However, in such a theoretical vacuum, Laplanche’s cosmic metaphor has further implications; latent in Freud’s ‘going-astray’, there are actually two facets which turn out to be the most important ‘innovations’ of all:

¹⁸ ‘The Unfinished Copernican Revolution’, p. 55.

¹⁹ See Freud, ‘Letter to Wilhelm Fliess: 21 September 1897’, pp. 264-6.

²⁰ Freud, ‘The Unfinished Copernican Revolution’, p. 60.

The first is classical: the discovery of the unconscious, in so far as it is precisely *not* our center, as it is an ‘excentric’ center; the other facet, the seduction theory, is hidden but indispensable to the first for it maintains the unconscious in its alien-ness.²¹

Fletcher helpfully indicates that ‘alien’ (translated from the French *l'étrangèreté*) denotes an ‘irreducible strangeness, the result of an *external* origin’.²² It is in this useful translation that we find the foundation of Laplanche’s ‘Unfinished Copernican Revolution’; buried in the matrix of ‘alien-ness’, ‘the other’ and the question of centering, we locate the unfinished nature of Freud’s discovery of unconscious drives.

Laplanche therefore focuses his theory on the beginnings of psychoanalysis and the ‘Preliminary Communication’ to *Studies on Hysteria*, in which Freud and Breuer posit the causality of trauma and the hysterical neuroses:

We must presume rather that the psychical trauma – or more precisely the memory of the trauma – acts like a *foreign body* which long after its *entry* must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work.²³

Here, ‘foreign body’ and ‘entry’ validate Laplanche’s ‘alien-ness’ or suggest an unconscious which is ‘put inside . . . by an alien’.²⁴ To add further legitimacy, Laplanche astutely quotes, noting the linguistic similarity in Freud’s description of unconscious drives:

These *alien* guests even seem to be more powerful than those that are at the ego’s command . . . Or else impulses appear which seem like those of a *stranger*, so that the ego disowns them; yet it has to fear

²¹ Ibid., pp. 61-2.

²² In ‘The Unfinished Copernican Revolution’, p. 62, note 21.

²³ Sigmund Freud. ‘On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication’. *Studies on Hysteria. The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 2*. London: Vintage, 2001. p. 6 (emphasis added).

²⁴ Laplanche, ‘The Unfinished Copernican Revolution’, p. 65.

them and take precautions against *them*. The ego says to itself: ‘This is an illness, a *foreign invasion*’.²⁵

The semantic resemblance is striking, yet Freud continues to diminish the ‘otherness’ in his 1917 metapsychology; in a poetic monologue to the ego, he proclaims ‘Nothing has entered into you from *without*’, thus indicating everything resides *within*.²⁶ Freudian thought thus continues to reject ‘alien-ness’: ‘[t]urn your eyes inward, look into your own depths, learn first to know yourself’.²⁷ As though his repudiatory letter to Fliess of September 1897 is being reiterated two decades on, no sooner has Freud discovered the irreducible strangeness of ‘the other’, he has once again – and almost immediately – been led astray.

It is from Freud’s iteration of ‘alien-ness’ however, that Laplanche develops his own theory:

For Freud neglects . . . the innovative core of his own initial formulation: hysterics suffer, not from memories, forgotten or not, but from ‘reminiscences’ . . . something which returns as if from elsewhere, a pseudo-memory perhaps, coming from . . . the other.²⁸

Defining ‘reminiscences’ or, more importantly, exploring the difference between ‘reminiscences’ and ‘memories’, is essential: where ‘memory’ is defined as ‘the action of remembering’ and ‘reminiscences’, ‘[an] expression . . . which recalls or is suggestive of something else’.²⁹ The necessary difference between the two is therefore the ‘suggestiveness’ of reminiscences; crucially, Laplanche focuses his theoretical interest in both where this ‘suggestiveness’ resides and, more importantly, what this ‘something else’ is. Residing therefore in the unfinished matrix of Laplanche’s ‘Copernican Revolution’ is his revision of the birth of unconscious drives. By interpreting *with* Freud, Laplanche is able to turn

²⁵ Freud, ‘A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis’, pp. 141-2 (emphasis added).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142 (emphasis added).

