Imagined Human Beings: A Psychological Approach to Character and Conflict in Literature

Preface

By Bernard J. Paris

What fascinates me most about literature is its portrayal of human beings and their relationships. For many years I have been developing a psychological approach in which I try to understand the behavior of realistically drawn characters in the same way that we understand the behavior of real people. These characters are not flesh and blood creatures, of course, but are imagined human beings who have many parallels with people like ourselves. Numerous critics have maintained that it is inappropriate or impossible to explain the behavior of fictional characters in motivational terms, but I argue in Chapter 1 that the rejection of psychological analysis has been a major critical error.

One reason why I find it possible to analyze literary characters psychologically is that I employ the theories of Karen Horney, which explain behavior in terms of its function within the present structure of the psyche rather than in terms of infantile origins. While literature gives little or no information about infancy, it reveals a great deal about the adult. A Horneyan approach does not force us to invent a character's early history but permits us to utilize exactly the kind of information that literature supplies. For the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with Horney, I provide an account of her ideas in Chapter 2.

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Among the virtues of Horney's theory are that it is free of arcane terminology and is readily intelligible. I have aspired to the same virtues in this book. I have written it not only for fellow critics but for all students, teachers, and lovers of literature who are drawn to novels and plays because of their human interest. For the sake of readability, I have chosen not to become a combatant in the theory wars that are raging in the fields of psychoanalysis and literary studies these days. I have discussed Karen Horney's place in psychoanalytic thought in my 1994 biography of her, and I have defended various aspects of my psychological approach to literature in previous critical works (Paris 1974, 1978b, 1986a, 1991a, 1991b).

I have entitled this book *Imagined Human Beings* because it is largely about mimetic characters who can be understood in psychological terms. As the sub-title suggests, it is also about various kinds of conflict. There are conflicts, first of all, within and between the characters. In Part II, I analyze the inner divisions of the central characters and the dynamics of their relationships in works by Sophocles, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Barth. I want to show not only the ability of the Horneyan approach to yield clarifying readings of controversial texts but also its range of application.

Perhaps because the title of her first book was *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, some people have the impression that Horney's theory is limited to the time and place in which she

wrote. It is not a universal theory, of course (no theory is), but it deals with human needs and defenses that are portrayed in the literature of many periods and cultures. While not ignoring cultural differences, a Horneyan approach enables us to see an underlying similarity in human experience. It can help us to understand the behavior of characters in literature from the past, to enter into their feelings, and to enrich our knowledge of ourselves and others through an understanding of their inner conflicts and relationships.

There are other kinds of conflict that I explore as well. I argue in Part III that in realistic literature there is usually conflict between plot and rhetoric on the one hand and mimesis on the other. When concretely drawn characters are understood in psychological terms, they tend to escape their roles in the plot and to subvert the view of them advanced by the rhetoric. I look at two patterns of action in particular, the education and vindication plots. When I examine the protagonists of education plots from a Horneyan perspective, they do not seem to have matured but to have switched from one defensive strategy to another. In vindication plots, noble characters are unappreciated at the outset but eventually receive the admiration they deserve. From a Horneyan perspective, these characters appear less admirable than the vindication pattern requires them to be.

There is almost always conflict between an author's interpretations and judgments, which are part of what I mean by "rhetoric," and the mimetic portrait of a character. Authors tend to glorify characters who embody the defensive strategies they favor while accurately portraying their behavior as damaging to themselves or others. A Horneyan approach helps us not only to see disparities between rhetoric and mimesis but also to understand the forces in the implied author's personality that generate them. There are sometimes inconsistencies within the rhetoric itself, as the author presents conflicting interpretations and judgments. A Horneyan approach can help us to make sense of such inconsistencies by seeing them as a product of the inner divisions of the implied author.

The conflicts between rhetoric and mimesis that are a consequence of realistic characterization can be either exacerbated or reduced by the choice of narrative technique. In Part III, I compare six novels that employ a variety of narrative techniques and try to show that the problems created by both omniscient and first person narration are illuminated by a Horneyan approach and resolved by the use of multiple narrators, such as Emily Brontë employs in *Wuthering Heights*.

This book is a product of the continuing evolution of the psychological approach to literature that I have been unfolding since 1964. It illustrates some of applications of the approach that I have discussed before, but it emphasizes some things that my previous books do not, such as plot and narrative technique, and it applies the approach more systematically and to a wider range of literary issues and texts. It provides distinctive readings, I think, of a dozen major works of Western literature. If read in conjunction with Part I, each chapter can be understood by itself, but the chapters are connected to each other by a series of comparisons and are part of an unfolding story that reaches its climax in my discussion of *Wuthering Heights*. In the concluding chapter, I review what I have done here and elsewhere and suggest additional applications of the approach.

Chapter 1

Applications of a Horneyan Approach

I

It is not difficult to see why psychoanalytic theory has been widely used in the study of literature. Psychoanalysis deals with human beings in conflict with themselves and each other, and literature portrays and is written and read by such people. What is confusing is that there are so many psychoanalytic theories, each with its claims and proponents. It clearly makes sense to use psychoanalysis in literary study, but which theory should we employ?

I do not believe that literature should be placed on the Procrustean bed of any one theory. Human psychology is inordinately complex and can be approached in many ways. A number of theories have accurately described certain aspects of it, but none has the whole truth or is universally applicable. Many theorists have derived global models of human nature from the limited range of phenomena they understand well, or have tried to explain too much with too limited a repertory of motives. We need a wide range of theories to do justice to the richness and diversity of human experience and to the literature that expresses it. Some theories are highly congruent with certain works and some with others, and often several can be employed in studying the same text or aspect of literature. There is a large body of Freudian and Jungian criticism; and the ideas of Alfred Adler, Otto Rank, Wilhelm Reich, Melanie Klein, D. W. Winnicott, R. D. Laing, Fritz Perls, Heinz Kohut, Jacques Lacan, and others have also been profitably used in literary studies.

Another psychoanalyst with an important contribution to make is Karen Horney. Her theory fits numerous works from a wide range of periods and cultures and illuminates a variety of literary issues. It yields a distinctive set of insights and is a valuable critical tool.

When I first read Horney in 1959, at the suggestion of a colleague in psychology, I was deeply impressed by her theory. She not only described my behavior in an immediately recognizable way, but she seemed to have invaded my privacy and to have understood my insecurities, inner conflicts, and unrealistic demands on myself. Above all, she enabled me to comprehend a mysterious change that had taken place in me since the completion of my dissertation.

I was originally a specialist in Victorian fiction who was trained at Johns Hopkins in the explication of texts and the history of ideas. In my doctoral dissertation, I examined George Eliot's thought in relation to her time and her novels in relation to her ideas. While I was working on my dissertation, I felt that George Eliot had discovered the answer to the modern quest for values, and I expounded her Religion of Humanity with a proselytizing zeal. When I completed the dissertation, I found that although I still felt my reading of George Eliot to be accurate, I was no longer enthralled by her ideas. I could not understand my loss of enthusiasm, which had left me feeling painfully disoriented and uncertain about my beliefs.

Reading Karen Horney helped me to understand what had happened. Horney correlates belief systems with strategies of defense and observes that when our defenses change, so does our philosophy of life. I had had great difficulty writing my dissertation, for reasons that therapy

later made clear, and had frequently felt hopeless about completing the Ph.D. Faced with the frustration of my academic ambitions, I found George Eliot's Religion of Humanity to be exactly what I needed: we give meaning to our lives by living for others rather than for ourselves. But when I finished my dissertation and was told that it ought to be published (Paris 1965), I could once again dream of a glorious career. Since I no longer needed to live for others in order to give meaning to my life, George Eliot's philosophy lost its appeal. In Horneyan terms, my inability to write my dissertation forced me to abandon my expansive ambitions and to become self-effacing, but on triumphantly completing it, I became expansive once more, and George Eliot's ideas left me cold. This was an unconscious process of which I first became aware through my reading of Horney and that I understood more fully in the course of psychotherapy.

While in therapy in the early 1960s, I read a great deal of psychoanalytic theory, often using it as an aid to self-analysis. I did not connect it to the study of literature until one memorable day in 1964 when I was teaching Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Again it was Horney who helped me to understand what was mystifying me. While arguing that the novel is full of contradictions and does not make sense thematically, I suddenly remembered Horney's statement that "inconsistencies are as definite an indication of the presence of conflicts as a rise in body temperature is of physical disturbance" (1945, 35). In the next instant I realized that the novel's contradictions become intelligible if we see them as part of a system of inner conflicts. I have been unfolding the implications of that "aha" experience ever since, with profound effects on my view of literature.

