

Family systems psychotherapy, literary character, and literature: an introduction

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The grammar of narrative is . . . fraught with the same ambiguities - arising from the same social ambivalences - that distinguish the biogrammar itself. Male versus female, self versus kin, kin versus non-kin, group versus group - these gene-bred antagonisms are embedded in a social life that is always demanding (through gene-bred imperatives) their resolution.

Robert Storey

I no longer believe in individuals; rather, I think of scapegoats, sent out by their families-of-origin to do battle with their new spouse over whose family they will recreate.

Carl Whitaker

I

Psychological literary criticism has sent out generations of scholars to do battle with recalcitrant imaginative texts, armed most often with the psychological tools of an early twentieth-century intrapsychic psychology that no longer answers all the interesting questions posed by those standing on the brink of the twenty-first (Livingston 93; Storey, Review 354; Mimesis 207). While classic psychoanalysis and its variations are all widely used in literature departments these days for the analysis of character, and have been for several generations (Almond and Almond, 1996; Bleich, 1996; Skura, 1981, 1992; Wright, 1984), most practitioners of real-world therapy have long since moved on to many other theoretical models (Corsini et al., 1989). Even very recent psychoanalytic literary models that seek to incorporate contemporary psychological thinking - including recent versions of ego psychology (Kohut, 1984), language-oriented Lacanian theory (Gallup, 1985), and narrative (Brooks, 1994; Bowie, 1993) - are still tied to many classic and, in my opinion, no longer tenable Freudian ideas such as the Oedipus complex, the (singular) unconscious, and drive-reduction versions of mental processes (Eysenck and Wilson, 1973; Grunbaum, 1984, Validation 64-65, 178-79, 204-28; Masson, Assault 113; Morson and Emerson 28-30; Spence 112-17).

One of the more widely used therapeutic models in the "real world" family systems therapy (hence, fst) - has barely made a ripple in the ocean of literary criticism from which most of us try to keep from drowning (Bump, 1991, 1993; Cohen, 1991; Knapp 1983, 1996; Womack, 1996). Indeed, why this is so - why the discipline of literary criticism has virtually ignored the contemporary social sciences while at the same time deifying one pseudoscientific model from the nineteenth century - remains somewhat of a mystery to this day (even though there has appeared in recent years a certain restlessness with the status quo) (Morrison, 1968).(1) Elsewhere I have asked this same question and tried to give some answers (Knapp, Striking,

chapter 2), but, beyond attributing such a massive cultural lag to the negative reasons associated with cognitive authority (hero worship), sheer inertia, and careerism, as well as the more positive one of loyalty to an ideational system one finds personally congenial, I have not been able to fully resolve this question in my own mind even though others besides me have tried (Holzner and Marx 109-10; Crews 55; Storey, *Mimesis* 37-38; Murray 93). Hence, the reader will have to proceed without an imprimatur from what Robert Pirsig might call the contemporary psycho-critical Church of Reason, and to explore actively some hitherto unfamiliar yet highly interesting new territory.(2) Since literary characters are endlessly fascinating anyway, one may well profit, when thinking about them, by looking at this most ancient of literary conventions (or codes) with newer spectacles (Milowicki and Wilson 219; Margolin 105).

However, the issue before us here is less to finish certain old and perhaps unresolvable matters but to pose new and fascinating questions. What would happen to our understanding of many literary characters in/and imaginative texts if critics were to analyze them using the intellectual tools and insights from family systems theory (fst)? What shifts in thinking would be required, especially if one grants that psychoanalysis and almost all of contemporary literary criticism are one and the same?(3) To accommodate this new and interesting way of looking both at the world many of us live in and at imaginative literary art forms, we must first discard many assumptions about psychological "reality" that seem both invisible and commonsensical - repression, the unconscious, Oedipus complexes and so on - and take on some new assumptions (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988; Aponte, 1994). Even though we may occasionally share some of the same vocabulary, practitioners of fst will employ it in a different way for quite different reasons (Fishlov 132; Schafer 257-58; Maranhao, 1986).

I have detailed elsewhere just what I believe is problematic with the old psychoanalytic thinking and vocabulary (Striking, chapter 1; see also Satir, *Family* 180ff.), so for now I wish to describe in capsule form some of the newer assumptions.(4) In the narrative that will shortly follow, I have highlighted some important terms in fst, a vocabulary that owes more to cybernetic and systems research and much less to many of the philosophers who contributed to Freudian and neo-Freudian theory (Grunbaum 1993, 113-21, 138-41; Powers 10-40; Taylor 317; Sass 321-27). For most of us in literary study, this cybernetic language and the systems thinking that goes along with it will be a decided wrenching away from the familiar but, by now, well-worn psychoanalytic terms and theories we first may have mastered in graduate school; but then, as we'll soon learn, a little morphogenetic pain is required of any group wishing to keep evolving.

## II

For me, no form of trouble, [Sibyl], Is new, or unexpected: all of this I have known long since, lived in imagination. (Aeneas, Bk VI, *The Aeneid*)

From the point of view of family systems psychotherapy (fst), the family system becomes the source of the matrix of identity, rather than only the individual character.(5) Thus, the "causes" of a given problem in growing up (and beyond) is much less the person construct or event, and more the emotional process that links people and events (Minuchin and Nichols 112). The whole is greater than the sum of its parts (the principle of emergence),(6) so that to understand a member(s) of a fictional family, one needs to understand the family system - "real" family or

step-family (Visher and Visher 34-39; Minuchin and Nichols 63).(7) In actual therapeutic (and presumably, literary critical) practice, one always notes an unresolvable and fluctuating tension between the representations of the individual (biological?) self ("hard reality") and the living system to which that self belongs, the family network ("soft or cultural reality"); thus, it is important when looking at an emergent family system not to fall into the other extremity, "holistic reductionism," which leaves the represented person (and his/her ethical responsibilities) out of the system (Dell and Goolishian, 1981; Palazzoli et al., *Family Games* 260; Selvini 289 ff.; Maynard, 1996).

Secondly, families are said to represent a co-evolutionary ecosystem (Churchman, 1968; Bateson, 1972). Within the family system, each member is said to determine the conditions for the development of all the other family members. For the family as a unit, the surrounding sociocultural system forms the coevolutionary ecosystem. Individual (1), family (2), and social environment (work, church, school, clubs, etc.) (3) represent a complex, close-knit, three-tiered feedback system with each of its units belonging to a different "logical" type (i.e., a unit of a lower order is an element of a unit of a higher order (Mayr, 1982; Goody, 1990; Gottlieb, 1993).

One of the most significant tasks for the family is to provide support for both integration into a solid family unit and differentiation into relatively independent selves - to think, act, and feel for oneself (Bowen, 1985; Kegan, 1982, 1994). This mutual process is lifelong, as members of one's primary group change from family-of-origin to one's created (married, cohabitating, close-knit intimates) family, and is somewhat different developmentally for male and female (Haley, *Uncommon* 40). In functional families, each member develops a solid self, able to act, think, and feel so that the inside and outside of the self are usually congruent.(8) In dysfunctional families, fear and anxiety usually force members to create a pseudo-self, so that one's inner feelings and outer behavior are often not congruent. Hence, Virginia Satir believes, in contrast to Freudian dogma, that sex is not the basic drive of man; rather, "the sex drive is continually subordinated to and used for the purpose of enhancing self-esteem and defending against threats of self-esteem" (*Family* 55).

