

# TELLING TALES AND CASE HISTORIES: USING NARRATOLOGY TO MAKE SENSE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

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A century on from its emergence as an epistemic enterprise which radically reconceptualized human life and behavior, psychoanalysis is reportedly “dead or dying” as a viable theory and practice (Dufresne 2007, 7). Its relevance to psychiatry has been undermined by competing therapies and by advances in pharmacology and neuroscience, while its “question-begging traits” continue to be excoriated as “a scandal for anyone who subscribes to community standards of rational and empirical inquiry” (Crews 2000, 21-22). If psychoanalysis rose to eminence only to descend into a netherworld of pseudoscience—where it keeps company with other historically situated disciplines such as iridology and phrenology—it does maintain something of a second life in the humanities. According to a 2008 report by the American Psychoanalytic Association, its concepts are being applied in six times more courses by departments which concern “both the more traditional and the newer liberal arts areas” (400) than by departments of psychology, in which psychoanalysis is typically “mentioned dismissively”, if at all (392).

These findings are corroborated by Frederick Crews, who begrudgingly notes that psychoanalysis “finds itself in dire straits everywhere *but* among humanists and a minority of ‘soft’ social scientists” (2000, 20). An explanation for this might be traced to the ‘linguistic turn’ in philosophy, in the course of which language was denied its transparency and recast as a structuring agent which is implicated in any examination of what was hitherto apprehended as ‘reality’. Even as he was being denounced for his purported inadequacies as a scientist in the so-called ‘Freud Wars’ of the 1980s and 1990s, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was claimed by theorists such as Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas to be the “progenitor of the shift from an objectifying, empiricist understanding of the human realm to one stressing subjectivity and interpretation” (Robinson 1993, 14). Although he is otherwise widely regarded to have “fallen from grace” (Ibid., 1), the father of psychoanalysis succeeds in these terms as the purveyor of a particular brand of hermeneutics.

One of the more traditional areas in which psychoanalysis continues to be applied is literary studies, where it maintains its status as one of a number of select paradigms employed in the analysis of literary texts. This is understandable, given that language is central to the discourse and objects of investigation of both, and that the relation of the analyst to the messages of the analysand is “analogous to the literary critic’s

reading of the multiple levels of a text” (Loewenberg 2000, 99). That literature has often served not only as an object but as a model for psychoanalysis is evident in Freud’s appeals to classical and modern mythologies and in his style of exposition, for which he was honoured with the Goethe Prize in 1932. Recognizing a “fundamental congruence” between literature and psychoanalysis (Rickard 1994, 1), Peter Brooks envisions a mode of criticism which undertakes “to stage an encounter of [the two] that doesn’t privilege either term but rather sets them in a dialogue” (Brooks 1994, 22-23).

The following will attempt to stage such an encounter through the mediation of narratology. It examines the ‘case study’, a genre which is both a (hi)story and a type of (inter)disciplinary (auto)biography, in which the analyst engages in critical self-reflection while being involved in a broader consideration of the epistemology of human life and behavior. Freud’s study of ‘Dora’ in ‘Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria’ (1905) is considered alongside a study of ‘Thelma’ in ‘Love’s Executioner’ (1989), one of a collection of ten ‘true stories’ by Irvin D. Yalom (b. 1931), each of which is intended as an exemplary representation of the theory and practice of an offshoot of psychoanalysis, existential psychotherapy. A narratological analysis is used to demonstrate how, in the process of conceptualizing their objects, objectives, and methodologies, the case studies undermine the reliability and applicability of the same through their own self-reflexiveness, which, ultimately, exposes the instability of the boundaries which demarcate science from science fiction.

## EXEMPLARY NARRATIVES

As a “dynamic approach to therapy which focuses on concerns that are rooted in the individual’s existence”, existential psychotherapy connects pathological behavior not to the early suppression of drives but to confrontations in “the future-becoming-present” of the patient with the “givens of existence”, namely death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness (Yalom 1980, 5-11). Influences include “humanistically oriented” European psychiatry championed by Rollo May (1909-94), the perennial tradition of existentialism in philosophy, and “the great writers” such as Kafka, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky, who, “no less fully than their professional brethren, explored and explicated existential issues” (Ibid., 16-21). As noted by Yalom, many of the leading existentialist thinkers preferred literary exposition to formal philosophical argument (Ibid., 16). Exemplary fictions by Camus, Sartre, and others were instrumental in the popularization of existentialism and suggested a model which Yalom was to adopt with the publication of a series of novels: *When Nietzsche Wept* (1992), *Lying on the Couch* (1996), *The Schopenhauer Cure* (2005), and *The Spinoza Problem* (2012).