As we shall see when examining *The Awakening*, there are other works like *Vanity Fair* in which thematic contradictions make it impossible to understand the text in its own terms. Literary critics have often defended the artistic unity of such works by suppressing awareness of inconsistencies or by rationalizing contradictions as part of a controlled structure of tension, irony, and paradox. More recently they have tended to delight in contradictions as evidence of the tendency of all linguistic structures to deconstruct themselves. With the help of Horney's theory we are often able both to recognize inconsistencies as genuine problems and to understand them as parts of an intelligible structure of psychological conflict. Long before the advent of deconstruction, I was showing how literary works almost always contain elements that subvert their dominant themes, but after this deconstructive move I was able to reconstruct them by showing that they still make sense in psychological terms (Paris 1974; see de Beaugrande 1986).

II

After accounting for the thematic contradictions of *Vanity Fair* as part of a structure of inner conflicts, I realized that Horney also works well with the major characters in the novel--William Dobbin, Amelia Sedley, and Becky Sharp. As I taught other nineteenth century novels with Horney in mind, I came to see that they, too, contain highly individualized characters whose motivational systems can be understood with the help of her theory. This recognition eventually led to my first book using Horney--*A Psychological Approach to Fiction: Studies in Thackeray, Stendhal, George Eliot, Dostoevsky, and Conrad* (1974). Characterization was not my only concern, but I gave a large part of each chapter to a detailed analysis of major figures in *Vanity Fair*, *The Red and the Black*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Notes from Underground*, and *Lord Jim*. In subsequent books, I have taken a Horneyan approach to all of Jane Austen's and all of

Shakespeare's major characters (Paris 1978b, 1991a, 1991b). The fact that Horney works well with literature from a wide variety of periods and cultures tells us something about both the power of her theory and the enduring features of human behavior.[1]

Like most students of literature, I had been taught to analyze literary characters primarily in formal and thematic terms. When I looked at realistically drawn characters from a Horneyan perspective, I came to see that there was an immense amount of psychological detail that literary criticism had simply ignored. These characters were not simply functions in a text or encoded messages from the author but were imagined human beings whose thoughts, feelings, and actions made sense in motivational terms. I had not been taught that literature is about human beings, human relationships, and human experiences; but outside of the academy one of the primary appeals of great literature has always been its portrayal of characters who seem to be of the same nature as ourselves. A psychological understanding of these characters makes them all the more fascinating.

When I began discussing the psychology of literary characters, I quickly encountered a great deal of resistance to this procedure among my fellow critics. It has become a dogma of modern theory that literary characters do not belong to the real world in which people have internal motivations but to a fictional world in which everything they are and do is part of a larger structure whose logic is determined by purely artistic considerations. The most recent schools of criticism continue to see characters in primarily functional terms, with many of them attacking the whole concept of a self that can be represented.

I believe that the rejection of the idea that literary characters can be analyzed in ways similar to those in which we analyze real people has been an enormous critical error (for fuller accounts of my argument, see Paris, 1974 and 1991b). The objections to this procedure apply to some kinds of characters but not to others. It is essential to recognize that there are different types of characterization requiring different strategies of interpretation.

A useful taxonomy is that of Scholes and Kellogg (1966), which distinguishes between aesthetic, illustrative, and mimetic characterization. Aesthetic characters are stock types who may be understood primarily in terms of their technical functions and their formal and dramatic effects. Illustrative characters are "concepts in anthropoid shape or fragments of the human psyche parading as whole human beings." We try to understand "the principle they illustrate through their actions in a narrative framework" (88). Behind realistic literature there is a strong "psychological impulse" that "tends toward the presentation of highly individualized figures who resist abstraction and generalization" (101). When we encounter a fully drawn mimetic character, "we are justified in asking questions about his motivations based on our knowledge of the ways in which real people are motivated" (87). A mimetic character usually has aesthetic and illustrative functions, but numerous details have been called forth by the author's desire to make the character lifelike, complex, and inwardly intelligible, and these will go unnoticed if we interpret the character only in functional terms.

One of the most frequent objections to motivational analysis is that it takes characters out of the work and tries to understand them in their own right. Given the nature of mimetic characterization, this is not an unreasonable procedure. Mimetic characters are part of the

fictional world in which they exist, but they are also autonomous beings with an inner logic of their own. They are, in E. M. Forster's phrase, "creations inside a creation" (1927, 64) who tend to go their own way as the author becomes absorbed in imagining human beings, motivating their behavior, and supplying their reactions to the situations in which they have been placed.

There has been a great deal of resistance among critics not only to regarding literary characters as imagined human beings, but also to using modern psychoanalytic theories to analyze them. One objection has been that earlier authors could not possibly have conceived of their characters in the terms we are using to talk about them. My reply to this is that the authors had to make sense of human behavior for themselves, as we all do, and that they drew upon the conceptual systems of their day. To see their characters in terms of those systems is to recover what may have been the authors' conscious understanding of them, but that does not do justice to their mimetic achievement or make the characters intelligible to us. To interpret Hamlet in terms of humors psychology does not explain his behavior to me.

We cannot identify our authors' conceptions of their characters with the characters they have actually created, even if we could be certain of what their conceptions were. One of the features of mimetic characters is that they have a life independent of their creators and that our understanding of them will change, along with our changing conceptions of human behavior. Even though the characters will outlive every interpretation, each age has to make sense of them for itself, using its own modes of explanation. Any theory we use will be culture-bound and reductive; still, we must use some theory, consciously or not, to satisfy our appetite for conceptual understanding.

I believe that psychoanalytic theory has much to contribute to our understanding of literature and that it permits a conceptual clarity that cannot be derived from literature alone. But literature has a contribution of at least equal importance to make to the theories that help us to understand it. There is a reciprocal relation, I propose, between psychoanalytic theory and the literary presentation of the phenomena it describes. Theory provides categories of understanding that help us to recover the intuitions of the great writers about the workings of the human syche, and these intuitions, once recovered, become part of our conceptual understanding of life. We gain greater insight into human behavior because of the richness of artistic presentation. Even the most sophisticated theories are thin compared to the complex portrayals of characters and relationships that we find in literary masterpieces, and they are thinner yet, of course, when compared with the density of life. While discussing an aspect of vindictiveness in *Neurosis and Human Growth*, Karen Horney observed that "great writers have intuitively grasped [this phenomenon] and have presented it in more impressive forms than a psychiatrist can hope to do" (198). Taken together psychoanalytic theory and literature give us a fuller grasp of human experience than either provides by itself.

The analyst and the artist often deal with the same phenomena, but in significantly different ways. Psychoanalytic theory gives us *formulations about* human behavior, whereas literature gives us *truth to* experience. Because of its concrete, dramatic quality, literature enables us not only to observe people other than ourselves but also to enter into their mental universe, to discover what it feels like to *be* these people and to confront their life situations. We can gain in this way a phenomenological grasp of experience that cannot be derived from theory alone, and

not from case histories either, unless they are also works of art. Because literature provides this kind of knowledge, it has a potentially sensitizing effect, one that is of as much importance to the clinician as it is to the humanist. Literature offers us an opportunity to amplify our experience in a way that can enhance our empathic powers, and because of this it is a valuable aid to clinical training and personal growth.

Another major source of resistance to the psychoanalytic study of character has been its reliance on infantile experience to account for the behavior of the adult. Since literature usually provides little information about early childhood, psychoanalytic critics tend to infer early experience from adult behavior, which they then account for in terms of infantile origins. Crucial explanatory material is generated out of the premises of their theory, with no corroborating literary evidence except the supposed results of the invented experiences, which were inferred from these results to begin with.

A Horneyan approach is not subject to this difficulty. Although Horney, like Freud, sees psychological problems as originating in early childhood, she does not see the adult as simply repeating earlier patterns, and she does not explain adult behavior through analogies with childhood experience. Once a child begins to adopt defensive strategies, his or her particular system develops under the influence of external factors, which encourage some strategies and discourage others, and of internal necessities, whereby each defensive move requires others in order to maintain its viability. The character structure of the adult has its origins in early childhood, but it is also the product of a complicated evolutionary history, and it can be understood in terms of the present constellation of defenses. Such a synchronic or structural approach is highly suitable for the analysis of literary characters, since we are often supplied with ample information about their existing defenses, however sketchy their childhoods may be. Because it describes the kinds of phenomena that are actually portrayed in literature, it permits us to stick to the words on the page, to explicate the text.