All families have subsystems: (a) spouse-spouse (at the top of the hierarchy); (b) parent-child; (c) sibling-sibling (Simon, Stierlin, and Wynne 183-85). Maintenance of boundaries between various subsystems may range from rigid to diffuse, although the parent's boundary from children is clearly separated by sexuality and responsibility (Minuchin, Lee, & Simon 226-27).(9) The original pair-bond (spouse-spouse) forms a dyad; dyads are thought to be inherently unstable as each member of the pair-bond seeks to develop a new self who is now part of a larger entity. During the inevitable pushes and pulls to establish a balance between intimacy and self-independence, the pair-bond can become unstable, calling in a third entity (child, parent, friend, lover, career, etc.) in order to reduce the tension and establish an equilibrium, even though this is often done at the considerable personal expense of the third party. The "Milan School" has developed a systematic "paradox and counterparadox" approach to help resolve family difficulties when the third entity is one of the family's children (Palazzoli et al., 1978). As Mara Selvini Palazzoli has theorized, "this implies relationally redefining the symptoms in terms of a protective-sacrificial conduct the patient is said to be enacting for the benefit of someone else in the family" (Palazzoli et al., *Paradox* 7).

With this third entity the pair then form a triangle, and the original relationship is thus said to be triangulated (Imber-Black 64-66), where one or the other spouse may be enmeshed (overly involved) with, say, the child while the other is disengaged or uninvolved (Palazzoli et al., Family Games 143-48). Parentification may occur when a child assumes or is assigned a parental role (eg, primary emotional bonding or primary breadwinner tasks (Boszormenyi-Nagy and Framo 143-212). Usually, this third element reduces intimacy even though both of the original partners yearn for their former mutual intimacy - but on their own terms - and the triangle thus often creates secrets.

The effect of secrets on the family system is often devastating because it introduces distortion at the fact-gathering level (Imber-Black, 1993; Daclemans and Maranhao, 1990). For example: A tells B something about C; B's feelings, thoughts, behavior, theorizing about C are all based on information obtained about C but B is asked to keep it a secret. When this information is incorrect or a lie, and B is bound to secrecy, B cannot check out information about C. Secrets help maintain illusions and prevent evidence contrary to one's fixed perception. B cannot do anything to change the relationship with C.

In the vocabulary of early cybernetic theory, families are said to maintain homeostatic balance through constancy loops. Family change occurs through variety loops. Homeostatic balance is the equilibrium in the system. The family is an open system and yet has limitations on its openness (Simon et al. 81-82). Morphogenesis is a deviation from the usual balance in all relationships in the system;(10) morphogenesis is the risk all dysfunctional families must take: change or die (divorce) because homeostasis is far stronger in families than morphogenesis. Once a pattern (e.g., a triangle) is set in motion, it may last the lifetime of the members involved (Minuchin, 1974; Bowen, 1985).

Any change in the system affects all members. Families (as well as individuals) undergo a life-cycle (courtship, marriage, first child, subsequent children, career moves [choices], illnesses, leaving the nest, aging, and death of spouse or sibling), and families are said to have developmental tasks appropriate to a given stage in the life-cycle (Kegan, 1982, 1994). For example, with the birth of the first child, the dyad (spouse-spouse) must overnight become a triad; each parent must now relate to the child both separately and as a pair-bond, and must as well adjust to the inclusion of the child's needs into the spouse's availability and interest in the other spouse. Carl Whitaker (Neill and Kniskern, 1982) thinks of marriages with words like "engagement," "involvement," and "locked in together." He says that it "is ordinarily a lessening of 'engagement' in a marriage that leads to a provocative act by one partner or the other" (197).

All family interaction is governed by transactional rules; if a does x, b will counter with x2 or y; a then responds to b's response, and vice versa. Thus family behavior is an adjustive process where cues are given and individual members respond to those stimuli. These rules are largely unspoken, circular, and oftentimes, endless. Understanding events in a family is best understood by a cyclical model of causality (a [greater than] b [greater than] c [greater than] a [greater than] . . .). Punctuation is an attempt by individuals to divide cyclic processes into beginnings, middles, and ends (e.g., More to squabbling children: "Who started it?" Children: "He did it! She did it!" pointing to one another like Haldeman, Erlichman, Mitchell, and Dean of Watergate fame).

Ultimate cues for action are understood through metacommunication, which serves to mark the context of a communications act. Metacommunication could be called communication or information about the act of communication itself, and may take almost any communicative form: eye-rolling, shrugs, tonal qualities, and facial gestures. The "simultaneous transmission of mutually exclusive messages and behavioral imperatives on the level of communication and metacommunication" is called the "double bind" (Bateson, 1972; Simon et al. 223). Schizophrenic children of parents who simultaneously hugged them and pushed them away to keep from getting too close were victims, in Bateson's view, of the double bind. Much of Bateson's work was, however, built on early theories of schizophrenia, before the mental disorder's genetic and biochemical origins were better understood (Goodwin and Jameson 96-123; Salzinger, 1991; Subotnick and Nuechterlein, 1988).

Families and individual family members are influenced by themes that are present in the preceding generation and are transmitted from one generation to the next through narratives, family stories, assumptions of "correct" behavior, etc. E.g., we . . . are survivors; or in our family, we never fight; therefore, we better not talk about . . . (the problem). William Randall suggests that the family is a "collection of stories - however differently compiled and told by different family members - through which each of us sees ourselves, interprets others, and makes sense of our world. It is a repertoire of 'forms of self-telling' by which we each transform our existence into experience" (Byng-Hall 196; see also Papp and Imber-Black, 1996).

Another view sees some themes as becoming family myths. According to one fst theorist (Stierlin, in Simon et al. 133), family myths may be categorized as follows: (1) myths of harmony (rosy pictures of a family's past and present life); (2) myths of forgiveness and atonement (often one family member is made solely responsible for the family's predicament; cr. scapegoat); (3) rescue myths ([subset of # 2] a person outside the family is attributed magical powers and regarded as the savior and benefactor, or one person is expected to achieve life goals not possible for grandparents, parents, or siblings).

The interactive and circular quality of family behavior has led fst theorists to posit the principle of equifinality (many "causes" can result in the same "effect"; the same "cause" can result in different "effects"). Equifinality applies to development within family processes since it is impossible to make deterministic predictions about family or human development. This element of the general fst theory has been under attack by many, including some feminist theorists, because it appears to do away with the issues of time, history, and responsibility (Hare-Mustin, 1987). By focusing on the "here and now," some fst practitioners have tended to minimize family history and individual responsibility from the past (Palazzoli et al., *Family Games* 159-60). More recently, many fst practitioners have tried to integrate knowledge of previous actions within the family and plans for solving contemporary familial issues. Indeed, James Framo (1996) thinks "hidden transgenerational forces exercise critical influence on current intimate relationships" (299; see also Hair, Fine and Ryan, 1996).

### III

And for the usual method of teaching arts, I deem it to be an old error of universities, not yet well recovered from the scholastic grossness of barbarous ages, that instead of beginning with arts

most easy, (and those be such as are most obvious to the sense,) they present their young unmatriculated novices, at first coming, with the most intellectual abstracts of logic and metaphysics . . . to be tossed and turmoiled with their unballasted wits in fathomless and unquiet deeps of controversy. (John Milton, "Of Education" 632)

Very briefly, I would like to describe some of the major differences among the several competing models of fst in ordinary language since we are all, at this point, "unmatriculated novices" in fst.(11) It is exciting to see how the different theoretical models usually began with an individual therapist's creative and sometimes idiosyncratic coping with recalcitrant family issues, but then, as the therapists as persons kept interacting with one another, how they borrowed and often imitated techniques from one another (Piercy and Sprenkle, 1990; Berardo, 1990; Rambo, Heath, and Chenail, 1993). Indeed, fst theorists in the '90s are noted for their eclectic approaches while still maintaining the artistry of their own personal therapeutic strengths. This is one of the crucial contrastive features with literary psychoanalytic thinking. By relying on one text (Standard Edition of Freud) and one authority (with a nod here and there to a Lacan, or a Homey, or a Kohut), our own contemporary "family of critics" has repeated the mistakes of Freud and his generation: cutting off from interaction with the rest of the psychological community. Hence, cut-offs, whether intellectual or emotional, are merely a temporary solution to life's and criticism's anxieties.