Before turning to fiction, Yalom published *Love’s Executioner and Other Tales of Psychotherapy* (1989). Although the collection is presented as a series of ‘tales’, it consists of ten “true stories” concerning former patients, whose names and

identifying characteristics have been altered in order to guarantee their anonymity (1989, x). Each was read in advance by its protagonist, who, “in the hope that the tale would be useful to therapists and/or other patients, gave [him] both their consent and their blessing” (Ibid.). In the introduction to an earlier theoretical work, *Existential Psychotherapy* (1980), Yalom had hoped to demonstrate, contrary to the assessments of other mental health professionals, that his was not a “muddled, ‘soft’, irrational, and romantic orientation” but one which was as coherent, rational, systematic, and effective as any of its rivals (Ibid.,5). Fulfilling the same purpose by complementary means, the later collection of tales provides an accessible representation of the theory and practice of existential psychotherapy in the form of a sequence of exemplary narratives.

As “true stories” of psychotherapy, Yalom’s tales bear comparison with the case histories composed at various intervals by Freud. In the first to be published, *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905), a similar concern is expressed for the protection of the patient’s identity with “guarantees of secrecy” (2001, 9). Like Yalom, who seeks both to defend his approach before his peers and to benefit other patients and therapists, Freud’s purpose is to substantiate his earlier conclusions by rendering his material “accessible to the judgement of the world” and, in so doing, to fulfil “his duties towards science [...and...] towards the many other patients who are suffering or will some day suffer from the same disorder” (Ibid., 7-8). His case history and the title story of Yalom’s collection, ‘Love’s Executioner’, both concern female patients: ‘Dora’, an eighteen-year-old whose neurosis derives from her psychosexual past, and ‘Thelma’, a chronically depressed and suicidal seventy-year-old, whose condition is grounded in her sexual and existential present.

As an exemplary narrative, the case history of Dora provides an opportunity for Freud to demonstrate the efficacy of various theories and practices. “[P]eculiarly well-adapted for showing how dream-interpretation is woven into the history of a treatment” (2001, 10), it is also suited to showcasing free association, a novel technique which has “completely revolutionized” psychoanalysis (2001, 12). Similarly, ‘Love’s Executioner’ begins as a representation of a therapy which is bound to be effective. Following two preliminary consultations and mutual assessments, the patient is committed to attend regular sessions with the therapist for a minimum of six months and to undergo a subsequent series of tests which are designed to measure the results. Pursuant to his “hope to demonstrate ... that it is possible to confront the truths of existence and harness their power in the service of personal change and growth” (1989, 15), Yalom outlines a strategy “to establish a close, meaningful relationship [with Thelma] as the solvent in which to dissolve her obsession” (1989, 24).

Neither Dora nor Thelma is an especially committed patient, the younger woman being obliged to attend by her father, the older resorting to Yalom only after some twenty years in alternative therapy. The example of each promises therefore to provide a neutral test case of their respective treatment. Dora terminates the

arrangement after less than three months, however, and, although he is confident that “we should no doubt have obtained the fullest possible enlightenment” had the sessions been allowed to continue, Freud acknowledges that he “can present only a fragment of an analysis” (2001, 12). Much against Yalom’s protestations, Thelma also decides to terminate her treatment and attends the outstanding contracted sessions reluctantly. In view of these outcomes and despite the intentions of their authors, it is questionable whether either of the narratives provides such an exemplary representation after all. The following proceeds from a narratological perspective to investigate how the respective therapies work and, in these particular cases, do not quite work out.

## MASTER NARRATIVES

According to Roy **Schafer**, “[i]t makes sense, and it may be a useful project, to present psychoanalysis in narrational terms” (1980, 30). Models of mental development are certainly amenable to classical definitions of narrative as a logically connected sequence of events (actions or happenings) which involve existents (agents or patients), while the increasing significance of narratology for psychoanalysis is evident in the development of cognitive and transmedial approaches which concern “mind-relevant aspects of storytelling practices, wherever—and by whatever means—those practices occur” (Herman 2007, 307). Schafer regards as “narrative structures” those “interpretive principles or codes” which have been employed by psychoanalytic theorists of different persuasions (1980, 29). What Yalom refers to in various terms as a “framework”, “paradigm”, “psychological construct”, or “theoretical structure” might be reformulated in Schafer’s terms as a ‘master narrative’ which, in providing a standardized system of explanation, allows the therapist “to make sense out of a large array of clinical data and to formulate a systematic strategy” (Yalom 1980, 26).

