

# SUBJECTS OF ANALYSIS

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## *On Becoming a Subject*

It is too late to turn back. Having read the opening words of this book you have already begun to enter into the unsettling experience of finding yourself becoming a subject whom you have not yet met, but nonetheless recognize. The reader of this book must create a voice with which to speak (think) the words (thoughts) comprising it. Reading is not simply a matter of considering, weighing, or even of trying out the ideas and experiences that are presented by the writer. Reading involves a far more intimate form of encounter. You, the reader, must allow me to occupy you, your thoughts, your mind, since I have no voice with which to speak other than yours. If you are to read this book, you must allow yourself to think my thoughts while I must allow myself to become your thoughts and in that moment neither of us will be able to lay claim to the thought as our own exclusive creation.

The conjunction of my words and your mental voice does not represent a form of ventriloquism. A more complex and interesting human event is involved. A third subject is created

in the experience of reading that is not reducible to either writer or reader. The creation of a third subject (that exists in tension with the writer and the reader as separate subjects) is the essence of the experience of reading, and, as will be explored in this volume, is also at the core of the psychoanalytic experience.

In writing these sentences, I choose each word and phrase and speak to myself through the voice of the reader whom I have created in my own mind. It is the otherness of the reader (whom I imagine and anticipate in my own internal division of myself into writer and reader, subject and object) that allows me to hear myself in preparation for your reading. In your reading, you generate a voice from my words that will create me in a broader sense than I am able to create myself. In that process you and I shall have created one another as a subject who has not existed to this point.

The reader and writer do not create one another ahistorically. The present in which the third subject comes into being is not simply the current moment, but "the present moment of the past" (Eliot 1919), which (past) speaks through us as much as we speak through one another. Laius's, and later, Oedipus's attempts to create an ahistorical present set in motion the cascade of events leading to the deafening roar of the insistence of history and of mortality. We must recognize ourselves in Laius's and Oedipus's efforts to escape history, since each of us resists experiencing ourselves as spoken as well as speaking. Art, literature, history, philosophy, and psychoanalysis all teach us, despite our protestations, that we are indeed spoken, not only by the historical Other, but by the unconscious Other and the intersubjective Other.

You, the reader, will oppose me, deny me, perhaps humor me, but never entirely give way to me. This book will not be "understood" by you; you will not simply receive it, incorporate it, digest it, or the like. To the degree that you will

have anything at all to do with it, you will transform it. (The word *transform* is too tepid a word to describe what you will do to it.) You will destroy it, and out of that destruction (in that destruction) will come a sound that you will not fully recognize. The sound will be a voice, but it will not be one of yours that you have heard before, for you have not previously destroyed me as you will encounter me in your reading of this book. The sound that you will hear is certainly not my voice since the words on this page are silent, composed as much by the white shapes around the black markings as by the markings themselves.

What I am describing is at the same time one of the most mysterious of human experiences and one of the most commonplace—it is the experience of doing battle with one's static self-identity through the recognition of a subjectivity (a human I-ness) that is other to oneself. The confrontation with alterity will not let us rest; that perception of the other I-ness once perceived will not allow us to remain who we were and we cannot rest until we have somehow come to terms with its assault on who we had been prior to being interrupted by it. This book is a disturbance, a disruption to you. You may decide to put the book down, but that would only be a postponement of something that has already been set in motion. This book has already become "an eternal curse on the reader of these pages" (Puig 1980).

If you decide not to postpone the confrontation posed by this book, you will know something of the experience of the analyst as he begins the first meeting (and every subsequent meeting) with an analysand. The analyst must be prepared to destroy and be destroyed by the otherness of the subjectivity of the analysand and to listen for a sound emerging from that collision of subjectivities that is familiar, but different from anything that he has previously heard. This listening must be done "without memory or desire" (Bion 1963), but at the same

time the listener must be rooted in the history that has created (spoken) him if he is to be able to discern the sound of which I am speaking. The destruction of analyst by analysand and of analysand by analyst (as separate subjects) in the collision of subjectivities must not be complete or else the pair has fallen into the abyss of psychosis or autism. Instead, the analyst must listen to (through) the roar of the destruction from its edge, not ever being certain where that edge lies.