One of the earliest fst theoretical systems may be called the Satir Communication Process model; developed by Virginia Satir - whose dynamic presence and emotional excitement indicated that fst is every bit as much an art as it is a science - the Communication Process model assumes a Rousseau-like view of human nature. According to Satir, each person has the potential to transform his/her own life into something she refers to as a mature existence. A person is said to be mature when that individual, "having attained his majority, is able to make choices and decisions based on accurate perception about himself, others, and the context in which he finds himself; who acknowledges these choices and decisions as being his; and who accepts responsibility for their outcomes" (Family 91).

According to Satir, most people see the world in one of two ways: the first is hierarchical in nature, one she calls the "threat and reward" model. The other she thinks of as the "organic and seed model," where human beings contain an innate potential for goodness and wholeness.(12) In the first model, human beings are weak and sinful, requiring some sort of hierarchy to maintain appropriate standards for all, rather like the model of miracle, mystery, and authority as proposed by Dostoyevski's Grand Inquisitor. Events are linear and blame may be readily assigned. In the second model, people and their relationships are based on a sense of uniqueness; individuals are encouraged to know themselves in a Delphic sense and so come to value an egalitarian quality in all human relationships. Events in their lives are part of a systemic paradigm, with relationships among components up and down the emergent/reductionist levels of abstraction.

She says that every part of a family's life is "related to the other parts in a way that a change in one brings about a change in all others. Indeed, in the family, everyone and everything impacts and is impacted by every other person, event, and thing" (Satir and Baldwin 191). Hence, the concepts of open and closed family systems, with the latter imposing a kind of threat/reward

mentality on its members whereas the former allows each person to fulfill his/her own potential in a constantly changing environment. In all families, this tendency of the family unit to remain stable within a dynamic, evolving set of relationships - described above as homeostasis - require rules for "appropriate" behavior and styles of communication. Hence, Satir was far more interested in the process of family interactions than in the content.

Satir was also interested in the triangles formed by the two spouses and each child. This primary "triad" forms the "essential source of identity of the self. On the basis of his learning experience in the primary triad, the child determines how he fits into the world and how much trust he can put in his relationships with other people" (Satir and Baldwin 1970). These learning experiences are based largely on the types of communications the child witnesses. Inconsistencies, contradictions, and incongruencies are all sensed by the developing child who soon learns that she cannot trust the plain sense of what is said but must always look to the meta-messages, the interpretation of what the parents really mean. If such an interpretation feels like a rejection, the child develops a sense of low self-esteem.

From such interpretations of the parents' actual intentions, the growing child also learns about power and control. Children intuit the sense that they can "control" two parents more interested in proving who is "right" than in jointly parenting the kid; sometimes this type of Mom and Dad triangulates the child, making him feel alternatively grandiose or helpless. Of course, parents can also help the fortunate child feel that he is able to have a positive impact on the parents as well. Satir suggested that healthy well-functioning families develop patterns of conversation that enhance self-worth through mutual cooperation and that such cooperation then becomes a goal toward which families in pain might aim.(13)

Satir described in *The New Peopling* (1988) some coping patterns that grew out of low self-worth. In some families, the roles were divided into (1) placator, (2) blamer, (3) supereasonable, and (4) irrelevant. The placator tries to soothe everybody else's ruffled feathers at the expense of or denial of self because the self is just not worth a whole lot in its own (metaphorical) eyes. The blamer is also not feeling very worthy and gets angry at or tries to control the whole world for his own feeling that way; the other is thus merely disregarded. The supereasonable or intellectual denies his/her own feelings at all costs, usually intellectualizing them and, in so doing, preventing them from becoming overwhelming and therefore uncontrollable, like Star Trek's Mr. Spock during "pooh farr." Context seems to be everything and the emotions of both self and other are simply irrelevant. Finally, the irrelevant-style of coping mechanism discounts self, other, and context - and the self acts erratically, unpredictably, or often, at best, inappropriately. Satir's list of types is not meant to be a set of theoretical personality attributes, but rather, a pragmatic way of seeing how the four roles are divided up among families in pain.

Less a theorist than an exuberant catalyst for human growth and change, Satir through her clinical experience developed a patterned way of looking at individuals. She thought of the self as having eight characteristics or qualities, each wrapped around the other, like a mandala or, more familiarly, an onion; with the physical being at its core, each self is also composed of emotional, intellectual, sensual, nutritional, contextual, and spiritual aspects, all interacting systemically and so emerging into an entity much greater than any one part. This self can learn to become more completely human, to risk transforming patterns absorbed during the old, negative

experiences communicated to her in childhood - that created the pain - into responses making it its own best imagined self, better able to respond differently and to work more flexibly under emotional stress.

Finally, one should speak of one of Satir's influential group techniques, "Temperature Taking." She advocated that, periodically, the group (family) take its emotional temperature in order to share things thus far left unsaid and to "detoxify" any negative or hostile feelings individuals may have built up. One could do several things during temperature taking: express appreciations, register complaints, describe emotional puzzles, offer or ask for new information not yet mentioned, and conjure up wishes, dreams, and hopes for the future.

### Bowen's "Transgenerational Process"

Murray Bowen was also a pioneer in fst who applied the umbrella of general systems theory to one natural system, human emotions. For him, theoretical models and actual practice should remain inseparable as each informs, corrects, reinforces, or modifies the other. Bowen was highly influential (he used to say at parties that his name was not Bowenian) in early fst thinking because he tried to combine the biological and the psychological in ways not previously done with any great consistency. Bowen theorized that a person's biological processes (what Jerome Kagan [1994] calls temperament) account for an individual's affinity for individualism and togetherness. More emotionally reactive people (Kagan's inhibited types) are often at the mercy of their biological make-up (cf. deSousa, 1987; Isaacson, 1982); the less physiologically reactive (Kagan's uninhibited types), the more often the person can exhibit choice, thinking and feeling with some imaginative control rather than merely reacting to the world at large.

Hence, the more sophisticated individual balanced her individuality with her need for affiliation, and balanced her intellect and emotions so as to maintain an equilibrium throughout the life-span (see Robert Kegan, 1982, 1994). Different ratios between intellect/emotions and togetherness/separateness are required of healthy persons in different relationships as well as the knowledge of which ratio is appropriate in which situation.

Bowen's theoretical ideas began with what he called the differentiation of the self, the ability of a self to keep intellect and emotions from becoming fused. Those who are fused are controlled by their emotions, act very needy, and are not able to make effective choices in life. For Bowen, the first important emotional task of differentiation the individual has is separating from the family-of-origin (1985). In addition to self-differentiation, the other major variable in life is anxiety, particularly chronic anxiety, which places major stresses and strains on the self's adaptive abilities. As Robert Kegan (1982, 1994) argues in another context, when chronic anxiety rules, making it impossible for the self to examine its own emotional response, the self cannot, without such examination, contemplate its own motivations and make the best possible choices.