Like all psychodynamic therapies, existential psychotherapy owes its origins to Freud, at the core of whose metapsychology Schafer identifies two primary narrative structures (1980, 30-33). ‘Freud’s Beast’, a model of psychosexual development, traces the maturation of the individual through five stages—oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital—in which the ego and superego supplement the id, which is tamed in a social environment hostile to its drives; ‘Freud’s Machine’, a model of mental functioning, presents the mind as a closed system or apparatus which contains an invariable quantity of energy and is motivated by force. Both of these narrative structures betray a reliance on Darwinian and Newtonian models and a resultant “thoroughgoing determinism” in which “[n]o room is left for freedom and responsibility” (Ibid.). Dissatisfied by this reductive and materialist determinism, certain followers of psychoanalysis searched for alternative models and, in the post-1945 intellectual climate, discovered one which allowed them to “construct a Freud who is [more] humanistic-existentialist” in orientation (Ibid.).

Philosophers of existentialism devised a variety of master narratives, examples of which include Kierkegaard’s model of enlightenment from the aesthetic through the

ethical to the religious stage, the will to power of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, and the absurd labors of Camus' Sisyphus. The basis of the narrative of human development propagated by Sartre is that existence precedes essence: Man does not choose to be born into the world but nonetheless emerges to encounter himself there; abandoned by God and condemned to be free, his essence is constituted by the choices he makes and for which he alone is responsible; burdened by anguish and despair, there are some who succumb to bad faith while others affirm their condition and realize an authentic life. Translated into the terms of a master narrative of existential psychotherapy, pathology consists in "anxiety and its maladaptive consequences", or in the defense mechanisms or symptomatic responses of the patient who is overwhelmed by the "ultimate concerns" of human existence (Yalom 1989: 485).

"Once installed as leading narrative structures", according to Schafer, the master narratives of psychotherapy "are taken as certain in order to develop coherent accounts of lives and technical practices" (1989, 30). In the 'Prefatory Remarks' to his case history of Dora, Freud asserts that the causes and symptoms of hysteria originate in "the patient's psycho-sexual life [and] are the expression of their most secret and repressed wishes" (2001, 7-8). Similarly, Yalom's 'Prologue' systematically accounts for each of the four "ultimate concerns" as they apply to the individual cases: his patients "feel their lives to be senseless and aimless" (1989, 12), love and sex are used to ward off isolation and "approaching death" (1989, 6), and the entire course of Thelma's therapy revolves around attempts "to help her reclaim her power and freedom" (1989, 7). Rather ironically, just as the 'Prefatory Remarks' and 'Prologue' precede the case histories, the master narratives of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy constitute conceptual essences which precede and always already condition the clinical existence of the patients.

When analysis is regarded in narrational terms, or on the basis of one of any number of interpretive codes, it must be accepted that "there are no objective, autonomous, or pure psychoanalytic data which ... compel one to draw certain conclusions" (Schafer 1980, 30). Yalom concurs implicitly with this, affirming that he presents "*a* paradigm, not *the* paradigm" of psychotherapy (1980: 26). According to him, all existential analysts agree on one fundamental point: that the "proper method" is the 'phenomenological' one, which "by definition is non-empirical" (Ibid. 24-25). Urging the therapist to "understand the private world of the patient" and to attend to their experiences "without 'standardized' instruments and presuppositions" (Ibid.), he suggests that, ultimately, the existential paradigm "can be justified only by its clinical usefulness" (Ibid., 486). Despite this disclaimer, it is clear from the 'Prologue' how the data of each case are conceptually anticipated. The following considers the actual sessions between patient and therapist, in order to judge whether the paradigm receives its justification or not.