III

As I have continued to look at literature from a Horneyan perspective, one discovery has led to another, about both the nature of literature and the possible applications of the approach. I began by using the theory to make sense of thematic contradictions but soon came to appreciate its power to illuminate character. Recognizing the psychological complexity of many of the protagonists of nineteenth century fiction led me to change my ideas about characterization; and as I read and taught works from a variety of periods and national literatures, I found that mimetic characterization is more widespread than generally thought and that Horney's theory works well with writers from many cultures. My selection of texts in Part II of this book is designed to show, among other things, that a Horneyan approach is applicable to works from *Antigone* to *The End of the Road*.

Employing a Horneyan approach to character has led me to perceive that the great mimetic creations almost always subvert their aesthetic and thematic functions. As we have seen, E. M. Forster describes "round" characters as "creations inside a creation." They "arrive when evoked," he says, "but full of the spirit of mutiny. For they have these numerous parallels with people like ourselves, they try to live their own lives and are consequently engaged in treason against the

main scheme of the book" (1927, 64). That seems exactly right to me. As wholes in themselves, imagined human beings can be understood in terms of their inner motivational systems, and when they are so understood, they appear to be inharmonious toward the larger whole of which they are a part. They are in conflict with their roles in the plot and with the author's rhetorical treatment of their experience.

When I first became aware of the incongruities between form and theme on the one hand and mimesis on the other, I felt that they were failures of art, but I have found them to be almost inescapable in realistic literature and have come to regard them as a concomitant of great characterization. Round characters create a dilemma for their creators. If they "are given complete freedom," says Forster, "they kick the book to pieces, and if they are kept too sternly in check, they revenge themselves by dying, and destroy it by intestinal decay" (1927, 64). The artists' character creating impulses work against their efforts to shape and interpret experience, and they must choose between allowing their characters to come alive and kick the book to pieces or killing their characters by subordinating them to the main scheme of the work. The great realists choose fidelity to their psychological intuitions over the demands of theme and form, usually without knowing that they are doing so.

There are a number of reasons why realistic characterization is almost bound to subvert a work's formal and thematic structures. As Northrop Frye observes, there are "two poles of literature," the mimetic, with its "tendency to verisimilitude and accuracy of description," and the mythic, with its "tendency to tell a story . . . about characters who can do anything" (1957, 51). Western literature has moved steadily from the mythic to the mimetic pole, but the movement toward mimesis has affected only content; literary form is derived from mythic patterns. Thus even in the most realistic works, "we see the *same* structural principles" that we find in their pure form in myth (136). There is a built-in conflict between myth and mimesis: "the realistic writer soon finds that the requirements of literary form and plausible content always fight against each other" (Frye 1963, 36).

Literary form and realistic characterization involve incompatible canons of decorum and universes of discourse. Realistic characterization aims at verisimilitude; it follows the logic of motivation, of probability, of cause and effect. But, as Frye observes, when judged by the canons of probability, "every inherited convention of plot in literature is more or less mad" (1963, 36). Form and mimesis arouse different sets of expectations within the reader. Mimetic characters create an appetite for a consistently realistic world. We want their behavior to make sense and their fates to be commensurate with the laws of probability. Realism does not round out a shape, however, and mimetic characters are often set into manipulated plots that arrive at rather arbitrary conclusions. One of our cravings, either for realism or closure, tends to be frustrated at the end.

In many realistic works, the formal pattern is closed, despite the improbabilities this creates, and the characters remain true to life, subverting that closure. In Jane Austen's novels, for example, the happy endings demanded by the comic structure seem much less satisfactory when we become aware of her protagonists' unresolved psychological problems and the deficiencies in their relationships (see Paris 1978b). One of the most common formal patterns in fiction is the education plot, based on the archetype of the fortunate fall, in which the protagonists err because

of their flaws, suffer because of their errors, and achieve wisdom and maturity because of their suffering. When we analyze the characters in Horneyan terms, we usually find that their growth is an illusion and that if they have undergone a great change it is from one destructive solution to another. The education plot and mimetic characterization are usually at odds with each other. This often gives rise to critical controversies, the sources of which can be understood through a Horneyan approach.

It is important to distinguish between the psychological portrait of a character and the rhetoric by which the character is surrounded. By rhetoric I mean what we normally think of as theme and a good deal more besides. The rhetoric consists of all the devices an author employs to influence readers' moral and intellectual responses to a character, their sympathy and antipathy, their emotional closeness or distance (see Booth 1961). When we understand mimetic characters in motivational terms, we usually find ourselves responding in ways that are different from those that the rhetoric seeks to induce and taking issue with the author's interpretations and judgments.

The great psychological realists have the capacity to see far more than they can conceptualize. Their grasp of inner dynamics and of interpersonal relations is so subtle and profound that concrete representation is the only mode of discourse that can do it justice. When they comment on what they have represented or assign their characters illustrative roles, they are limited by the inadequacy of abstractions generally and of the conceptual systems available to them. Their interpretations of their characters are often wrong and almost always oversimple, in contrast to their intuitive grasp of the characters' psychology. The more we recover their intuitions and do justice to their mimetic achievement, the more disparities we perceive between their representation of human behavior and their interpretation of it.

Psychological analysis leads us to judgments that are in conflict with those of the author because it enables us to see the destructiveness of the solutions that have been glorified by the rhetoric. Writers tend to validate characters whose defensive strategies are similar to their own and to satirize those who have different solutions. The rhetoric of the work and sometimes even the action are designed to gain sympathy for the life styles and values of the favored characters. Changes from a condemned defensive strategy to an approved one are celebrated as education and growth, although the new solution is often as unhealthy as the one that has been discarded. Insofar as the characters are mimetically portrayed, we are given an opportunity to understand them in our own terms and to arrive at our own judgments. When we arrive at different interpretations and judgments, the author's spell is broken, the characters are seen to rebel, and we experience a disparity between rhetoric and mimesis.

To be more precise, we experience a disparity between the author's interpretations and judgments and our own. The mimetic component of literature can never be definitively interpreted, by the author or anyone else. By virtue of its richness, it escapes all conceptual schemes, and conceptual schemes are constantly changing. I employ a Horneyan approach because it satisfies my appetite for clarity here and now. I am aware of the epistemological problems, but I choose to make as much sense of things as I can, according to my best lights, rather than to dwell on the uncertainty of knowledge. Although I shall not be constantly calling attention to the fact, let it be understood that I know that I am presenting my version of reality, which I hope will be of use to some others in the construction of theirs.

Once psychological analysis of mimetic characters led me to resist authorial rhetoric, I began to interpret the rhetoric itself from a psychological perspective and to see it (along with much else) as a reflection of the psyche of the implied author. When the rhetoric consistently glorifies characters who embrace a particular solution while criticizing those who have adopted others, it reveals the implied author's own defenses, repressions, and blind spots. In works where the rhetoric is inconsistent, such as *Vanity Fair* or *The Awakening*, it reveals the implied author's inner conflicts. It is possible to psychoanalyze not only the implied authors of individual texts but also the authorial personality that can be inferred from many or all of a writer's works. I have done this with Thomas Hardy (Paris 1976a), Jane Austen (Paris 1978b), and William Shakespeare (Paris 1991a). The next step would be psychobiography, in which texts could be used as a source of insight into the inner life of their creator. Karen Horney's theory has been employed in this way by Lawrance Thompson in his monumental biography of Robert Frost (1966, 1970, 1976), and many other writers would be illuminated by Horneyan analysis.