Bowen (1985) employed the words "solid self" and "pseudo-self" (described above); the solid self, balancing intellect and emotions, embodies the person's core beliefs, attitudes, and so on. This contrasts to the pseudo-self, or what Bowen calls the pretend self, that because it is ruled by anxieties and fears, takes its core beliefs from outside the self, usually from some charismatic individual who has a seemingly solid self.(14) Of course, the major issues always come into play



in a marriage where the two spouses are operating at different levels of differentiation - particularly during times of stress and familial change (such as the birth of the first child).

Another addition of Bowen's was his assumption that, sometimes, triangles last beyond one lifetime into the next generation. Chronic anxiety or intolerance of "aspects of the human process is a manifestation of being triangled into it" (Kerr and Bowen, 1988). Certain individuals may, unwittingly, be acting out in their lifetime family issues unresolved from the previous generation (or more). Hence, a multi-generational transmission process may find each successive generation's individuals becoming more and more fused (intellect and emotions) and hence less and less able to cope in a healthy way with the ordinary strains of life. Indeed, a whole society may also regress, based on the degrees of unmastered and uncontrolled general anxiety.

Thus, a given nuclear family's emotional system includes processes and patterns that may be copies of previous generations and which may, in turn, get passed on to future generations. Since people select their spouses with, as Carl Whitaker suggests, "exquisite care," Bowen thinks this is because we tend to pick someone operating at similar levels of differentiation. What Robert Kegan (Evolving 115-16; 1994) has come to call the lifelong process of self/other or subject/object differentiation affects not only choice of spouse but also leads to parenting style as well. Hence, when a child becomes frightened or a teenager exhibits unacceptable behavior, for example, the anxious parent interprets these as "serious problems" and gets overprotective, more out of his/her own interpretation than necessarily out of anything "real." As the parent acts on such "beliefs," in turn, the child or teen accepts that reading and so "becomes" what the parent has interpreted, and the parent calms down in light of this new predictability. With the parents' relaxed manner, the child also now relaxes, and a partial identity is created that may last that child's lifetime and beyond. This whole process is called the family projection.

Another way of mastering anxiety or poor differentiatedness in a family is the cut-off. The person cutting off another is trying to reduce anxiety by putting physical distance or effecting an emotional withdrawal between the self and the other. These cut-offs - temporally lasting a short time or a lifetime - attempt to fix a problem of fusion with distance, but in so doing create a new set of problems. The unresolved fusion problems from a divorce may, for example, get carried over to the next spouse or lover, with the same predictable results.

Finally, Bowen borrowed from the work of Walter Toman (1976), who was interested in sibling hierarchy. The place of the child within the birth order is crucial in understanding emotional reactivity. In the family structure, the oldest child, having two parents to look after only him/her, becomes more like the parents than many of the later children - in tastes, values, emotional responses, and so on - because the parents have more time than at any other time later in their child-rearing years. On the negative side, the parents are also more often anxious, never having experienced raising an infant before, and so the older one grows up more anxious. The second child, however, coming into a family with a ready-made rival for his/her parents' affections, has to do something different to get noticed. Very often, the second kid becomes the rebel, breaking the rules in contradistinction to the goody-two-shoes older child who already has mom and dad's attention. More positively, by the time the parents have the second child, they know a bit more about parenting, are somewhat more relaxed, and so, too, the child grows up feeling less strained and acting as if the world is an easier place to be than the older sibling.

## Minuchin's Structural Family Therapy

The key figure in this branch of fst is Sal Minuchin, a pediatrician turned psychiatrist, who in the mid-sixties founded the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic, where he developed a family-oriented treatment program and trained such famous fst therapists as Jay Haley, Lynn Hoffman, and Harry Aponte. Minuchin was also heavily influenced both by Gregory Bateson and Nathan Ackerman and their differing approaches to human problems. Bateson, the theorist, and Ackerman, the emotional connector, made up for Minuchin the dichotomy between the ideological and the clinical. He never felt the need to resolve the tension between these two since they must, he believed, "coexist, because they are different perspectives that complement each other" (Minuchin and Nichols 38).

Hence, as practitioner and clinician, Minuchin introduced the family structure mapping technique where the therapists, with the help of the family, draw a family map (or tree) to indicate patterns of connection, distance, anger, etc., between and among members of the family. Indeed, Minuchin's focus was often on the structural components of the family and on its boundary issues; he believed that effective family functioning was characterized by openness, flexibility, and organization - and in the 1980s extended these descriptive characteristics to extended systems, other generations, and so on.

Since in fst the creativity and the authority of the individual therapist is of equal importance to the "system" in its early formulation, Minuchin's therapeutic style is important to note. Unlike some therapists, Minuchin was quite directive and engaged within the family's interactions right there during the sessions. He believed that only by temporarily joining them in their own system could he make adequate diagnoses and help them restructure negative and unproductive patterns of interaction.

In our sessions with families we felt anything but in control. We felt like foreigners, visiting a group of people with their own common culture and history, their own ways of communicating, and their own well-established loyalties and rivalries. We needed to learn how to join them, to gain their trust, and demonstrate our usefulness. Above all, we needed to develop new ways of intervening that reflected our new understanding. (Minuchin and Nichols 29)

To help further this emerging research, Minuchin introduced the practice of videotaping sessions so that he and the therapeutic team could code dimensions of family structure and interaction as a prelude to effective intervention. Minuchin sometimes had the IP (identified patient) observe her parents in an argument from behind a one-way mirror (with everyone's permission, of course) and noted how often the child (IP) was far more involved within the parent's marital conflicts than the other kids in the family. Hence, the IP had either joined or was recruited into an alliance with one or the other parent - often to the physical detriment of the IP. Through therapy, whenever the familial interactive patterns were changed in a more positive direction, the IP's symptoms were usually relieved.

Generalizations about fst in the beginning of this introduction concerned with structural elements in families - subsystems, boundaries, hierarchies, coalitions, parentification, enmeshment and disengagement - owe much of their theoretical status to the early work of Sal Minuchin.

Freud left intact the notion that the self is self-contained. Family therapy challenged the equally cherished belief in self-determination by illuminating the power of the family. It recognized men and women as parts of a larger system - as subsystems, albeit significant ones, of larger systems. For the family therapist the family was a unit, and when one or more members of the system posed a problem, the family was the site of intervention. (Minuchin and Nichols 36)

Minuchin's ideas and style of doing therapy have permeated the discipline, so that now his language is common parlance among family therapists and his style is often emulated by those therapists whose personalities tend toward directiveness and extroversion. Indeed, some first thinkers argue that Minuchin was such a charismatic therapist that he as a person was more influential than his ideas. Through the force of his personality, Minuchin the man was able to effectuate changes in clients through interventions that lesser mortals would never even dream of trying, much less experience success.

### Symbolic-Experiential Therapy

Perhaps the leading proponent of this form of interventionist artistry is the late Carl Whitaker, who said that "[t]heory and technique come alive and take form only when filtered through the personhood of the therapist" (Whitaker and Bumberry 35). For Whitaker, theory always had to take a back seat to the intuitions and personal strengths of the therapist him/herself: one must "care enough to get in and get involved, while retaining enough love of self to withstand the cultural mandate of sacrificing yourself to save the family" (35). Indeed, he always believed that remaining "tough" in the face of family pressures for him to join in their view of the world was as important as caring; Carl used to joke that therapists who got overly enmeshed in their clients' worldviews "needed a life." Since Whitaker firmly believed that his own "self-search, then, [was] central to [his] use of self," Carl was perhaps more concerned than many therapists with directly experiencing the family at a level of mutual empathy. Although severe "cultural dissonance need not preclude therapy, [one needs] to take it seriously" (41, emphasis added). One might contrast Whitaker's immediate involvement in therapy with the classic psychoanalytic session where the analyst remains behind and to the side of the client, largely quiet and non-directive (Grunbaum, Foundations 241ff).