## ANALYTIC NARRATIVES

If the master narratives of existentialist philosophy apply to what might be termed the micro-narrative of the individual life, those of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy are applicable to the narrative situation of the dialogue between patient and therapist. In *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946), Sartre relates the story of a pupil who came for advice on whether to stay and console his mother or to avenge his slain brother by joining the *Résistance*, a decision which will determine what he makes of his future (35). Predictably neutral in his response, Sartre assumes a role analogous to that of the existential psychotherapist, whose function toward the patient is to catalyze their will to act and to engage effectively in life. If the authenticity of the young man's existence can be read in an autobiographical narrative which is consistent with responsible choice, the mental health of the patient who undergoes therapy consists in the correction of the "faulty narrative" of neurosis into "a coherent life story" (Brooks 1994, 49).

Brooks has noted an "increasing agreement ... that psychoanalysis is a narrative discipline [which] at least implicitly displays the principles of its own 'narratology'" (1994, 47). In classical structuralist narratological theory, the basic and necessary components of a 'narrative text' are situated on two levels: those of *story*, or underlying content, and *discourse*, the means and manner in which that content is structured and communicated. Translated into these terms, the telling by the analysand is an incoherent discourse which is decomposed to its underlying story by the analyst, who then recomposes and retells it as a coherent discourse, which is in turn reiterated by the analysand. The work involved in the analytic dialogue might be said to constitute both a narrative situation and a hermeneutic cycle. As Brooks warns, the narrative is "not simply 'there', waiting to be uncovered" (1994, 55) but comes into being through hypothesis or "interpretative construction" which, in a "dynamic interaction of the teller and listener" is ongoing and potentially interminable (1994, 50).

In 'Love's Executioner', Thelma recounts how she and one of her former therapists had met casually after the termination of her treatment and begun an affair which was eventually ended by him abruptly and without warning. Now, although her "life is being lived eight years ago" (1989, 21), she is convinced that recovery is possible if she is only offered an explanation and allowed a minimum of continued contact, even to the extent of a five-minute telephone conversation per year (1989, 27). From Yalom's perspective, Thelma's discourse is a deluded romance which, on the basis of its underlying story, is recomposed by him into a discourse of seduction by an unprofessional therapist (1989, 22-23). Convinced, however, that her faulty and incoherent narrative obscures the true causes of her depression, he purposes to convince Thelma that Matthew was never in love with her so that she can begin to establish a more authentic basis for living her life after a more fundamental existential despair has been exposed.

Having diagnosed her obsession according to the master narrative of existential psychotherapy as "an old woman's irrational but sustaining ... love illusion" (1989,

14), Yalom persists in trying to convince his patient that the love she experienced never occurred. Like Dora, who disagrees with Freud's analysis of her childhood experiences, Thelma "never found this thesis persuasive" (1989, 32). According to Brooks, the earlier case history indicates the discovery by Freud that "the relation of teller to listener is as important as the content and structure of the tale itself" (Brooks 1994, 50). Although transference involves "an uneasy dialogue" (Ibid., 61), it is a "productive encounter" in which the analyst "renounces the totalitarian foreclosure of interpretation and meaning" (Ibid., 71-72). Freud notes that "the factor of 'transference' ... did not come up" during his treatment of Dora (2001, 13), and the same is true of Yalom's treatment of Thelma, who "would not, for example, relate to [him]" (1989, 11) and "gave no evidence of wanting a response" from him (1989, 25).

Far from being productive, the encounter between Thelma and Yalom becomes deadlocked to the extent that they "might as well have been in separate rooms" (Ibid.). As is the case with Dora and Freud, the narrative situation remains that of a story over which two mutually exclusive discourses fail to compromise. Yalom does not question the adequacy of his own narrative and, rather than engaging with his patient 'phenomenologically', as should "every good therapist", with "empathy, presence, genuine listening, [and] non-judgmental acceptance" (1989: 25), assigns her intransigence to 'resistance' and considers, moreover, that "much wonderful therapy may be wasted on a patient" (Ibid., 36). He becomes increasingly discouraged and exasperated, realizes that "all [his] strenuous efforts had been ineffective", and feels compelled to resort to a desperate measure (Ibid., 45). Assuming that his reputation will intimidate Matthew into cooperating, Yalom proposes that Thelma's ex-lover be invited to the sessions, only to discover that his patient has pre-empted him and arranged a three-way meeting on her own initiative.