²⁷ Freud, ‘A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis’, p. 143.

²⁸ Laplanche, ‘The Unfinished Copernican Revolution’, p. 71.

²⁹ ‘Memory’; ‘Reminiscences’, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, online.

Freudian orthodoxy back on itself: ‘*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*’ becomes ‘[w]o Es war, wird immer noch Anderes sein’. In effect, ‘where it was, I should be’ – in which ‘it’ and ‘I’ are born of the same psychological space – is replaced with ‘there where there was it, there will be always and already the other’.³⁰ The above raises two important questions, which will be elucidated below: who is ‘the other’; and why are they ‘always and already the other’?

2.2. A Copernican Birth: Laplanche’s ‘Primal Situation’

Laplanche’s ‘primal situation’ is the Copernican paradigm formulated to revise Freud’s Ptolemaic ‘universal event in early childhood’.³¹ In *New Foundations in Psychoanalysis*, Laplanche meticulously tracks his move from a Freudian ‘special’ theory of seduction towards a new ‘general’ theory. The protagonists in Laplanche’s ‘primal situation’ are the seductive adult and the seduced child: however, this is not the seduction of Freud’s specialised theory, as demonstrated in the ‘Case Study of Katharina’; instead, Laplanche focuses on the enigmatic seduction of messages from the adult – with a developed sexual unconscious – to the new-born child.³²

Laplanche initially indicates the evidence for an adult’s unconscious and developed sexuality can be located in ‘bungled actions’ (to borrow from Freudian terminology), suggesting it must bear witness to the fact there is ‘something unconscious’:

In the primal situation we have . . . a child whose ability to adapt is real but limited, weak and waiting to be perverted, and a deviant adult . . . [furthermore] given that the child lives on in the adult, an adult faced with a child is . . . [likely] to perform bungled actions . . . because he is

³⁰ Laplanche, ‘The Unfinished Copernican Revolution’, p. 83 (emphasis mine).

³¹ Freud, ‘Letter to Wilhelm Fliess: 15 October 1897’, p. 272.

³² Freud, ‘Case Study of Katharina’, pp. 125-34.

involved in a relationship with his other self, with the other he once was. The child in front of him brings out the child within him.³³

The elements in Laplanche's 'primal situation' are forming, as is his theory that explains the birth of unconscious drives. Furthermore, when Laplanche describes the adult as 'deviant', he is referring to the repressed infantile material called into being during primal seduction: it is awoken by the other, or the 'other [the adult] once was'; accordingly, the adult's deviancy only pertains to sexual norms.³⁴

Laplanche then turns to the message in the 'primal situation': 'messages which the subject rejects or refuses to recognise for what they are'.³⁵ These rejected or unrecognisable messages unconsciously transmitted from the adult to the child are termed 'the enigmatic signifier'. A complex construct, not least due to its reliance on semiotics, Laplanche initially describes the enigmatic signifier as follows: '. . . [when] an adult proffers to a child verbal, non-verbal and even behavioural signifiers which are pregnant with unconscious sexual significations'.³⁶ Reminding us of the normality of these significations, Laplanche is quick to state enigmatic signifiers are also 'forms of communication which have nothing to do with sexual assault'.³⁷ While Laplanche is undoubtedly renouncing Jacques Lacan's epigrammatic axiom 'the unconscious is structured like a language' by suggesting signifiers can be also non-verbal or behavioural, he is equally borrowing from Lacan, particularly with regard to the concept of a 'de-signified signifier'; or a signifier which the addressee cannot comprehend.³⁸ Laplanche indeed makes note of Lacan's important distinction between 'a

³³ Jean Laplanche. *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989. p. 103.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

³⁵ Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 103.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁸ Qtd. in John Gasperoni. 'The Unconscious is Structured like a Language'. *Qui Parle*. 9.2 (1996), p. 77.