As an artist of the family crucible (Napier and Whitaker, 1988), Whitaker developed what he called the "psychotherapy of the absurd" (Neill and Kniskern 33). As a therapist, one had to be willing to risk "personal craziness" in order to get people to be more comfortable with impulse living - a favorite theme of Whitaker's - because human beings are by and large unable to control life by intellectual insight alone:

I believe part of the human condition is to have within you a rich and bubbling impulse life. We're all murderous, we all struggle with suicidal impulses, we all have incestuous fantasies, we're all terrified by the notion of death. To fail to face these simple facts of life is to seal off much of your humanness. (Whitaker and Bumberry 78)

The therapist gained insight into a given family's dynamics by looking carefully at the representational system underlying what is actually being said: Whitaker played with double entendres, loaded words, and unique phrases, mixing literal and symbolic meanings in order to

uncover the system that families in pain were unable to see clearly (Whitaker and Bumberry 79-80, 112).

For Whitaker, the first step toward emotionally healthier family life was confusion, unlearning old patterns and developing better ones to take their place: no confusion, no change; no change, no growth. We all have "potentials for experiencing" different modes of being (see Mahrer 37-78). Whitaker tried to get families to develop an increased tolerance for the absurdity of life through what he called "amplification moves," often done by "seeding the unconscious," planting casual suggestions in the session that later would be recycled in a more serious and detailed way. Hence, the therapist had to relish unusual metaphors and remain open to his "own internal associations [that Whitaker thought] central to [his] work" (Whitaker and Bumberry 96, 110). In his metaposition as family therapist, Whitaker looked to expanding the significance of the family's daily interactions and broadening their horizons in life by getting members to recognize that love/hate were yoked experiences (81); indeed, one needed considerable flexibility, personal and familial, to cope with the natural development across the life-span through which all families undergo.

Whitaker's influence in family systems work has been substantial. His personal combination of emotional sensitivity and therapeutic toughness has made him a role-model for therapeutic trainees who, early on, tend to look at largely the first function without recognizing that the second is a crucial complement. In many ways, Whitaker would have made an excellent literary critic, with his emphasis on language play as revelatory of hidden agendas and inaccessible emotional dynamics; his insistence on family members' willingness to risk being more personal and less regulated by role-images would also have been salutary in a literary discipline increasingly dominated by persons whose allegiance is more to their "school" and less to their own individual talents as critics and scholars.

### Strategic Family Therapy

Strategic fst has become the theory of choice among managed-care providers because of its emphasis on short-term interventions, and the here-and-now (in contrast to psychoanalysis, which often requires five days a week, fifty weeks a year, for one, two, or more years!). Most strategic practitioners de-emphasize family history and older family patterns; rather, strategic therapists focus on identifying the function of psychiatric symptoms within the family structure, and then directly creating an intervention strategy to effect family and IP change. The two prominent founders of this school of intervention were (again) Gregory Bateson (1972) and Milton Erickson (Rosen, 1982), the latter of whom was an M.D. cum hypnotist. They trained such prominent people as Jay Haley (who also worked for nine years with Sal Minuchin), John Weakland, and Don Johnson (Watzlawick et al., 1974; Haley, 1963, 1976; Madanes, 1981).

Strategic therapists think of individual psychiatric symptoms as systemic responses to faulty family communications. From Bateson, they identify patterns derived from what is called the "double-bind," a meta-message that is at odds with the verbalized or literal message. One parent may give the child permission to do something verbally while at the same time cuing her non-verbally that such behavior is impermissible. Not knowing the real "message" - "listen to your father" (when I, the parent, really want you to behave as I expect) - the confused IP often feels

like a real "stranger in a strange land" and in frustration, may develop psychiatric symptoms consistent with schizoid-like behaviors. When the family comes in for help, the first thing the therapist examines are signs of communicative distortion on the most fundamental emotional level.

This type of therapy also looks at the family's place in that culture's family life-cycle. All families go through phases and transitions, from a two-member family to a three (add one child), for example. It is at these stress points that the strategic fst looks for adjustment problems, recognizing that the forces of homeostasis are far stronger than any individual's desire for flexibility. The therapist's job(s) is to actively intervene, giving the family emotional "homework" assignments, shaking up entrenched coalitions, suggesting paradoxical alternatives to problems as a way of helping the family move from stuckness toward a more flexible way of seeing themselves.(15)

Following Bateson and Weakland, strategic fst therapists think of the self as socially constructed. One's attitude determines what one sees, how one responds to these visions, and the behavior resulting from such responses to "reality." Hence, many therapists in this school practice re-framing problems in families so that the members see alternatives to patterns they once believed were simply a part of the real world, as unchangeable as the mountains or the sea (deShazer, 1975).

#### The Milan School (TMS)

Founded in Milan, Italy, by Mara Selvini Palazzoli and several others, the Milan school (TMS) focused their work on clinically diagnosed schizophrenics, autistics, depressives, and those suffering from anorexia nervosa and other emotional disorders. Following the teachings of Bateson, Milton Erickson, Jay Haley, and others, they originally refined paradoxical interventions during the '60s and '70s, culminating in the famous Paradox and Counterparadox (1978).(16) However, by the late 1970s, Palazzoli "started having misgivings about so-called paradoxical methodology. . . . some of our results were doubtful at best and . . . there had been a number of downright failures. Moreover, we were perplexed by the frequency of relapse in the wake of brilliant initial response" (Family Games 3; Mashal, Feldman, and Sigal, 1989).

By 1989, Palazzoli and others published their important Family Games, where the focus was less on psychologically-manipulating shock treatments or induced crises, and more on what Palazzoli called family intrigue. When a family enters therapy because of a problem child in "crisis," the therapeutic team wants to know, first, what are the "games" (moves and countermoves) that family members employ on one another in order to gain or maintain an individually preferred position (emotional attachment, controlling advantage) vis a vis the other persons in the family group? What are the "rules" of this family's game, who plays what role in maintaining the game at its current level, and who gains (or loses) pragmatically by individual and collective behaviors during the daily game? How does the current family structure aid or hinder one's understanding of the game and its rules?

Once the therapeutic team can answer (understand) those questions, the next step is therapeutic intervention. What sorts of actions, other than talk, can the therapist induce in the family in order

to demonstrate the possibilities of their alternative behaviors and so help them to change? The first step after a lengthy intake is the "invariant prescription," where the therapist assigns the husband and wife to go out on a date together, but to do so "secretly," without telling anyone else - not children, parents, in-laws, friends - when and where they are going and, upon return, what or how well they did. Palazzoli's invariant prescription accomplishes the following: (1) it awards, structurally speaking, "preeminence . . . to the parental couple" and dismisses, for the time being, "first . . . the elder generation (grandparents) and later . . . the younger one"; (2) by avoiding a rational or "explicit comment, the therapist strongly characterizes the therapeutic system as symmetrical, that is . . . governed by its own options"; in addition, the parents signal to the others that they are claiming the right to privacy "for which no permission or agreement is required from anyone"; (3) thus, the couple and the therapist are joined in a "collaborative compact" because of the secrecy, an alliance against the 'interferers' (the extended family, the children) and "in favor of the disturbed child's recovery and the entire family's well-being"; (4) the prescription gives the team crucial information on the "fluctuating manner in which the couple is defined, . . . [and] alternately seen as parents, and as spouses, implicitly labeled as co-responsible for their child's pathology yet explicitly acknowledged to be the victims of their child's pathological power." Pragmatically, however, the couple get to share in what "not even the therapist needs to be let in on; she does not especially want to know what they do on their outings" (Palazzoli et al., *Family Games* 31-32).