As I have said, a Horneyan approach has led me to see that there are almost bound to be disparities between rhetoric and mimesis. I have come to realize that these disparities can be either exacerbated or reduced by the choice of narrative technique. Omniscient narration tends to exacerbate them because although omniscient narrators present themselves as authoritative sources of interpretation and judgment, they are not. First person narration reduces the disparities because the interpretations and judgments belong to a character and therefore are clearly subjective. First person narration creates other problems, however, such as those of reliability. How do we know the degree to which the narrator's perspective is endorsed by the implied author? How do we know whether the narrator's interpretations and judgments are trustworthy? And, most perplexing, how do we know if the narrator's *accounts* of self and others are accurate? In omniscient narration, we believe what the narrator *shows* us about the characters, even if we are skeptical about what we are *told*. But in first person narration, can we believe the narrator's accounts of self and others, even when they are presented dramatically? The perceptions and recollections of an anxious, defensive, insecure narrator may well be distorted.

I have found that both omniscient and first person narrators require psychological analysis. The omniscient narrator's interpretations and judgments are a reflection of the character structure of the implied author, who has a vested interest in giving a certain rhetorical spin to the story. First person narrators are usually characters with profound psychological problems who are engaged in various forms of self-punishment and self-justification. Understanding their needs and defenses can go a long way toward helping us to detect their distortions and assess their reliability. As I have suggested, a Horneyan approach to narration often gives us a great deal of insight into the psyche of the implied author.

Some works, such as *Wuthering Heights*, employ multiple narrators. First person narrators often seem to be speaking for the author, but the use of multiple narrators tends to relativize the narration, especially when the narrators have differing perspectives. Techniques such as this that lead to the disappearance of the author can diminish or eliminate the disparity between rhetoric and mimesis, since the rhetorical stance of the implied author becomes difficult or impossible to define. The implied author may be recovered through psychological analysis, however, if we see the multiple narrators as expressing conflicting components of the author's psyche and consider the motives behind this choice of narrative technique.

The studies of individual works in the body of this book will illustrate most of the applications of a Horneyan approach that I have discussed, and I shall suggest others in the Conclusion. In Part II, I shall examine characters and relationships in works by Ibsen, Barth, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Sophocles. The texts I have selected display most of the defensive strategies Horney describes and show the forms they have taken in various periods and cultures. These works are bound together by a number of recurring motifs, such as living through others, morbid dependency, suicide or suicidal tendencies, and searching for glory, all of which Horney's theory illuminates. I shall not consider the works chronologically but in an order that facilitates comparison.

In Part III, I shall continue to examine characters, relationships, and recurring motifs, but I shall also consider the protagonists in relation to rhetoric and plot and shall explore the ways in which mimesis functions as a subversive force. I shall focus on six novels: *Great Expectations, Jane Eyre, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Madame Bovary, The Awakening,* and *Wuthering Heights*. Some of these novels display the education pattern that I have described above, while others have a vindication pattern, based on the Cinderella archetype, in which a virtuous but persecuted protagonist finally achieves the status and approval he or she deserves. Both of these patterns are supported by the rhetoric and undermined by the mimesis, which (as I interpret it) shows the educated characters to be compulsive and immature and the vindicated characters to be less deserving of glorification than the author would have us believe.

I shall compare the novels in terms of these formal patterns and also in terms of their narrative techniques. *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre* have unreliable first person narrators, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Awakening* have problematic omniscient narration, and *Madame Bovary* has an omniscient narrator who is not as invisible as many, including the author, have claimed. *Wuthering Heights* avoids most of the difficulties found in the other novels by its use of multiple narrators. The problem here is to locate the implied author and to get some sense of where she stands in relation to the characters and their values. I believe that a Horneyan approach can help us to solve this problem.

IV

In my discussions of literature, I shall use Horney's theory as a source of insight rather than as a grid upon which to lay texts. Although influenced by Horney, the readings I offer are mine. They are not the inevitable result of the application of her theory; indeed, I sometimes disagree with her analysis of a literary character.

I believe that psychoanalytic theory illuminates literature, that literature enriches theory, and that combining theory and literature enhances both our intellectual and our empathic understanding of human behavior. This process involves not just theory and literature but also our own personalities and our insight into ourselves. There is a triangular relationship between literature, theory, and the individual interpreter. Our literary and theoretical interests reflect our own character, the way in which we use theory depends on the degree to which it has become emotionally as well as intellectually meaningful to us, and what we are able to perceive depends on our personality, our theoretical perspective, and our access to our inner life.

I have found Horney's theory to be a powerful instrument of analysis, and I am eager to share this discovery with others so that their understanding of literature and life might also be enriched by it. I know, however, that no one will entirely agree with my readings, just as I never entirely agree with anyone else's, and that the application of Horney's theory might yield different results in other hands.

For those unfamiliar with Horney or with my previous expositions of her ideas, I provide an account of her mature theory in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

Horney's Mature Theory

I

Born in a suburb of Hamburg in 1885, Karen Horney (née Danielsen) attended medical school in Freiburg and completed her studies at the universities of Göttingen and Berlin. She married Oskar Horney in 1909, was in analysis with Karl Abraham in 1910-12, had three daughters between 1911 and 1916, received her M.D. in 1915, and became a founding member of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute in 1920. She separated from Oskar in 1926 and accepted Franz Alexander's invitation to become founding Associate Director of the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute in 1932. In 1934, she moved to New York, where she joined the faculties of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute and the New School for Social Research. Because of her critique of orthodox theory, Horney was forced to resign from the New York Psychoanalytic in 1941, whereupon she founded the American Institute for Psychoanalysis, of which she was dean until her death in 1952.[1]

Horney's thought went through three stages. In essays she wrote between 1923 and 1935, she tried to revise Freud's phallocentric view of feminine psychology while remaining within the framework of classical theory. These essays were largely ignored during her lifetime, but since their republication in *Feminine Psychology* in 1967, Horney has been widely recognized as the first great psychoanalytic feminist.

Exposed to new ideas and to patients with different problems after she moved to the United States, Horney began to question libido theory, the universality of stages of psycho-sexual development, and many other basic tenets of psychoanalysis. In *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1937) and *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (1939), she replaced biology with culture and disturbed human relationships when explaining the origins of neuroses, and she shifted to a predominantly structural paradigm in which she sought to account for behavior in terms of its current function.

In her last two books, *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945) and *Neurosis and Human Growth* (1950), Horney described in a systematic way the interpersonal and intrapsychic strategies of defense that people develop in order to cope with the frustration of their psychological needs. While each stage of Horney's thought is important, I believe that her mature theory represents her most significant contribution. It provides explanations of human behavior in terms of currently existing constellations of defenses and inner conflicts that we can find nowhere else. It is this aspect of her thought that I have found to be of most value for the study of literature and that I shall describe here.

According to Horney, we are not simply tension-reducing or conditioned creatures but have present in us an "evolutionary constructive" force that urges us "to realize" our "given potentialities" (1950, 15). We each have a biologically based inner nature, a "real self," that it is our object in life to fulfill. Horney would have agreed with Abraham Maslow's account of the basic psychological needs that must be met if we are to actualize our potentialities. These include

physiological survival needs, needs for a safe and stable environment, needs for love and belonging, needs for esteem, and the need for a calling or vocation in which we can use our native capacities in an intrinsically satisfying way (Maslow 1970).

Horney sees healthy human development as a process of self-realization and unhealthy development as a process of self-alienation. If our basic needs are relatively well met, we shall develop "the clarity and depth of [our] own feelings, thoughts, wishes, interests . . . .; the special capacities or gifts [we] may have; the faculty to express [ourselves], and to relate [ourselves] to others with [our] spontaneous feelings. All this will in time enable [us] to find [our] set of values and [our] aims in life" (1950, 17). If our psychological needs are seriously frustrated, we shall develop in a quite different way. Self-alienation begins as a defense against "basic anxiety," which is "a profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness" (18) generated by feelings of isolation, helplessness, hostility, and fear. As a result of this anxiety, we "cannot simply like or dislike, trust or distrust, express [our] wishes or protest against those of another, but [we have] automatically to devise ways to cope with people and to manipulate them with minimum damage to [ourselves]" (Horney 1945, 219). We cope with others by developing the interpersonal strategies of defense that I shall examine next, and we seek to compensate for our feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy by an intrapsychic process of self-glorification. These strategies constitute our effort to fulfill our now insatiable needs for safety, love and belonging, and esteem. They are also designed to reduce our anxiety and to provide an outlet for our hostility.