signifier *of* and a signifier *to*', where a signifier can 'signify *to* without its addressee necessarily knowing what *it* signifies'.³⁹

It is what the child does with the enigmatic signifier that is vital for Laplanche. Once again, by re-centering his thought on Freudian paradigms, the seeds of a new psychoanalytic foundation emerge. In returning to a letter Freud wrote to Wilhelm Fliess on 6 December 1896, Laplanche recalls a schema which still has 'programmatic value'.⁴⁰

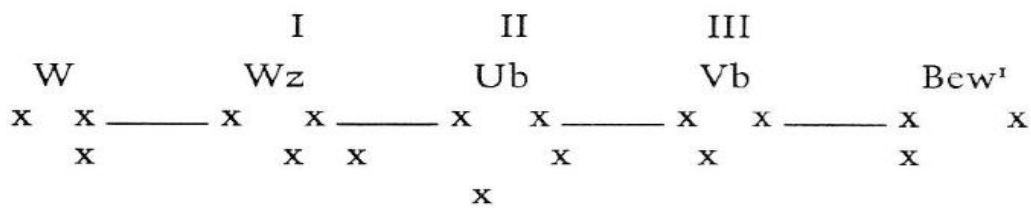


Figure 1.1⁴¹

Figure 1.1 (above) maps out what Freud called threshold moments in one's development; more importantly, at these moments, indicated by I, II, III (. . .), psychical registrations take place in the mental apparatus. However, by centering on the subject's own psyche, Freud appears again to be moving toward a Ptolemaic model. Written nine months prior to the abandonment of his seduction theory, this reliance on Ptolemaic theory is highlighted by Laplanche in two ways: first, Freud leaves the W (perception) column 'enigmatically blank'; second, there is the issue of 'indication' (Wz) and how 'perception alone could supply [these] indications'.⁴² In other words, Laplanche argues for the Copernican dimension in Freud's original model; rather than the Ptolemaic suggestion that unconscious indications and perceptions occur spontaneously from *within*, there must be both a 'first indication of

³⁹ Qtd. in Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 130.

⁴¹ Freud's Translation Model. From *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, p. 207.

⁴² Freud, 'Letter: 21 Sept 1897', pp. 264-6; *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, pp. 130-1.

perception' and a 'first inscription in the psychical apparatus' that are originally addressed to the subject by 'the other'.⁴³

Laplanche's birth of the unconscious effectively becomes the 'enigmatically blank' first column of Freud's 1896 schema, based both on the human-being as a 'self-translating' organism and a borrowing (and development) of a Lacanian arithmetical equation.

$$\frac{S1}{s} \times \frac{S2}{S1}$$

*Figure 1.2*⁴⁴

Quick to remind us that, despite the look of his theory, 'we are not dealing with higher mathematics or topology', Laplanche demonstrates the importance of 'the other' in the child's translation process: as above, *s* continues to represent the signified, but the original Lacanian *S* now becomes 'the enigmatic signifier' (S1).⁴⁵

While the obvious mathematical response is that the S1 on each side of the equation will disappear, this appears too neat for Laplanche; instead, he manufactures a contrivance, albeit one that is highly suggestive, labelling the process of an infant translating these initially enigmatic messages as 'metabolisation'.⁴⁶

$$\frac{\frac{S2}{s}}{\frac{S1}{S1}}$$

⁴³ Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 131.

⁴⁴ Laplanche's demonstration of the enigmatic signifier. From Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 131.