This pushing the couple together for a "date" is done primarily to discover who in the whole family reacts the strongest, for what stated or implicit reasons, and to whom. Indeed, rather than wading through a considerable amount of intake conversation, much of which would be disguised anyway by the implicit family "rules," the therapeutic team gets the family to act in typical but in most often unstated ways; from the immediate responsive actions of the whole family to the prescription, the team then uses this crucial information to plan its future therapy.

During the description of its team-oriented therapeutic techniques, Palazzoli explains three crucial metaphors used to help treat families in pain who wish to change. The first of these is the concept explained by the word *imbroglio*. *Imbroglio* "covers a veritable maelstrom of 'communicating behaviors' [that] members of a family exchange among themselves that is triggered by a specific move in the game." It is

a complex interactive process that appears to arise and develop around the specific behavior tactics one of the parents brings into play, . . . [consisting of the parent] bestowing a semblance of privilege and preference upon a dyadic transgenerational (parent-offspring) relationship, when, in reality, this professed rapport is a sham. It is not grounded in genuine affection and is nothing but a strategic device used against someone else - generally the other parent. . . . [Much of the process] almost entirely defies verbal expression . . . since it is structured around mainly analogical exchanges. (*Family Games* 68-70)

Perhaps one of the more obvious examples of "imbroglio" can be found in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* where Polonius rather obscenely vows to Claudius to "loose his daughter" to Hamlet to find out "where the truth is hid" of Hamlet's presumed madness (II.ii.156, 162). To Ophelia, Polonius says that he "fear'd [Hamlet] did but trifle/And meant to wrack thee." But the father's real purpose was considerably less parental concern and much more political manipulation, using his

own daughter, to continue currying favor with Claudius, whom he asks bluntly, "[w]hat do you think of me?" (II.i. 109-10; II..ii. 129).

The second metaphor is called the "war of succession." When one or the other parent dies or is terminally and totally incapacitated, the family is ipso facto required to reorganize along interactional lines. If the parents were involved in an "imbroiled" situation before the bereavement, then the surviving parent may "provoke competitive strife among the offspring and some member(s) of the extended family" by not making clear who will be turned to for "solace and support" (Family Games 84). It was any "persistently suspended judgment on the part of the widowed parent on the matter of who was to succeed to the deceased that laid the scene for a veritable, albeit undeclared 'war of succession.'"

In "apparently random fashion, [the widow/widower] deal out to their several offspring allusive blishments and equally allusive frustrations, thus continually creating and fueling a tantalizing ambiance of uncertainty and fierce competition. [At the same time, the parent] openly professes . . . exclusive concern for the children," and the net result is that the "series of confusing moves keeps the lonely parent" at the center of his or her children's interest and concern (Family Games 84-85). Since the "game" began well before the death of the parent, it is merely a continuation of earlier "diplomacy" with the surviving players.

Finally, Palazzoli et al. advocate "thinking in loops, the to-and-fro movements of . . . the rhythmical motion of the weaver's weft continually going from one end of the warp to the other" (Family Games 266). For the therapist, thinking in loops about the conversations with families she encounters also "tackles the problem of Aristotelian logic. [In] our 'shuttling' we must simultaneously reach out beyond it and return to it, a back and forth motion." As Vancouver (1996) has said: in "the systems perspective of communication . . . , humans are subsystems, interacting individuals are the system, and organization or social context is the supersystem" (175).

The several models discussed above are not placed in any sort of normative order. Like most psychotherapeutic models, fst is as much an art as a science and much depends on the relationships developed between clients and therapists, regardless of model. For those of us who are primarily literary critics, a useful lesson may be taken from cognitive studies of learning as we try to find the right therapeutic tool to help us read our favorite text. Almost a decade ago, Kuhn, Amsel, and O'Loughlin stated that exercise, "in relating the same body of evidence [a text?] to contrasting theories plays a facilitative role in the development of skills coordinating theory and evidence" (205).

#### IV

##### Brief Conclusion to FST Theory

One must study the coalitions and apparent power balances and imbalances in relation to the symptomatic behavior - [the] detective work in devising a hypothesis that will explain the symptom in the family and how all the pieces fit. (Lynn Hoffman)

Clearly, the use of family systems thinking in literary criticism will require some major changes in the reader. In adapting this "new psychology," the critic (or just plain reader) will have to assume that one examines a character's motivations for reasons other than merely intrapsychic ones alone. The critic will quickly perceive that simple linear causality is merely one component in a much larger set of loops and zig-zags, and that to understand fictional characters and their families, one must look for a character's behavior as a response quite often to a move by another, or a countermove to a response in a previous round of moves. Further, the critic sees that both real and fictional families maintain enormous strength over their members, sometimes lasting for generations, and that each family develops its own "game" or style and forcefulness of communication in order to contain the centripetal forces threatening to modify their daily processes. Family members are enormously protective of one another to those outside, even in the middle of the most painful battles within.

The well-versed critic in *fst* admits that human behavior is, finally, far more complex, multi-faceted, and interactive than the simple linear models from the last century. This critic will need to master not only a new vocabulary but must also, at the same time, actively reject the hybrid language and thought processes that criticism and psychoanalysis have symbiotically created. One then sees that the unconscious is a primitive descriptor for the many mental processes unavailable for immediate conscious inspection; that drive reduction no longer describes a scientific consensus of the way the brain works and has not for over seventy-five years; that the Oedipus complex may not exist in the way Freud described and literary critics have used during the last three-fourths of a century (Knapp, *Striking* 35; Masson, *Assault* 113). And, in so admitting, the critic candidly acknowledges the strains in moving toward an alien but highly stimulating new tool for literary analysis while, at the same time, *pace* George Orwell, rejecting total allegiance to literary Freud, Lacan, and all the other familiar little orthodoxies which are still contending for our souls.

V

The Essays in This Volume Now does [our] project gather to a head: My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and Time Goes upright with his carriage. (*The Tempest*, V.i. 1-3)

Below are several essays devoted to putting into practical use the theoretical matters discussed above.<sup>(17)</sup> Although family systems can be considered the new psychology on the block, the reader will notice that systemic literary analyses make use of the same tools of narratology, thematic analysis, and aesthetic function so familiar in current psychologically-oriented literary criticism. The first essay - co-editor Kenneth Womack's "Only Connecting with the Family: Class, Culture, and Narrative Therapy in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*" - looks at the early-20th-century British class system through *fst*. As Womack says, "by supplying readers with a critical lens that identifies the nature of feedback loops existing between the novel's characters and the diversity of their class origins, family systems psychotherapy demonstrates . . . Forster's [employment of] narrative therapy as a means of challenging his nation - with its collection of disparate classes and cultures - to, if nothing else, 'only connect.'" The second article - James M. Decker's "Choking on My Own Saliva: Henry Miller's *Bourgeois Family Christmas* in *Nexus*" - focuses more intimately on the narrative voice of the writer called "Henry" in Miller's *Nexus*. Decker argues that "Miller's *kunstlerroman*en inextricably merge Henry's nascent art with his



personal relationships: Miller observes not only Henry's growth as an artist, but also his growth as a person and his reaction to others' reactions to his growth."

The third fst-oriented essay is Gary Storhoff's "Anaconda Love: Parental Enmeshment in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*." In an original attempt to apply fst to a multi-cultural, multi-generational literary work, Storhoff says that Morrison, like so many family systems-oriented therapists, is interested in the "contextual dimensions of her family dramas, the interpersonal family patterns that develop intergenerationally." From the perspective of family history, Morrison "extends her sympathies to all her characters, even the most seemingly undeserving ones."