II

According to Horney, we try to overcome feelings of being unsafe, unloved, and unvalued in a potentially hostile world by moving *toward, against*, or *away from* other people. These moves give rise to the neurotic solutions of compliance, aggression, and detachment. Whereas healthy people move flexibly in all three directions, compulsive people are "driven to comply, to fight, to be aloof, regardless of whether the move is appropriate in the particular instance" (Horney 1945, 202). Each solution involves its own constellation of behavior patterns and personality traits, its own conception of justice, and its own set of beliefs about human nature, human values, and the human condition. Each involves also a deal or bargain with fate in which obedience to the dictates of that solution is supposed to be rewarded (see Paris 1991a).

In each defensive move, one of the feelings involved in basic anxiety is overemphasized: helplessness in the compliant solution, hostility in the aggressive solution, and isolation in the detached solution. Since all of these feelings are bound to arise under adverse conditions, we make all three defensive moves compulsively and are torn by inner conflicts, since the moves are incompatible with each other. To gain some sense of wholeness, we emphasize one of the moves and become predominantly compliant, aggressive, or detached. Which move we emphasize will depend on a combination of temperamental and environmental factors.

The other trends continue to exist but operate unconsciously and manifest themselves in disguised and devious ways. The conflict between the moves has not been resolved but has gone underground. If the submerged trends are for some reason brought closer to the surface, we experience severe inner turmoil and may become paralyzed, unable to move in any direction at all. When impelled by a powerful influence or the collapse of our predominant solution, we may

embrace one of our repressed defensive strategies. Although often experienced as conversion or education, this is merely the substitution of one solution for another.

Horney calls the major solutions compliance, aggression, and detachment in *Our Inner Conflicts* and self-effacement, expansiveness, and resignation in *Neurosis and Human Growth*, where she combines the interpersonal and the intrapsychic. The two sets of terms clearly overlap and can often be used interchangeably. In *Neurosis and Human Growth*, there are three distinct expansive solutions: the narcissistic, the perfectionistic, and the arrogant-vindictive. There are thus a total of five major solutions: compliance or self-effacement, narcissism, perfectionism, arrogant-vindictiveness, and detachment or resignation. The aggressive solution of *Our Inner Conflicts* corresponds closely to the arrogant-vindictive solution of *Neurosis and Human Growth*, and, as with the other pairs, I shall use whichever term seems most appropriate in a given context.

Self-effacing people often grew up under the shadow of someone--perhaps a preferred sibling, a beautiful mother, or an overbearing father--and sought love and protection through a self-subordinating devotion. They may have had a fighting spirit at one time, but the need for affection won out and they "became compliant, learned to like everybody and to lean with a helpless admiration" on those they "feared most" (Horney 1950, 222).

The strategies they adopted in childhood evolve into a constellation of character traits, behaviors, and beliefs in the adults. They try to overcome their anxiety by gaining affection and approval and by controlling others through their dependency on them. They need to feel part of something larger and more powerful than themselves, a need that often manifests itself as religious devotion, identification with a group or cause, or morbid dependency in a love relationship. Love appears "as the ticket to paradise, where all woe ends: no more feeling lost, guilty, and unworthy; no more responsibility for self; no more struggle with a harsh world" for which they feel "hopelessly unequipped" (Horney 1950, 240).

In order to gain the love, approval, and support they need, basically compliant people develop certain qualities, inhibitions, and ways of relating. They seek to attach other people by being good, loving, self-effacing, and weak. They become "'unselfish,' self-sacrificing," "overconsiderate," "overappreciative, overgrateful, generous" (Horney 1945, 51). Appeasing and conciliatory, they tend to blame themselves and feel guilty when they quarrel with another, experience disappointment, or are criticized. They are severely inhibited in their self-assertive and self-protective activities and have powerful taboos against "all that is presumptuous, selfish, and aggressive" (Horney 1950, 219). They glorify suffering and use it to manipulate others and justify themselves.

The compliant defense brings with it not only certain ways of feeling and behaving, but also a special set of values and beliefs. The values "lie in the direction of goodness, sympathy, love, generosity, unselfishness, humility" (Horney 1945, 54). These can be admirable values, but compliant people embrace them because they are necessary to their defense system rather than as genuine ideals. They must believe in turning the other cheek, and they must see the world as displaying a providential order in which people like themselves are rewarded. Their bargain is that if they are generous, loving people who shun pride and do not seek their own gain or glory,

they will be well treated by fate and other people. If their bargain is not honored, they may despair of divine justice, they may conclude that they are at fault, or they may have recourse to belief in a higher justice that transcends human understanding. They need to believe not only in the fairness of the world order but also in the goodness of human nature, and here, too, they are liable to disappointment.

In compliant people, says Horney, there are "a variety of aggressive tendencies strongly repressed" (1945, 55). They are repressed because experiencing them or acting them out would clash violently with their need to be good and would radically endanger their whole strategy for gaining love, protection, and approval. It would undermine their bargain with fate. Compliant people's strategies increase their buried hostility since they invite abuse but also make them afraid of expressing anger or fighting back.

Because of their need for surrender and a safe outlet for their aggression, compliant people are often attracted to their opposite, masterful expansive people whose "egotism, ambition, callousness, unscrupulousness" and "wielding of power" they may consciously condemn but secretly admire (Horney 1945, 54). Merging with such people allows them "to participate vicariously in the mastery of life without having to own it" to themselves (Horney 1950, 244). This kind of relationship usually develops into a morbid dependency that exacerbates compliant people's difficulties. When the love relationship fails them, they will be terribly disillusioned and may feel that they did not find the right person, that something is wrong with them, or that nothing is worth having.

There are numerous predominantly compliant or self-effacing characters in literature who have been analyzed in Horneyan terms. Starting with Shakespeare, these include Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Hamlet, Desdemona, Duke Vincentio in *Measure for Measure*, Timon of Athens, Prospero (Paris 1991a), the poet in Shakespeare's sonnets (Lewis 1985; Paris 1991a), and Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra* (Paris 1991b). In later writers, there is Fanny Price in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (Paris 1978b), Thackeray's Dobbin and Amelia (Paris 1974), Esther Summerson in Dickens's *Bleak House* (Eldredge 1986), Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (Paris 1974), Tess in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (Paris 1976a), Conrad's Charley Marlow (Paris 1974, 1993b), the priest in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* (Straub 1986), Saul Bellow's Moses Herzog (Paris 1976b), Alice Mellings in Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist* (Eldredge 1989), and George Bailey in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (Gordon 1994). As is true for characters exemplifying each of the major solutions, most have inner conflicts and manifest other trends. There are many more characters displaying each solution than I shall cite here, since I am mentioning only prime examples who have already been discussed in print.

People in whom expansive tendencies predominate have goals, traits, and values that are the opposite of those of self-effacing people. What appeals to them most is not love, but mastery. They abhor helplessness, are ashamed of suffering, and need to achieve success, prestige, or recognition. There are three expansive types: the narcissistic, the perfectionistic, and the aggressive or arrogant-vindictive.

The arrogant-vindictive solution is in many ways the opposite of the self-effacing one. Arrogant-vindictive people usually have had a particularly harsh childhood in which they have encountered "sheer brutality, humiliations, derision, neglect, and flagrant hypocrisy." Like the survivors of concentration camps, they go through "a hardening process in order to survive." As children, they "may make some pathetic and unsuccessful attempts to win sympathy, interest, or affection but finally choke off all tender needs." Since affection is unattainable, they scorn it or conclude that it does not exist. Thus they have no incentive to please and can give free rein to their bitter resentment. The desire for love is replaced by ambition and a drive toward "vindictive triumph." They live for the "day of reckoning" when they will prove their superiority, put their enemies to shame, and show how they have been wronged. They dream of becoming the great hero, "the persecutor, the leader, the scientist attaining immortal fame" (Horney 1950, 202-203).

As adults, arrogant-vindictive people are ferociously competitive: they "cannot tolerate anybody who knows or achieves more . . ., wields more power, or in any way questions [their] superiority" (Horney 1950, 198). They have to drag their rivals down or defeat them. They retaliate when injured by hurting their enemies more than they have hurt them. They are ruthless and cynical in their relations with others, seeking to exploit and outsmart everyone. They trust no one and are out to get others before others get them. They avoid emotional involvement and dependency and use the relations of friendship and marriage to enhance their position. They want to be hard and tough and regard all manifestations of feeling as sloppy sentimentality.