⁴⁵ Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 131.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Figure 1.3⁴⁷

Despite being ‘unmathematical’, the above schema is at the core of Laplanche’s theory. The enigmatic signifier (S1) is metabolised and processed by the ever-translating infant; however, due to lacking any form of developed sexuality, the infant will not be able to process the sexual significations latent within the message. As a consequence, the enigmatic within ‘the other’s’ message falls below the bar of repression; there, it remains, initially dormant, but gradually forming itself with subsequent metabolisations. Laplanche subsequently argues that this is the birth of the child’s unconscious: rather than Freud’s theory that the source-object is Ptolemaic (born from *within*), and based initially on satisfying the self-preservative instinctual functions, Laplanche instead announces that the source-object is the fragments of the deviant adult’s discourse: the de-signified signifier; the repressed, untranslatable metabola in the other’s initial messages.⁴⁸ In his short essay ‘Implantation, Intromission’, Laplanche refers to the processes above as ‘implantation’ or the ‘common, everyday, normal’ ways in which messages are embedded within the periphery of the subject’s ego, which allow for ‘active translation and repression’ to occur.⁴⁹

In this process of metabolisation (or ‘implantation’), the infant’s sexuality emerges. Although Laplanche rejects the ‘indefinable endogenous movement’ of Freud’s psychosexual model, he does borrow Freud’s concept of ‘Anlehnung’; the process in which the sexual drives ‘lean on’ the self-preservative functions.⁵⁰

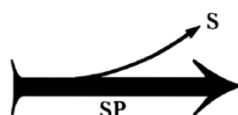


Figure 1.4⁵¹

⁴⁷ Laplanche’s Metabolisation Process. From Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 132.

⁴⁸ Freud, ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’, p. 168; *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 132.

⁴⁹ Jean Laplanche. ‘Implantation, Intromission’. *Essays on Otherness*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1999. p. 136.

⁵⁰ Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 145; Freud, ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’, p. 168.

⁵¹ ‘Anlehnung’ and the Emergence of the Drive. From Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 145.

Laplanche argues we should retain this model of ‘Anlehnung’, though on the proviso that, at the point which the SP and S lines diverge, ‘we do not see it as a spontaneous or endogenous movement’.⁵² Alternatively, Laplanche claims the very point at which the lines diverge is the moment the enigmatic signifier takes up residence in the ego-individual; the very point the individual’s unconscious drives come into being. According to Laplanche’s paradigm therefore, the birth of the unconscious drives is not an endogenous, Ptolemaic event; instead he works within a Copernican framework: the unconscious sexual drives are formed from the enigmatic residue of the internal other.

3. ‘Ptolemaic and/or Copernican’: E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *Mademoiselle de Scudery*

In moments of theoretical crisis, Freud often turned to literature: most notably his Ptolemaic readings of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* and William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* when working through the difficult abandonment of his seduction theory, or his 1919 essay ‘The Uncanny’, which provides an aesthetic reading of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *Der Sandmann*. While Freud did not explicitly write about *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, Laplanche’s reconceived concept of the drive allows for a distinctive re-reading of this enigmatic tale. At stake in such a reading is the way in which Laplanche’s concept of the internal other complicates the elaborate narrative framework of Hoffmann’s text, serving as an expedient example of how a revised Copernican framework for the birth of unconscious drives can be illustrated, particularly with regard to how the novella focuses on a character whose impulses ‘appear’ entirely Ptolemaic. Furthermore, in applying Laplanche’s concept of the ‘enigmatic signifier’ and its relation to a reconceived concept of the drive, it not only allows for a re-working of the novella’s ‘primal scene’, but also a re-evaluation of the true source of the focal character’s murderous obsessions.

⁵² In Figure 1.4, SP refers to the ‘self-preservative function’ and S ‘sexuality’; *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, p. 145.

After its explosive and violent opening scene, in which a masked figure hammers the door of aging court poet Mademoiselle de Scudery and deposits a mysterious box, Hoffmann structures his novella by way of an elaborate series of narrative frames, finally resting on master-jeweller René Cardillac, perhaps European literature's 'first representation . . . of the stalker and serial killer'.⁵³ Cardillac is a complex figure in the narrative; he appears 'after' he is killed, and his compulsion to repeat, by swiftly thieving from and then murdering those who purchase his craftsmanship, is certainly problematic in terms of interpretation.⁵⁴ Edwin Keppel Bennett argues Cardillac commits his crimes through a 'blind obedience to an obscure impulse', evoking the Freudian unconscious located in his theory of infantile sexuality; in other words, the impulses the master-jeweller is impelled to follow are so obscure that they must come from *within*.⁵⁵