Following in order of reading is Judith Ann Spector's fst-focused discussion of "Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant: A Critical Feast*." Tyler's novel, Spector marvels, "offers us a rare study of the 'intergeneration transmission of symptoms' of an entire family" from the early marriage partners' initial idealization of one another, to their inevitable and mutual disillusionment, to the power struggle "waged on behalf of [each one's] internalized family-of-origin." Spector discusses how Tyler's characters, her fictional parents and children, are both sick for home and sick of it!

Finally, this issue of *Style* closes with Jerome Bump's "The Family Dynamics of the Reception of Art." Bump sketches an overview of fst's place in the current literary critical spectrum and, as well, suggests a number of fictional writers and works particularly suited to this newer psychological analysis. Among the novelists discussed by Bump are contemporary American writers such as Anne Tyler and Toni Morrison, and British Victorian novelists like the Brontes and Charles Dickens.

. . . thou shalt crown the year with thy blessing, when thou shalt send forth labourers into thy harvest sown by other hands than theirs; when thou shalt send forth new labourers to new seed-times, whereof the harvest shall be not yet. (St. Augustine)

## Notes

1 Cf. Thomas F. Petruso, *Life Made Real: Characterization in the Novel since Proust and Joyce* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1991). Petruso believes that much "theory" generally

[is comparable to] the latest version of the Rosseta stone, which, like Marxism and Freudianism before it (and so much the better when combined with them), can provide, as Fredric Jameson says of his own methodology, "the ultimate semantic precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts" (1981, 75) and even "the absolute horizon of all reading and interpretation" (17). If the tone of this assertion is somewhat dogmatic, it is, alas, not at all rare among theoretical initiates. (17)

Certain feminist psychoanalytic critics are also becoming more skeptical in recent years. Hannah Lerman (1986) says, for example, that

Despite the growing openness to philosophical thought, psychoanalysts in general do not seem to be well-versed in the tenets of empiricism or sensitive to the elementary distinctions between observable data and hypotheses. . . . Psychoanalysis as a theory that is relevant to the psychology of women is partially validated, partly disconfirmed, and, as far as we know now, partly unconfirmable. (143)

Further, she goes on to say of the neo-Freudian Karen Horney, an influential thinker for the "Florida School" of psychoanalytic critics, that "Horney's theory of personality development, although derived largely from the original Freudian view, is nevertheless a partial (albeit incomplete) step toward what we would consider a woman-based personality theory" (183).

2 Norman Holland may well be the most brilliant (and generous) advocate of this latter reason. Although he has warned fellow psychoanalytic critics against what he calls "here a phallic symbol, there a phallic symbol" mode of critical analysis, he still maintains allegiance to the psychoanalytic model of literary criticism. However, unlike Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, Professor Holland maintains a keen interest in expanding its domain boundaries through interaction with other psychologies and other models of criticism. The same may be said for my Lacanian-oriented colleague and the editor of *Style*, James Mellard. Literary criticism is that much the better for their spirit of intellectual openness, generosity, and fearlessness when confronting combative newcomers.

3 In her chapter on "Psychoanalytic Criticism," in *Redrawing the Boundaries*, Professor Meredith Skura specifically says that she agrees with me in this, noting that the "boundary between literature and psychoanalysis. . . has disappeared" (369).

4 Liddle and Saba (1982) describe an academic course devoted to training future first therapists. Their concerns and advice are appropriate as well for literary critics who wish to learn more about first theory and practice: "The difficulty of shifting a beginning trainee's intrapsychic, monadic epistemology of human behavior cannot be over-emphasized." Rather, the trainee must forcefully think of human beings within systems and develop "the capacity to conceptualize human problems and their resolution in interactional- rather than individualistic ways" (64-65). Recently, Janet H. Murray has argued that for those interested in artistic representation, the "more we see life in terms of systems, the more we need a system-modeling medium [she's referring here to computer hypertext story games] to represent it - and the less we can dismiss such organized rule systems as mere games" (93).

Clearly, one does not ignore the socio-biological (Storey, 1996; Carroll, 1995), physiological (Kagan, 1994), and developing (Kegan, 1994) person either; one does place that person, however, inside her most important social matrix, the family, as well. Thus constituted, the self and its most basic society constitute a lifelong and irresolvable dance with one another, first one leading, then the other, spinning to what the novelist John Hawkes has elsewhere called a "creepy minuet." So, for example, for an individual or a character (like Robert Pirsig's narrator in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*) suffering from manic-depressive illness, the treatment of choice for this genetic brain disorder includes both lithium for the organic person and family therapy for the person's social self (Goodwin and Jamison 738-41). This lesson physicians have learned through painful trial and error - that what must be kept uppermost in

mind is that no amount of social or environmental pressures can cause that disorder in a person, although either may trigger episodes of it. For the literary critic exploring the motivations of a mimetically-oriented character, facile judgments about "madness" must now always be made with both nature and nurture in mind.

A reminder: to avoid further clumsy admonitions about the representedness of literary characters, the reader should assume that one may substitute the construct, character - as a "public reality accessible on its own terms outside the text" (Milowicki and Wilson 218; see also Phelan, 1989) - whenever the words "person" or "self" are used in relation to imaginative texts.

5 Put a bit differently, the family, as well as the individual, is a living system, and every living system "has three fundamental characteristics: (1) totality (the system is largely independent of the elements which make it up;" hence the family emerges out of the collection of individual persons comprising its system); "(2) autocorrective capacity, and therefore the tendency toward homeostasis"; families are self-regulating systems possessing the critical property of negative entropy, which means that families can acquire energy from their environment to organize and maintain functioning; "(3) capacity for transformation" (Palazzoli et al., Paradox 56).

In more abstract and mathematical terms, Ludwig von Bertalanffy says that a system may be defined as "a set of differential equations with the property that information about the state of the system influence(s) the system's rate of change" (164). Concerned with the human applications of von Bertalanffy's ideas, Jeffery Vancouver has recently discussed what he calls Living Systems Theory (LST). LST is a paradigm in organizational science that (1) "provides a framework for describing the micro (i.e., human), macro (social organizations), and meso (interaction between the two) levels of the field without relying on reductionism or reification. The more parsimoniously it can do this, the better"; (2) "provide(s) a model of the major processes of dynamic interaction between individuals, situations, and behavior to address the major phenomenon of the field like behavior, cognition, and affect"; and (3) provide(s) researchers with [interesting] research ideas" (165; see also Keeney, 1990). See also note 14 below.

6 Emergence: The evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr (1982) points out that both living and non-living systems "almost always have the property that the characteristics of the whole cannot (not even in theory) be deduced from the most complete knowledge of the components, taken separately or in other partial combination." This appearance of novel properties in whole systems "has often been evoked to explain such difficult biological realities as mind, consciousness, and even life itself" (341; see also Hofstadter 709-10).

"Perhaps the two most interesting characteristics of new wholes are that (1) they, in turn, can become parts of still higher-level systems; and (2) that wholes can affect properties of components at lower levels." This latter phenomenon is sometimes referred to as 'downward causation' and is particularly useful in understanding family systems. However, for Mayr, explanatory reduction alone is simply incomplete, "since new and previously unpredictable characters emerge at higher levels of complexity in hierarchical systems" (65). Obviously, this is one of the fundamental guiding principles of fst; the self "emerges" into a family, and the family

and the selves making up that family possess properties no one individual alone can contain (Whitaker and Bumbery 60).

A simple demonstration about emergence: take a fertilized human egg, cut it in half, and what do you get after nine months? Normally, twins! Take these same twins, cut one of them in half, and what do you get? Arrested for murder! Left alive, these twins remain separate but genetically very similar living systems inside another living system called their family.