Whereas self-effacing people tend to be masochistic, arrogant-vindictive people are often sadistic. They want to enslave others, to play on their emotions, to frustrate, disparage, and humiliate them. Horney does not explain this behavior in sexual terms but sees it partly as their way of retaliating for injuries and partly as a response to their sense of the emptiness and futility of their lives. They develop a pervasive envy of everyone who seems to possess something they lack, whether it be wealth and prestige, physical attractiveness, or love and devotion. The happiness of others "irritates" them. If they "cannot be happy," "why should [others] be so?" The arrogant-vindictive person must "trample on the joy of others" because if they "are as defeated and degraded as he, his own misery is tempered in that he no longer feels himself the only one afflicted" (Horney 1945, 201-202).

Aggressive people regard the world as "an arena where, in the Darwinian sense, only the fittest survive and the strong annihilate the weak." A "callous pursuit of self-interest is the paramount law" (Horney 1945, 64). There are no values inherent in the order of things except that might makes right. Considerateness, compassion, loyalty, unselfishness are all scorned as signs of weakness, "as restraints on the path to a sinister glory" (Horney 1950, 203). Those who value such qualities are fools just asking to be exploited. Aggressive people are sometimes drawn toward compliant types, however, because of their submissiveness and malleability--and also because of their own repressed self-effacing tendencies.

Just as self-effacing people must repress their aggressive impulses in order to make their solution work, so for arrogant-vindictive people any "attitude of compliance would be incompatible" with their "whole structure of living" and would "shake its foundations." They need to fight their softer feelings: "Nietzsche gives us a good illustration of these dynamics when he has his superman see any form of sympathy as a sort of fifth column, an enemy operating from within"

(Horney 1945, 69-70). They fear the emergence of compliant trends because this would make them vulnerable in an evil world, would cause them to feel like fools, and would threaten their bargain, which is essentially with themselves. They do not count on the world to give them anything but are convinced they can reach their ambitious goals if they remain true to their vision of life as a battle and do not allow themselves to be seduced by the traditional morality or their own compliant tendencies. If their predominant solution collapses, powerful self-effacing trends may emerge.

Predominantly arrogant-vindictive characters who have been discussed in Horneyan terms include Iago (Rosenberg 1961, Rabkin and Brown 1973; Paris 1991a), Edmund, Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth, and Macbeth after the murder (Paris 1991a), and Richard III and Cassius (Paris 1991b) in Shakespeare; Julien Sorel in Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (Paris 1974); Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* (Paris 1974); Count Guido in Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (Lewis 1986); Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (Paris 1978c, 1991c, 1994b); and Joe Christmas in Faulkner's *Light in August* (Haselswerdt 1986).

Predominantly narcissistic people also seek mastery, but their childhoods are quite different from those of arrogant-vindictive people, as are their strategies of defense. Whereas arrogant-vindictive people have usually been subject to abuse, narcissistic people were often "favored and admired" children who were "gifted beyond average" and "early and easily won distinctions" (Horney 1950, 194). The goal of aggressive people is to prove their superiority to their detractors through achievement; the goal of narcissistic people is to maintain the sense of being exceptional that they imbibed in childhood. "Healthy friction with the wishes and will of others" (18), which Horney regards as an essential condition of sound development, and the need to earn a sense of worth through achievement, are missing in their early experience. They develop an unrealistic sense of their powers and importance, and this creates anxiety of a different kind from that experienced by those toward whom the world has been begrudging. They are afraid of other people whose genuine accomplishments or refusal to indulge them call their inflated conception of themselves into question. Note that Horney does not posit a primary narcissism, as do many other theorists, but rather sees narcissism, like aggression, as a reaction to an unhealthy environment.

As adults, narcissists seek to master life "by self-admiration and the exercise of charm" (Horney 1950, 212). They have an "unquestioned belief in [their] greatness and uniqueness" that gives them a "buoyancy and perennial youthfulness." The narcissist "has (consciously) no doubts; he *is* the anointed, the man of destiny, the great giver, the benefactor of mankind." He feels that there is "no one he cannot win" and is adept at charming people "with a scintillating display of feeling, with flattery, with favors and help--in anticipation of admiration or in return for devotion received." His insecurity is manifested by the fact that he "may speak incessantly of his exploits or of his wonderful qualities and needs endless confirmation of his estimate of himself in the form of admiration and devotion" (194).

Like arrogant-vindictive people, narcissists use people and do "not seem to mind breaking promises, being unfaithful, incurring debts, defrauding" (Horney 1950, 195). But they are not "scheming exploiters"; rather, they feel that their needs are "so important that they entitle [them]

to every privilege." They expect unconditional love from others, no matter how much they "trespass on their rights."

Because their imagination is captivated by "the glory of the dramatic," narcissists resent "the humble tasks of daily living" as "humiliating." They have fantasies of "quick and glamorous achievement," avoid consistent effort and attention to detail, and quickly lose interest as a face-saving device if they encounter obstacles (Horney 1950, 313-15). When disillusioned they may give up their ambitions, telling themselves that they would have accomplished something great if they had decided really to try.

On the surface narcissistic people are "rather optimistic" and "turn outward toward life," but "there are undercurrents of despondency and pessimism" (Horney 1950, 196). They see the world as a fostering parent, expect continual good luck, and demand the fulfillment of their wishes by fate and other people. Their bargain is that if they hold onto their dreams and their exaggerated claims for themselves, life is bound to give them what they want. Since life can never match their expectations, they feel, in their weaker moments, that it is full of tragic contradictions.

Predominantly narcissistic characters who have been discussed in Horneyan terms include King Lear (Paris 1991a) and Richard II (Paris 1991b) in Shakespeare, Jane Austen's Emma Woodhouse (Paris 1978b), Mathilde de la Mole in *The Red and the Black* (Paris, 1974), and Conrad's Lord Jim (Paris 1974).

In *Neurosis and Human Growth*, Horney gives the least amount of attention to the perfectionistic solution, but she discusses it also in *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*, where she argues that an adherence to "rigid and high moral standards" and a "drive toward rectitude and perfection" (1939, 207) are not products of an instinctually based superego but special needs of individuals who have had a certain kind of childhood. They were made to feel worthless or guilty if they did not live up to their parents' demands, but by conforming to expectations they could put themselves beyond reproach and gain a feeling of superiority. Perfectionists do not revel in a sense of being wonderful, like narcissists, but derive a sadistic satisfaction from their rectitude because it shows others "how stupid, worthless, and contemptible they are." They want to "strike others with righteous indignation from the height of their infallibility," to "inflict the same injury" on others that their parents inflicted on them (218-21).

As adults, perfectionists feel superior because of their "high standards, moral and intellectual, and on this basis look down on others" (Horney 1950, 196). They easily feel guilty but regard this as a virtue because it proves their "high sensitivity toward moral requirements." If the analyst points out that their self-recriminations are exaggerated, they may feel that the analyst is inferior and "cannot possibly understand" them (Horney 1939, 220). Unlike narcissists, perfectionists work hard and pay obsessive attention to details. What really matters is not the details themselves "but the flawless excellence of the whole conduct of life" (Horney 1950, 196). Only this will reduce their anxiety, make them feel superior to others, and give them a sense of controlling their own destiny.

Since they are pursuing the impossible, perfectionists must find ways to defend themselves against failure and its consequences. One defense is to equate "standards and actualities--*knowing* about moral values and *being* a good person" (Horney 1950, 196). While they deceive themselves in this way, they may insist that others live up to their standards and "despise them for failing to do so. [Their] own self-condemnation is thus externalized." The imposition of their standards on others leads to admiration for a select few and a critical or condescending attitude toward most people.

The bargain of the perfectionist is based on a legalistic conception of the world order: "Because he is fair, just, dutiful, he is entitled to fair treatment by others and by life in general. This conviction of an infallible justice operating in life gives him a feeling of mastery" (Horney 1950, 197). Success is not a matter of luck, of being the favorite of fortune, as it is for the narcissist, or of superior shrewdness, talent, and ruthlessness, as it is for the arrogant-vindictive person; rather, it is a proof of virtue. Ill fortune may mean that he is not really virtuous or that the world is unjust. Either conclusion shakes him "to the foundations of his psychic existence," invalidating "his whole accounting system" and conjuring up "the ghastly prospect of helplessness." If he recognizes "an error or failure of his own making," self-effacing trends and self-hate may come to the fore.