A Ptolemaic reading of the narrative is indeed credible enough. Despite the tale's highly elaborate narrative framework, the novella ostensibly orbits around its 'primal scene', in which Cardillac recounts a memory of his mother being seduced by a Spanish cavalier: '[t]he cavalier noticed my mother's longing, fiery glances. . . . There he clasped her passionately in his arms; my mother grasped the beautiful chain'.⁵⁶ In this suggestive structural center, Cardillac refers to an '*inborn* urge, [. . . which] burst forth and grew mightily'; these internal urges rob Cardillac of his health, and his resultant exigency to first thief from and then murder those who purchase his work seem to have their origins *within*.⁵⁷ Furthermore, geocentric descriptions appear in several subtle ways during Cardillac's explosive narrative fragment: first, Cardillac himself is a one-month foetus when his mother is seduced, suggesting his structural importance in the scene; second, Hoffmann repeatedly

⁵³ John Fletcher. *Freud and the Scene of Trauma*. New York: Fordham UP, 2013. pp. 335-6.

⁵⁴ Hoffmann, *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, p. 44. The infantile compulsion to repeat in Freudian theory obstinately settles on originary drives being born 'within': Cardillac's compulsion to repeat therefore becomes problematic in terms of interpretation, due to its ambiguous and complex origins.

⁵⁵ Edwin Keppel Bennett. *A History of the German Novelle*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1965. p. 61.

⁵⁶ Hoffmann, *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, p. 64.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65 (emphasis added).

evokes a Ptolemaic matrix in the text: '[d]eep *inside* of me there grew a desire to murder'; "[d]ark thoughts arose *within* me'.⁵⁸ Here, as if to mirror the wider issues at stake in the novella, Hoffmann is juxtaposing structural and linguistic centrality; that is, the narrative architecture which envelopes Cardillac's account parallels the linguistic milieu of his 'inborn urge', doubly suggesting that the birth of his unconscious drives reside very much *within*.

Ellis rightly notes however, in the scene in which the master-jeweller speaks of this memory, it is in fact not Cardillac who speaks; it is 'Hoffmann's narrator giv[ing] us Olivier's account of Cardillac's account of the story given him by unspecified persons . . . of what happened to Cardillac's mother before his birth'.⁵⁹ In refocusing the narratology of the scene, a Copernican reading of the novella becomes possible; indeed, even before the 'primal scene', Hoffmann's narrative appears to pre-figure the traumatic scenography of Freud's earliest case-studies in *Studies on Hysteria*. First, consider the device of the framed narrative itself, which performs the act of 'unravelling . . . th[e] dreadful mystery' in much the same way, for instance, as demonstrated in the 'Case of Miss Lucy R.', which sees Freud unpack the peculiar symptoms of a governess first smelling 'burnt pudding' then 'another, similar smell, resembling cigar smoke' through a series of narrative frames, working towards a 'primal scene' that sees her employer's 'fury burst forth upon the head of the unlucky [Miss Lucy R.]'.⁶⁰ Second, Hoffmann presents us with the character of Mademoiselle de Scudery herself, who appears to eerily pre-empt the role of the psychoanalyst, asked as she is by Olivier Brusson to 'show compassion and listen to [him] calmly'.⁶¹ Given that *Studies on Hysteria* is focal in Laplanche's revision of Freud's 'Copernican Revolution', it can also be applied to the internal strangeness of Hoffmann's elaborate framed narrative to similarly 're-focus' the novella's 'primal scene'. Moreover, when Cardillac recounts the memory of his

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 65 (emphasis added).

⁵⁹ J. M. Ellis. 'E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Das Fräulein von Scudery*'. *The Modern Language Review* 64.2 (1969), p. 341.

⁶⁰ Hoffmann, *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, p. 53; Freud, 'Case Study of Miss Lucy R.', p. 107; p. 119; p. 120.