In narratological terms, Yalom's intention in summoning Matthew is to force a change in both the focalization and the homodiegetic narration of Thelma's discourse. The question-and-answer format he arranges for the session imposes the most controlled method possible of aligning the story with his own recomposition of her discourse from a heterodiegetic and implicitly omniscient perspective. Much to his surprise, however, he is "not remotely prepared" for Matthew's version of the narrative (1989, 53), which appears to confirm Thelma's and to justify her 'resistance'. Yalom finds himself profoundly "dislocated" in the event (1989, 54). "As with reader and text", as Brooks notes in reference to the case history of Dora, "there is no clear mastery, no position of privilege, no assurance ... that the analyst and the analysand won't trade places" (1994, 58). That the patient and therapist *do* trade places will be suggested next, as we return from the narratives of the analytic dialogue represented in 'Love's Executioner' to the narration of the tale itself.

## UNRELIABLE NARRATIVES

According to the conventions of the analytic dialogue, Thelma's narrative role is predetermined. Once the analyst has decomposed the faulty narrative to its underlying story, the content becomes "illustrative of an unrecognized ... set of attitudes ... held by the analysand, who is shown to be an unreliable narrator in respect to the consciously constructed account" (Shafer 1980, 43). As things turn out, Yalom's patient is less an unreliable narrator than a narrator who is not relied upon. Like Dora, whose narrative of sexual abuse is corroborated when she confronts Herr K., Thelma is vindicated when, in answer to her direct questions, Matthew reveals that he had "felt [as] one with [her]" (1989, 53) and that it was on the advice of *his* therapist that he had ceased all communication. Thelma's apparently absurd solution to her obsession is also vindicated: after a period of cooling off, she contacts Matthew again and the former lovers arrange between themselves to meet regularly in future.

Conventional roles are reversed in the therapeutic encounter between Thelma and Yalom. The patient has become her own analyst and the analyst his own patient, an unreliable narrator who espouses a "delusional system, working toward the construction of fictions that can never be verified other than by the force of [their] conviction" (Brooks 1994, 60). If Thelma's 'resistance' is such as to prevent transference, Yalom's frustration produces a counter-transference which, as Schafer observes, always results in incoherence on the part of the analyst, whose "retellings themselves become unreliable and fashioned too much after the analyst's own 'life story'" (1989, 43). Yalom invests disproportionate energy in trying to convince Thelma and adheres to an unreasonable refusal of her narrative which in itself amounts to resistance. Increasingly resentful of the "hard and unrewarding work" (Ibid.), he feels "baffled and rejected" (Ibid.), hears only "[m]ore and more" criticisms of therapy (Ibid., 45), and comes to the conclusion that "powerlessness was the problem in [his] therapy with Thelma" (Ibid., 35).

The question of Yalom's reliability as one of two narrators involved in the analytic dialogue extends to his role as sole narrator of the text in which that narrative situation is embedded. As is the case with the history of Dora, which according to Freud's own admission "was only committed to writing from memory" (2001, 10), Yalom's account is subject to the vicissitudes of selection and representation which are characteristic of any retrospective report. Like Freud, he is now a homodiegetic narrator whose focalization shifts between two perspectives, those of immediate involvement and of "personal reflections post hoc" (1989, x). If the first is overtly subjective and tendentious, the reliability of the second is equally questionable. Although he admits to having "botched [the] case" he had accepted unhesitatingly (1989, 65), Yalom concludes that he "had disregarded twenty years of evidence at the outset that Thelma was a poor candidate for psychotherapy" (Ibid.), thus shifting the blame to the selection process and from the therapist back to the patient.

Yalom justifies his claim by asserting that he had been "[s]wept along by hubris" (Ibid.), echoing an observation made by him in his prior account of accepting



Thelma's case (Ibid., 29). Those parts of the narrative which are focalized through his "personal reflections" are simultaneously predictive and retrospective and sustain the concept of 'hubris' as a unifying theme which, subscribed under his self-conscious metaphorical role as "love's executioner", is carried over to another level of discourse: that of the literary. Although each of Yalom's patients approved of their representation in his collected tales, some decided that "the disguise was unnecessarily extensive" or were unsettled by "dramatic liberties", while Yalom himself concedes that he "often made symbolically equivalent substitutes" and that the "dialogue is [often] fictional" (1989, x). In a complex series of layers, the narrative situation of the analytic dialogue, which already embeds a master narrative, is embedded in the narrative of a case history, which is itself embedded in the discourse of a literary narrative.

