

Jay Martin, *Who Am I This Time? Uncovering the Fictive Personality*. New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1988. 255 pp.

In his most recent book the title of which is borrowed from Kurt Vonnegut's short story, Jay Martin—professor of English, author of a number of biographies, faculty member of the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute and the California College of Medicine, UC Irvine, and practicing psychoanalyst—examines fictive personality both in literature and in the life of "real people." His main interest resides with a complex identification situation which he sees threatened by the impact of contemporary culture through mass media, pop music, video, and film industry, in other words through fictions, on the basis of which the author labels our contemporary culture "fictive." Martin's main concern is to define a fictive personality through the position of the "I." By using "real" persons and fictive characters the author turns his study into a real combinatorics of "real" persons/fiction characters and their assumed (fictive) personalities. He draws his examples from media personalities like Patty Hearst, Mark Chapman (John Lennon's assassin), John Hinckley (who attempted to assassinate Ronald Reagan) literary and film characters, Martin's and Freud's patients, Freud himself, as well as performance artists, actors, or even persons who "impersonated" their own selves (as William Cody did after he entered show business under the name of "Buffalo Bill").

However, there is a problem in Martin's presentation of fictive person-

tion when the first object (mother) is lost. However, the formation of the subject does not exclusively rely on the mother-child relation. The Oedipal (triangular) situation implies a father who is not considered in many of the analyses. And although Martin does not take a stand in his discussion of Peter Sellers' mother's "negligence" of her son as recounted in Alexander Walker's Sellers biography, there is an implied criticism of Sellers' mother pursuing her acting career one week after her child was born. The inattention to the father reduces the situation to stereotypical mother-father role assignments which should not pass unnoticed in 1988! A further example of a mother's "inappropriate behavior" is given in a reference to Daniel N. Stem's work with "affect attunement," or rather "misattunement"—when the mother deliberately manipulates her child, or in her "overattunement"—when she "'steals' the child's self by taking the behavior away from him" (p. 155). Mothering and not parenting seems to be the central issue in this behavioristic view. My intention is not to refute the role of the mother as the child's first object. The existence of a father figure is indispensable for its psycho-sexual development. The mother-father-child relationship, and consequently every individual's acquisition of language, is based on the assumption that authority and "truth" always reside with an other. When the child discovers that it is not the mother's sole source of desire which it yearns to be, but that the father is the representative of the law and power, the child exchanges his first object with the father, hoping to gain power through his new identification. And that situation is often neglected in Martin's study.

Furthermore, the psychoanalysis Martin practices is of a kind which has and gives an answer to all possible questions in his diagnosis of both fictional characters and "real" persons. The author's attempt to present the span of fictive characters operate in is interesting; however, the practice seems reductionist when there is only one answer. When Martin claims that deconstructionist theories interpret any text "only as a fiction to be manipulated by the critic (who sees himself as wiser)" (p. 228, my emphasis), this suggests that he does not see the speaking subject's personality as fiction but rather as a Cartesian cogito. For a deconstructionist, who understands subjectivity as a fictive category, cannot give one single answer but settles instead for a series of options. Deconstructionists give the primacy to the signifier over the signified thus allowing for a number of interpretations. The shortcoming of having only one answer to a problem is evident in Martin's last example of his patient Mack who experienced himself as a Martian. Only after having seen the television program based on Ray Bradbury's novel *The Martian Chronicles* does the psychoanalyst understand his patient's claim, despite the fact that he has earlier tried to deconstruct the word which could also be a pun on his name Martian—Martin. By dismissing the unconscious possibility Martin suggests that he is concerned with a definite, single answer, ruling the unconscious out of the

ality which covers both an "as if personality" (adaptation from Helene Deutsch), a mask, a defense, a sublimation, and a "whole range of behavior from normal to psychotic, from thought to emotions, passivity to aggression, creativity to destructiveness" (p. 126). Having thus delineated the fictive personality, the author places himself within the practice of American psychoanalysis which takes the position of the "I" for granted. For is the I of Martin's book a professor, a biographer and a critic or a psychoanalyst? Or is he all these at once?

The epistemological question contained in the title of the book is in the Chapman—analysis transformed into a "geographical" one: "Where is the 'I'?" In some instances Chapman assumes the personality of Holden Caulfield, the protagonist of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, in others he identifies with John Lennon whom he finally kills. Assuming a role of an other must be understood in the light of the author's claim that there is a tendency in each and every one of us to play a game, a role, imitate someone else, and thus participate in a fictive situation. According to Martin,

fictions are fundamental in dreams, daydreams, aesthetic appreciation, meditation, adaptation, wishes, defense and many another human impulse. They are a crucial part of the human character, then—the part, especially, that expresses character traits through identification (pp. 126-127).

And yet, only a page later, the author cites Joyce McDougall whose *Theatres of the Mind* (an illusion to Breuer's case history of Anna O. and her own "private theatre") discusses the position of a character as related to language, and it is language which "informs us that the scriptwriter is called I" (p. 128). Poststructural psychoanalysis claims that there is an irrefutable link between sexuality, the unconscious and language. According to Lacan, the unconscious constantly undermines the subject, making any certainty on the part of the subject (concerning its psychic processes) impossible. Lack of certainty is a lack of reality, therefore *fiction*, which further implies that subjectivity is another fiction.

Thus, the fiction Martin refers to and the one of the subject constituted through language belong to different spheres. Furthermore, in giving the account of many fictive characters, Martin pays more attention to their behavior and socialization than to their psycho—sexual development, and even less to their participation in language. This point brings me to the presentation of analysts' mothers. I use the term analyst for all those analyzed or being referred to as having a fictive personality, no matter whether they are fictional characters or living persons. In my understanding, psychoanalysis is concerned with psycho—sexual development of an individual as manifested in the acquisition and through the use of language: since words replace objects they continuously point to the primary separa-

system of language despite the fact that he saw the possibility of Mack's punning.

What makes Martin's book interesting is its unpretentious and humorous style, and the rich examples drawn from mass media and popular culture. It is seldom we find a scholarly book which a layman can read without getting a complex for his or her lack of familiarity with literary and theoretical texts it discusses. And since the book is chiefly concerned with the impact of popular culture on people's lives and behavior, it should be a recommended reading for all those parents and teachers who have not yet understood the dangers and influence of the magic box and its fiction.

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