⁶¹ Hoffmann, *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, p. 56.

mother and the Spanish cavalier, Hoffmann opens the section: ‘Wise men often speak of the strange impressions which afflict pregnant women, and of the strange influence these *impressions from outside* can have on the child’.⁶² These instances appear to suggest that the structural devices Hoffmann employs in *Mademoiselle de Scudery* point towards a distinctly Copernican framework: the question now resides in *who* supplies these ‘impressions’; perhaps a way of re-phrasing to open a new discursive space is to question *what* the seductive presence in the novella is, providing these impressions from ‘outside’.

In Laplanche’s ‘primal situation’, the other is essentially a subject with an unconscious and a developed sexuality, who transmits a signifying object to the infant. I propose that Hoffmann’s tale presents us with an altogether different overdetermined signifying object carrying ‘the other’s’ desires; objects around which the entire novella orbits: the jewels. *Mademoiselle de Scudery* may be named after its aging ‘detective’ figure, and the novella’s structure may well focus on the murderous Cardillac, but it is the jewels that truly drive the plot. These jewels, secretly transported in the darkest hours of the Parisian night, are certainly suggestive of sexual desire: ‘. . . there were many who, entangled in some amorous intrigue, crept to their mistress in the night, often bearing a [jewel]; but often too, the lover failed to reach the house where he anticipated enjoyment’.⁶³

Plotz has rightly argued that the secretive circulation of jewels within a narrative is indicative of being unable to contain their significations, where the jewel transforms the space around it into one of ‘sexual vulnerability’.⁶⁴ Such vulnerability reminds us of the helpless child in Laplanche’s ‘primal situation’, a being also vulnerable to sexually latent content in ‘the other’s’ discourse. Moreover, the final words in the novella add weight to the allusively sexual significations buried within the jewels: ‘[m]any who appeared on

⁶² Ibid., p. 63 (emphasis added).

⁶³ Hoffmann, *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, p. 26.

⁶⁴ John Plotz. ‘Discreet Jewels: Victorian Diamond Narratives and the Problem of Sentimental Value’. *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England*. Plymouth: Buckwell UP, 2014. p. 344.

Cardillac's list presented themselves to [d'Andilly] and, to their no small surprise, received back the jewels that had been stolen from them. What was left fell to the treasury of the church of St Eustace'.⁶⁵ 'What was left' is particularly significant: it is no coincidence the final act of the narrative is to effectively de-sexualise the jewels, assigning them to the sex-less location of 'St Eustace'. As a consequence, the latent residue of what sexuality remained within 'the unconscious other' of Hoffmann's tale is sublimated, no longer able to seduce the sexually vulnerable.

Given the sexual signification the jewels harbour, a 'primal scene' which appeared Ptolemaic now takes on an entirely Copernican dimension. Note, for instance, the mother's 'longing, fiery glances' and her 'grasp[ing of] the beautiful chain'; in other words, she is seduced by the jewels, or – in this case – by the 'deviant other'.⁶⁶ Due to the fact that Cardillac claims the moment had 'got into [him]', I would argue his 'inborn urge' actually came from *without*; from the 'irreducible strangeness' which resides in the sexual signification latent in the enticing 'external other' of the cavalier's beautiful jewelled necklace.⁶⁷ The highly vulnerable nature of Cardillac's position in the scene (being a one-month foetus) means he cannot suppress the originary urges of his mother: '[his] evil star had risen and sent down fires'.⁶⁸ Cardillac indeed continues to claim '[o]nly [real gems] enticed [him]'; consequently, the alien-ness of the enigmatic significations the jewels carry creates Cardillac's unconscious drives. Hoffmann here also uncannily evokes Laplanche's theory of 'intromission', defined as the 'violent variant' of 'implantation', or the simultaneous milieu of translation and repression.⁶⁹ In this violent act administered by the internal other, the message is embedded in such a way as to 'block [or] short-circuit' the usual processes of translation; furthermore, and of particular importance, intromission places *within* an 'element

⁶⁵ Hoffmann, *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, p. 84.