Although he makes a point of deflecting any such interpretation, Freud is aware that the case history of Dora might be read (or written) by the physician "as a *roman à clef* designed for their private delectation" (2001, 9). That he is "a writer of fiction" might be a polemical claim, but there is some truth in Crews' observation that his writings "achieve a poetical density of texture by abolishing the boundary we might expect to find between the honest investigator's fantasy life and the material he is trying to explain" (2000, 29). 'Love's Executioner' similarly shifts generically between "true stories" and "tales" and in epistemic position and ontological status between fact and fiction. The literary qualities of its surface—apparent in variations of focalization, techniques of characterization, and deployments of symbol and metaphor—penetrate to a deeper level in the structure of the text, where a plot is developed according to a classically conventional scheme of exposition, crisis, denouement, and resolution.

Like the case history of Dora, 'Love's Executioner' establishes a 'clinical picture', progresses to a crisis in the struggle over narrative meaning, and culminates in the patient's delivery of "the ultimate riposte ... of refusing to tell further" (Brooks 1994, 57). Although the outcome in neither case reflects well on the therapies represented, both histories are resolved. Freud learns about Dora's improvement, which he immediately identifies with "the effects of [his] treatment" (2001, 120), attributing his earlier failure to little more than an untimely omission of information concerning her homosexual love for Frau K. The final report on Thelma's case praises her therapist's work for its effectiveness and concludes that, "*as a result of [her] therapy, [she has] improved significantly*" (1989, 66; emphasis added). For Yalom, however, this offers "little comfort" (Ibid., 67). What his tale arguably provides is only further proof of the self-validating "science fiction" (Crews 2000, 24) which fuels the censure of certain psychotherapies and undermines their claims to be regarded as anything other than pseudoscientific enterprises.

## CONCLUSION

While the status of psychoanalysis has been radically undermined in the fields of psychiatry and psychology, it retains viability in the humanities as a distinct variety of hermeneutics. As suggested by Brooks, literary critics who appeal to psychoanalysis as an authoritative interpretive paradigm might do well to involve it with literature in ways which avoid the privileging of either term. In the staging of such an encounter, narratology can usefully serve as an intermediary by providing both a framework and a set of analytical tools. If Crews disparages the “devolution of psychoanalysis from science to hermeneutic to mere occasion for ‘narrative truth’” (2000, 30), other critics have been more constructive in recognizing and theorizing the same shift in focus. Schafer presents psychoanalysis in explicitly narrational terms, regarding its interpretive codes or principles as “narrative structures” (2000, 29), while Brooks presents it as a narrative discipline which, in the encounter between analyst and analysand, implicitly displays the principles of its own ‘narratology’ (1994, 47).

The foregoing analysis of Yalom’s ‘Love’s Executioner’ and Freud’s ‘Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria’ demonstrates the pertinence of the ‘case study’ genre to a balanced encounter between literature and psychoanalysis. As Peter Loewenberg observes, Freud’s case histories are more likely to feature in literary than in psychology studies and read less like clinical texts than “the best fiction” (Loewenberg 2000, 97). Approached through the mediation of narratology as exemplary narratives intended to represent the theories and practices of their respective psychotherapies, the case histories of Dora and Thelma are representations of failed treatments, which can be problematized through the application of models of narrative types and types of narration. The ultimately unreliable and self-validating discourse which is applied by Yalom both in therapy and in the representation of that therapy deploys strategies of focalization, metaphor, symbolization, and plot resolution which, like those of Freud, slip from the clinical to the literary and from fact to the threshold of fiction.

The application of a narratological framework provides an insight into the functioning of psychotherapy as a subjective and interpretive rather than objective and empirical epistemic enterprise. The representation of treatment according to classical plot structures is expressive of a fundamental desire for cure through narrative coherence as well as being a reflection of Brook’s “aesthetic conception of psychoanalysis”, with its emphasis on “formal properties of narrative, its coherence, completion, and rhetorical force” (Rickard 1994, 12). According to Harold Schweizer, this conception “leads necessarily to the admission that psychoanalysis is not really different from literature” (Ibid.). Although this is perhaps an exaggerated claim, it is indicative of a fundamental connection, not least on the level of narrative structure and strategy, which “leaves open the possibility for a correspondence between the two discourses where neither is dominant” (Ibid.). In the field of literary studies, this suggests the existence of an already firm basis for establishing and maintaining a more

balanced dialogue and non-privileged interrelation between literature and psychoanalysis.

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