Predominantly perfectionistic characters who have been analyzed in Horneyan terms include Brutus and Coriolanus (Paris 1991b), Othello, Cordelia, and Macbeth before the murder (Paris 1991a) in Shakespeare; Samuel Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe (Eldredge 1982); and three characters in Jane Austen--Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, Knightly in *Emma*, and Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* (Paris 1978b).

People who are predominantly resigned or detached usually have had a childhood in which there were "cramping influences" against which they "could not rebel openly, either because they were too strong or too intangible." Demands were made for love, understanding, conformity, or emotional support that threatened to "engulf" them. They felt that they had to submit to these demands in order to obtain love, but they also wanted to rebel against "the bonds put around" them. They handled this situation by withdrawal. Putting "an emotional distance between [themselves] and others," they no longer wanted affection nor did they want to fight. This helped them preserve their individuality, but they had to put a check on their feelings and "retract all those wishes and needs which would require others for their fulfillment." While retracting their wishes made them more independent, it also sapped their "vitality and maim[ed their] sense of direction" (Horney 1950, 275-76).

Whereas self-effacing people crave love and expansive people seek mastery, detached people worship freedom and independence. They want to be left alone, to have nothing expected of them, to be subject to no restrictions. They have a "*hypersensitivity to influence, pressure, coercion* or *ties* of any kind" (Horney 1950, 266, emphasis in the original). They may react with anxiety to physical pressure from clothing, closed spaces, long-term obligations, the inexorability of time, the laws of cause and effect, traditional values and rules of behavior, or, indeed, anything that interferes with their absolute freedom. They want to do what they please when they please, but since they are alienated from their spontaneous desires, their freedom is rather empty. It is a *freedom from* what they feel as coercion rather than a *freedom to* fulfill themselves. Their

desire for freedom may take the form of a craving for serenity, which means for them "simply the absence of all troubles, irritations, or upsets" (263).

Detached people disdain the pursuit of worldly success and have a profound aversion to effort. They have a strong need for superiority and usually look on their fellows with condescension, but they realize their ambition in imagination rather than through actual accomplishments. They make themselves invulnerable by being self-sufficient. This involves not only living in imagination but also restricting their desires. In order to avoid being dependent on the environment, they try to subdue their inner cravings and to be content with little. They cultivate a "don't care" attitude and protect themselves against frustration by believing that "nothing matters."

Detached people withdraw from both other people and themselves. They seek privacy, shroud themselves "in a veil of secrecy," and, in their personal relations, draw around themselves "a kind of magic circle which no one may penetrate" (Horney 1945, 75-76). They withdraw from themselves by suppressing or denying their feelings. Their resignation from active living gives them an "onlooker" attitude that often enables them to be excellent observers both of others and of their own inner processes. Their insight divorced from feeling, they look at themselves "with a kind of objective interest, as one would look at a work of art" (74).

Their withdrawal from themselves is in part an effort to resolve their inner conflicts. In this solution, says Horney, the subordinated trends are not deeply repressed; they are visible to the trained observer and are rather easily brought to awareness. Because detached people are likely to entertain the attitudes of the subordinated solutions, their values are highly contradictory. They have a "permanent high evaluation" of what they regard "as freedom and independence" and cultivate individuality, self-reliance, and an indifference to fate. But they may at one time "express an extreme appreciation for human goodness, sympathy, generosity, self-effacing sacrifice, and at another time swing to a complete jungle philosophy of callous self-interest" (Horney 1945, 94).

In order to reduce their vulnerability, detached people believe, "consciously or unconsciously, that is it *better* not to wish or expect anything. Sometimes this goes with a conscious pessimistic outlook on life, a sense of its being futile anyhow and of nothing being sufficiently desirable to make an effort for it" (Horney 1950, 263, emphasis in the original). They do not usually rail against life, however, but accept their fate with ironic humor or stoical dignity. They try to escape suffering by being independent of external forces, by feeling that nothing matters, and by concerning themselves only with things within their power. Their bargain is that if they ask nothing of others, they will not be bothered; if they try for nothing, they will not fail; and if they expect little of life, they will not be disappointed.

Predominantly detached characters who have been analyzed in Horneyan terms include Horatio in *Hamlet*, Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* , and Apemantus in *Timon of Athens* (Paris 1991a), Mr. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Paris 1978b), Dostoevsky's underground man (Paris 1974), and Quentin Compson in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and the Fury* (Butery 1989). The detached solution is particularly prevalent in twentieth century literature, and much work remains to be done with characters who manifest it.

Horney describes childhood experiences typical for those who have adopted each of the major solutions, but most children have a combination of these experiences and develop a combination of defenses. Conflicts between the solutions cause oscillations, inconsistencies, and self-hate. One of the most significant features of Horney's theory is that it permits us to make sense of contradictory attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs by seeing them as part of structure of inner conflicts. Horneyan theory has a dynamic quality: solutions combine, conflict, become stronger or weaker, need to be defended, generate vicious circles, and are replaced by others when they collapse. This quality of the theory is difficult to convey in exposition, but it will become evident in our discussions of literature.

III

While interpersonal difficulties are creating the movements toward, against, and away from people, and the conflicts between these moves, concomitant intrapsychic problems are producing their own defensive strategies. To compensate for feelings of self-hate and inadequacy, individuals create, with the aid of their imagination, an "idealized image" of themselves that they endow with "unlimited powers" and "exalted faculties" (Horney 1950, 22). The idealized image, in turn, generates neurotic claims, tyrannical "shoulds," and neurotic pride, all of which ultimately increase self-hate.

The content of the idealized image is much influenced by our predominant solution and the attributes it exalts. The idealized image of self-effacing people "is a composite of 'lovable' qualities, such as unselfishness, goodness, generosity, humility, saintliness, nobility, sympathy" (Horney 1950, 222). Arrogant-vindictive people see themselves as masters of all situations who are smarter, tougher, more realistic than other people. Narcissists see themselves as prophets and benefactors of mankind who have unlimited energies and are capable of magnificent achievements, effortlessly attained. Perfectionists regard themselves as models of rectitude who achieve a flawless excellence in the whole conduct of life. The idealized image of detached or resigned people "is a composite of self-sufficiency, independence, self-contained serenity, freedom from desires" and "stoicism" (277). In each solution, the idealized image may be modeled in whole or in part on a religious or cultural ideal or an example from history or personal experience.

The creation of the idealized image leads to additional inner conflict. The conflict between the interpersonal strategies is imported into the idealized image, which reflects not only the predominant solution but also the subordinated ones. Since each solution glorifies a different set of traits, the idealized image has contradictory aspects, all of which demand to be actualized. A conflict also arises between pride and self-hate. Individuals can feel worthwhile only if they live up to their idealized image, deeming everything that falls short to be worthless. As a result, they develop a "despised image" of themselves that becomes the focus of self-contempt. A great many people shuttle, says Horney, "between a feeling of arrogant omnipotence and of being the scum of the earth" (1950, 188).

The idealized image evolves into an idealized self and the despised image into a despised self, as people become convinced they really are the grandiose or awful beings they have imagined themselves to be. Horney posits four selves competing with each other: the real self, the

idealized self, the despised self, and the actual self. The real (or possible) self is based on a set of biological predispositions that require favorable conditions for their actualization. The idealized (or impossible) self is an imaginary creation that is unrealistically grandiose, and the despised self is unrealistically worthless and weak. The actual self is what a person really is--a mixture of strengths and weaknesses, health and neurosis. The distance between the actual and real selves will vary, depending on the degree of self-alienation. It will be small in self-actualizing people.

With the formation of the idealized image, the individual embarks upon a "search for glory," as "the energies driving toward self-realization are shifted to the aim of actualizing the idealized self" (Horney 1950, 24). What is considered to be glorious depends on the major solution. Horney does not see the search for glory, the quest of the absolute, the need to be god-like as essential ingredients of human nature but as reactions to the frustration of basic needs. It is when people feel themselves to be nothing that they must claim to be all.

For many people the search for glory is the most important thing in their lives. It gives them the sense of meaning and feeling of superiority they so desperately crave. They may experience depression or despair if they feel that their search for glory will never succeed. They fiercely resist all encroachments on their illusory grandeur and may prefer death to the shattering of their dreams. The search for glory is a "private religion" the rules of which are determined by the individual's neurosis, but glory systems are also a prominent feature of every culture. They include organized religions, various forms of group identification, wars and military service, and competitions, honors, and hierarchical arrangements of all kinds.