⁶⁶ Hoffmann, *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, p. 64.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64; see Fletcher, in 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution', p. 62, note 21.

⁶⁸ Hoffmann, *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, p. 64.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

resistant to all metabolisation'.⁷⁰ In the forceful episode between Cardillac's mother and the Spanish cavalier, I argue an act of 'intromission' occurs: as a consequence, Cardillac cannot successfully metabolise the violent affect his mother undergoes in her interactions with the Spanish cavalier; indeed, the repetitive pejorative language in the 'primal scene' of 'horror', 'gruesome' and 'terror' certainly suggests the violent affect both his mother – and therefore Cardillac – receive during the scene.⁷¹

In effect, due to the enigmatic signifier in Hoffmann's tale being so potently latent with desire for both sex and death – that is, his mother's sexual longing and the cavalier's strange, violent end to his life – the jewel metabolises into the internal other, repressed and embedded within Cardillac's periphery – or his ego-individual – in the form of a monstrous hybrid.⁷² The enigmatic signifier is formed *externally* in a Copernican framework, transmitted by the other, before gradually metabolising *internally*, as each jewel Cardillac crafts (or catches glimpse of) unconsciously drives him towards behaviour of the most immoral nature.

4. The Internal Other

In revising the birth of unconscious drives, Laplanche's cosmic metaphor and Freud's 'braid of history' collide to illuminate the relationship between the concept of psychoanalytic theory and the subject of psychoanalysis itself – the human psyche:

. . . one is entitled to claim that the Ptolemaism of the human psyche, its . . . recentering, follows upon a 'Copernican' stage as its presupposition, in which the nursling child is caught up in the orbit of the other and has a passive relation to its messages. . . . On the side of

⁷⁰ Laplanche, 'Implantation, Intromission', p. 136.

⁷¹ Hoffmann, *Mademoiselle de Scudery*, pp. 64-5.

⁷² See Fletcher, *Freud and the Scene of Trauma*, p. 340.

theory, Freud's endless Ptolemaic relapses . . . [are] nothing but a parallel to the ineluctable . . . closure of the apparatus of the soul.⁷³

In his own Hegelian interpretation, Fletcher argues that, essentially, Laplanche formulates 'Laplanche's law': "theoreticogenesis", the development of theory, reproduces ontogenesis, the fate of sexuality and the unconscious in the human being'.⁷⁴ Therefore, while it is clear the theoretical model of the universe went first through a Ptolemaic, then Copernican phase, Laplanche correctly asserts, like Freud's own theoretical meta-narrative and Cardillac's relationship with the enigmatic jewels in Hoffmann's novella – whose drives were created in Copernican frameworks *before* they were Ptolemaic – so too the human psyche re-centers on itself *after* a de-centering phase.

It is in the theoretical vacuum Freud created by abandoning his seduction theory in September 1897, and developing his universal theory of infantile sexuality, that Laplanche acutely revises the other in psychoanalytic discourse. Freud declared in 1917 'the ego is not master in its own house', yet he still provided his house with a universal 'center': the drives of his Ptolemaic unconscious.⁷⁵ Laplanche instead re-interprets Freud's theoretical dependence on Ptolemy by asserting there is in fact 'no center'; like the earth orbiting the sun in the solar system, and the solar system itself orbiting other cosmic matter, the human psyche initially orbits its own 'local center': 'the other', or more specifically, the deviant adult in the 'primal situation'. At stake in Hoffmann's text too is the question of its 'center', where the elaborate narrative structure and enigmatic character of Cardillac eerily evoke the later revision of Freudian theory through Laplanche's reconceived concept of the driver of our unconscious. By viewing Hoffmann's overdetermined symbol of the jewels in *Mademoiselle de Scudery* through Laplanche's insightful theory of interpreting *with* Freud,

⁷³ Laplanche, 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution', p. 82.