Conversely, no practitioner of fst forgets that the family is also made up of independent (but simultaneously inter-dependent) selves (see also Vancouver 166; Kegan, 1994) and that the therapist must sometimes reduce his/her attention to one or more of those individuals. Hence, fst practitioners move up and down the scales of abstraction between emergence and reduction as the therapeutic need arises. Hence reduction - in therapy, literary criticism, and psychological research - is a necessary complement to emergence.

Indeed, Magne Arve Flaten (1994) has argued, for example, that an abstract concept like "classical conditioning" cannot be "reduced to one single neurophysiological mechanism [since it consists of several processes] "that had best be called by different names." Hence "if a psychological concept cannot be given one neurophysiological meaning," then it is the concept that needs to be changed. Such change hardly means that "reductionism as a research strategy has failed or is 'wrong;' indeed, the finding [by reductive investigation] that two processes once called by a common name are different, since their underlying processes are different, is one of the ways in which science advances" (paragraphs 3-5).

7 Obviously, there will be certain cultural differences in the make-up of families across the world. I have focused on North American and Western European family structures since those are the ones with which I am most familiar. For an example of crucial differences in French families in the North and South of France, see Emmanuel Todd (1991, 10-26).

8 Clearly, the debts owed to psychoanalytic thinkers like D. W. Winnicott (1965) is here apparent. His distinction between "true" and "false" selves has its echo in Bowen's (1985) "solid" vs "pseudo-selves." One of the major differences between fst and psychoanalysis (read most of psychoanalytic literary criticism) is that the former clearly acknowledges its roots in psychoanalytic practice (after all, fst grew out of dissatisfaction with individual psychoanalytic therapy) and, not surprisingly, has come to use some of its vocabulary. However, in using these terms, fst often transforms them for its own rather different purposes. This practice of intellectual exchange or borrowing is, unfortunately, a one-way practice, especially for most literary critics. In direct contrast to fst, Freud cut off psychoanalysis from its contemporary, psychology, and made it clear that only those trained in his techniques "for delving into the unconscious [were] entitled to challenge [Freud's] findings" (Esterson 30; Masson, *Analysis* 69; Knapp, *Striking* 231, 243). Fortunately, and in contra-distinction to many literary critics, most practicing psychoanalysts do indeed borrow eclectically from fst or from any other useful source (Edelson, 1984).

9 Minuchin et al. (1996) suggest that cultural differences play an important part in deciding where such boundaries form. For example, in working with African-American families, the therapist

may need to explore the extended family. The importance of the kin network may stretch all the way back to African roots as well as laterally into the contemporary necessity of coping with poverty and racism. But a black family that has attained middle-class status may be facing a stressful choice between helping the extended family or disconnecting [in that way] from them. (24)

10 In more technical terms, according to William T. Powers (1973), morphogenesis is the positive feedback loop. Positive feedback: a feedback situation in which a disturbance acting on any variable in a feedback loop gives rise to an effect at the point of disturbance that aids the effect of the disturbance. Homeostasis or negative feedback: in this situation, a disturbance acting on any variable in the feedback loop gives rise to an effect at the point of disturbance which opposes the effect of the disturbance (285-86).

11 In what follows, I have borrowed from a variety of sources, including elements from the somewhat simplified but readable descriptions out of Lambie and Daniels-Mohring (1993, 253-75). It probably should also be said in passing that this information may be useful to the literary critic in variable ways, the most important of which, I believe, are the alternative viewpoints afforded those interested in (literary) character analysis (Orcutt and Prell, 1994).

12 One can't avoid, in the 1990s, noticing the similarities between some of Satir's writings and what we would now call California-speak. While some of this language may sound a bit trite, the force of her personality and her success in "spreading the gospel" of fst has clearly resonated among the very same kinds of persons initially enamoured of Rousseau. Perhaps this is an on-going tension among human beings in the world - between the view of an essentially corrupt human nature as espoused by, say, a Thomas Hobbes (1633-1679), and the view promoted by, say, the older Aldous Huxley, among others, who thinks that "at no time [in history] are all the potentialities of the human psyche simultaneously realized; history is, among many other things, the record of the successive actualization, neglect, and reactualization in another context of different sets of these almost numerous potentialities" (8). While Huxley was interested in the growth potential on the human psyche of certain kinds of mushrooms when he wrote this, Satir's primary interest is in the growth potential of individuals in families.

13 These conversations include both verbal and non verbal cues and assumes their congruence. One of the contrasts between, say, Lacan and Satir is the former's almost dogmatic insistence on language as primary: "we must be attentive to the "un-said" that lies in the holes of discourse, but this does not mean that we are to listen as if to someone knocking on the other side of a wall" (1977, 93). Most fst therapists not committed to such an emphatic emphasis on utterance would suggest that the congruity between the verbal and the body language of the patients is often the locus of crucial information. Jay Haley, for example, reports Milton Erickson thinking it very important to become "conscious of how the behavior of each member toward the others can shift if their spatial orientation is shifted . . . [in this way] I can define them geographically" (Uncommon 32).

14 This description contrasts, of course, with the major theoretical beliefs of what could be loosely called post-modernism: a "poetics in which the category "world" is plural, unstable, and problematic would seem to entail a model of the self which is correspondingly plural, unstable, and problematic" (McHale 253). Although to many in the '90s, the post-modernist belief in a non-essential, highly unstable self appears to be a truism (Gergan, 1991, 1993), there is no reason why such an assumption should not itself come under some scrutiny. Among those disagreeing with this literary view of the self include many experimental psychologists, biologists, and others (Carroll, 1995; Gazzaniga 230-31; Kagan, 1994; Kegan, 1994, *Evolving* 83; Storey, *Mimesis* 16; Tudge 24, 280-83) whose opinions are well worth exploring.

Robert Storey has, for example, said that essentialism "is the cant term that now seems to cover every instance of an extension from the particular, but essentialism of any stamp, as evolution would argue, is quite beside the point. Neither philosophical appeals to Platonic essences nor analogies drawn from subatomic physics (however seductive to many postmodern 'theorists') have any bearing upon how human behavior, including apprehension of human an, may legitimately be described" (*Mimesis* 16; see also Carroll 466-69). In sum, these thinkers are arguing that the concept "self" and our images of character derived in part from that concept are far more complicated, inventive, and interesting than most post-modernists have dreamt of in their philosophy.

15 Although Milton Erickson (see Rosen, 1982) was the absolute master of paradoxical interventions, the Milan school - described ahead - has made regular use of the technique, to certain paradoxical conclusions (Palazzoli et al., 1989).

16 A paradoxical intervention was a therapeutic technique in which the therapist and her team would make a diagnosis about the homeostatic "pathology" of the family's functioning. Assuming that this relatively stable but painful or "pathological" family system needed above all else a change (morphogenesis), the therapist would "prescribe" an "upheaval, a sort of severe jolt to the family's Weltanschauung" (world view) in order to forcefully break them from the individual and collective habits maintaining the system (Watzlawick et al., 1974). This theory posited a notion of "discontinuous change," a "change coming about by jumps" and leaps rather than in the "steady, gradual flow associated with personal evolution, heightened awareness, progress in learning, and so on. . . . In a literal sense, paradoxical therapies essentially involve inducing crisis," and a kind of "all or nothing" logic (Palazzoli et al., *Family Games* 242-43).

17 Before ending this introduction, I would be remiss by not specifically mentioning Paula Marantz Cohen's *The Daughter's Dilemma: Family Process and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1991); insofar as I know, it is the first and only (to summer 1997) published book-length discussion devoted to fst-oriented literary criticism.

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