The creation of the idealized image produces not only the search for glory but the whole structure of phenomena that Horney calls the pride system. We take an intense pride in the attributes of our idealized selves and on the basis of this pride make "neurotic claims" on others. At the same time, we feel that we *should* perform in a way that is commensurate with our grandiose conception of ourselves. If the world fails to honor our claims or we fail to live up to our shoulds, we become our despised selves and experience agonizing self-hate. As with our idealized image, the specific nature of our pride, shoulds, claims, and self-hate will be influenced by our predominant solution and by the conflicts between it and subordinate trends.

Our need to actualize our idealized image leads us to impose stringent demands and taboos upon ourselves, a phenomenon Horney calls "the tyranny of the should." The function of the shoulds is "to make oneself over into one's idealized self: *the premise on which they operate is that nothing should be, or is, impossible for oneself*" (Horney 1950, 68). The shoulds are characterized by their coerciveness, disregard for feasibility, imperviousness to psychic laws, and reliance on willpower for fulfillment and imagination for denial of failure. There is a good deal of externalization connected with the shoulds. We often feel our shoulds as the expectations of others, our self-hate as their rejection, and our self-criticism as their unfair judgment. We expect others to live up to our shoulds and displace onto them our rage at our own failure to do so. The shoulds are a defense against self-loathing, but, like other defenses, they aggravate the condition they are employed to cure. Not only do they increase self-alienation, but they also intensify self-hate, since the penalty for failure is a feeling of worthlessness and self-contempt. This is why the shoulds have such a tyrannical power. "It is the threat of a punitive self-hate" that "truly makes them a regime of terror" (85).

The shoulds are impossible to live up to because they are so unrealistic: we should love everyone; we should never make a mistake; we should always triumph; we should never need other people, and so forth. The shoulds always demand the repression of needs, feelings, and wishes that cannot be repressed. The shoulds are also impossible to live up to because they reflect our inner conflicts and are at war with each other. They are generated by the idealized image, but the idealized image is a composite of various solutions, each of which produces its own set of demands. As a result, we are often caught in a crossfire of conflicting shoulds. As we try to obey contradictory inner dictates, we are bound to hate ourselves whatever we do, and even if, paralyzed, we do nothing at all. The crossfire of conflicting shoulds is a powerful concept that explains much inertia and inconsistency.

Another product of the idealized image is "neurotic claims," which are our demands to be treated in accordance with our grandiose conception of ourselves. Claims also involve the expectation that we will get what we need in order to make our solution work. Generally speaking, neurotic claims are unrealistic, egocentric, and vindictive. They demand results without effort, are based on an assumption of specialness or superiority, deny the world of cause and effect, and are "pervaded by expectations of magic" (Horney 1950, 62).

Neurotic claims do not achieve their objective, which is confirmation of our idealized image and our predominant solution. If the world fails to honor our claims, as is often the case, it is saying that we are not who we think we are and that our strategy for dealing with life is ineffective. We may react with rage, despair, and self-hate, but we may also reaffirm our claims, which are extremely tenacious, since we depend on them for self-aggrandizement and a sense of control over our lives.

The claims are what we feel entitled to according to the conception of justice that is part of our predominant solution. Although specific expectations will vary from solution to solution, the essential conception of justice remains the same. In a just world, our claims will be honored; if they are not, life is absurd. Since our solution will collapse if the universe is not organized as it is supposed to be, we have a powerful vested interest in preserving our belief system in face of contrary evidence. If we become convinced that the world has belied our expectations, we may go to pieces or switch to another solution with a different conception of the universe.

An important part of the justice system in each solution is what Horney calls a "deal" and what I have called a bargain with fate, the specifics of which will vary with the solution, as I have shown. The bargain is that if we obey our shoulds, our claims will be honored, our solution will work, and our idealized conception of ourselves will be confirmed. I have made a detailed study of this phenomenon in *Bargains with Fate: Psychological Crises and Conflicts in Shakespeare and His Plays* (1991), where I argue that the leading characters of the major tragedies are thrown into a state of psychological crisis by precipitating events that challenge their bargains with fate.

It is important to recognize that the bargain with fate involves not only an expectation that our claims will be honored if we live up to our shoulds, but also a conviction that we will be punished if we violate them. The justice system of our solution can turn against us, as it does against Macbeth. In some cases, conflicting solutions generate conflicting bargains, ethical codes, and conceptions of justice.

Neurotic pride, says Horney, is "the climax and consolidation of the process initiated with the search for glory" (1950, 109). It substitutes for realistic self-confidence and self-esteem a pride in the attributes of the idealized self, in the successful assertion of claims, and in the "loftiness and severity" of the inner dictates. Since pride turns the compulsive behaviors of the various solutions into virtues, anything can be a source of pride. There is commonly a great pride in the mental processes of imagination, reason, and will, since "the infinite powers" we ascribe to ourselves "are, after all, powers of the mind." The mind must work incessantly at "maintaining the private fictitious world through rationalizations, justifications, externalizations, reconciling irreconcilables--in short, through finding ways to make things appear different from what they are" (91-94).

Pride is a vitally important defense, but since it is based on illusion and self-deception, it increases our vulnerability. Threats to pride produce anxiety and hostility; its collapse results in self-contempt. We are especially subject to feelings of shame (when we violate our own pride) and humiliation (when our pride is violated by others). We react to shame with self-hate and to humiliation with a vindictive hostility ranging "from irritability, to anger, to a blind murderous rage" (Horney 1950, 99).

There are various devices for restoring pride. These include retaliation, which reestablishes the superiority of the humiliated person, and loss of interest in that which is threatening or damaging. They also include various forms of distortion, such as forgetting humiliating episodes, denying responsibility, blaming others, and embellishing. Sometimes "humor is used to take the sting out of an otherwise unbearable shame" (Horney 1950, 106). We also protect our pride by avoidances, such as not trying, restricting wishes and activities, and refusing to become involved in any serious pursuit or relationship.

Self-hate is usually the end product of the intrapsychic strategies of defense, each of which tends to magnify the individual's feelings of inadequacy and failure. Self-hate is essentially the rage the idealized self feels toward the self we actually are for not being what it "should" be. Self-hate is in large part an unconscious process, since it is usually too painful to be confronted directly. The chief defense against awareness is externalization, which takes active and passive forms. Active externalization "is an attempt to direct self-hate outward, against life, fate, institutions or people." In passive externalization "the hate remains directed against the self but is perceived or experienced as coming from the outside." When self-hate is conscious, there is often a pride taken in it that serves to maintain self-glorification: "The very condemnation of imperfection confirms the godlike standards with which the person identifies himself" (Horney 1950, 114-15). Horney sees self-hate as "perhaps the greatest tragedy of the human mind. Man in reaching out for the Infinite and Absolute also starts destroying himself. When he makes a pact with the devil, who promises him glory, he has to go to hell--to the hell within himself" (154).

As we turn to look at literature from a Horneyan perspective, it is important to keep in mind that we shall find neither characters in books nor people in life who correspond exactly to Horney's descriptions. Her types are composites, drawn from her experience with people who share certain dominant trends but who differ from each other in many important ways. The Horneyan typology helps us to see how certain traits and behaviors are related to each other within a psychological system, but once we have identified a person's predominant solution, we must not

assume the presence of all the characteristics Horney ascribes to that solution. It is also important to remember, as Horney observes, that "although people tending toward the same main solution have characteristic similarities, they may differ widely with regard to [their] level of human qualities, gifts, or achievements" (1950, 191). The situation is further complicated by the fact that people experience inner conflicts and display behaviors, traits, and beliefs that belong to more than one solution. Quoting William James to the effect that "'most cases are mixed cases'" and that "'we should not treat our classifications with too much respect,'" Horney concludes: "It would be more nearly correct to speak of directions of development than of types" (1950, 191).

If we forget these qualifications, we are liable to put people into categories instead of grasping their individuality, and our analysis will be little more than a reductive labeling. Horney allows for infinite variations and combinations of defenses and recognizes other components of the personality as well. In a brief description, her theory seems highly schematic, but when properly employed it is quite flexible.

Note: this chapter may differ slightly from the version published in *Imagined Human Beings: A Psychological Approach to Character and Conflict in Literature* (NYU Press, 1997). This book is in print.

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