⁷⁴ See Ardis Collins. *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Dialectical Justification of Philosophy's First Principle*. London: McGill UP, 2013. p. 192; John Fletcher. 'Introduction: Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Other'. *Essays on Otherness*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1999. p. 3.

⁷⁵ Freud, 'A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis', p. 143.

we can reaffirm that, at the beginning of our psychical life, there is a crucially Copernican dimension. That is to say, Hoffmann's text acknowledges Laplanche's appreciation of Freud's thought 'as a whole': that unconscious drives do not develop spontaneously from *within*; rather, the process starts *without*, before embedding and metabolising *within* as the highly individualistic and naturally enigmatic internal other.

Works Cited

- Bennett, Edwin Keppel. *A History of the German Novelle*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1965. Print.
- Collins, Ardis B. *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Dialectical Justification of Philosophy's First Principle*. London: McGill UP, 2013. Print.
- Ellis, J. M. 'E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*'. *The Modern Language Review* 64.2 (1969): 340-350. Print.
- Fletcher, John. *Freud and the Scene of Trauma*. New York: Fordham UP, 2013. Print.
- . 'Introduction: Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Other'. *Essays on Otherness*. Ed. John Fletcher. Abingdon: Routledge, 1999. 1-51. Print.
- Fletcher, John and Nicholas Ray. 'Introduction – Seduction and Enigmas: Laplanche, Reading, Theory'. *Seductions and Enigmas: Laplanche, Theory, Culture*. Eds. John Fletcher and Nicholas Ray. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2014. 14-54. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. 'A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis'. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 17*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Vintage, 2001. 135-44. Print.
- . 'Case Study of Katharina'. *Studies on Hysteria. The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 2*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Vintage, 2001. 125-34. Print.
- . 'Case Study of Miss Lucy R.' *Studies on Hysteria. The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 2*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Vintage, 2001. 106-24. Print.
- . 'Letter to Wilhelm Fliess: 21 September 1897'. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess: 1877-1904*. Ed. and Trans. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson. London: Harvard UP, 1985. 264-6 Print.

- . 'Letter to Wilhelm Fliess: 15 October 1897'. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess: 1877-1904*. Ed. and Trans. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson. London: Harvard UP, 1985. 270-3. Print.
- . 'Repression'. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 14*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Vintage, 2001. 141-58. Print.
- . 'The Uncanny'. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 17*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Vintage, 2001. 217-56. Print.
- . 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality'. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 7*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Vintage, 2001. 125-248. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund and Josef Breuer. 'On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication'. *Studies on Hysteria. The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 2*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Vintage, 2001. 1-17. Print.
- Gasperoni, John. 'The Unconscious is Structured like a Language'. *Qui Parle*. 9.2 (1996): 77-104. Print.
- Hoffmann, E. T. A. *Mademoiselle de Scudery. Tales of Hoffmann*. Ed. and Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982. 17-84. Print.
- Laplanche, Jean. 'Exigency and Going-Astray'. *Seductions and Enigmas: Laplanche, Theory, Culture*. Eds. John Fletcher and Nicholas Ray. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2014. 71-6. Print.
- . 'Implantation, Intromission'. *Essays on Otherness*. Ed. John Fletcher. Trans. Luke Thurston. Abingdon: Routledge, 1999. 133-7. Print.
- . 'Interpreting (with) Freud'. *Seductions and Enigmas: Laplanche, Theory, Culture*. Eds. John Fletcher and Nicholas Ray. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2014. 55-70. Print.

- . *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*. Trans. David Macey. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989. Print.
- . 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution'. *Essays on Otherness*. Ed. John Fletcher. Trans. Luke Thurston. Abingdon: Routledge, 1999. 52-83. Print.
- 'Memory, n'. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2015. Web. 7 Jan. 2016.
- Plotz, John. 'Discreet Jewels: Victorian Diamond Narratives and the Problem of Sentimental Value'. *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England*. Ed. Mark Blackwell. Plymouth: Buckwell UP, 2014. 329-54. Print.
- 'Reminiscences, n'. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2015. Web. 7 Jan. 2016.