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The representations of narcissism in Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan and Heinrich von Kleist's Penthesilea

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Introduction

A) Aim and Rationale

My aim is to explore the relationship between selected psychoanalytic notions of narcissism and the representation of character in the two theatre texts: *Saint Joan* by Bernhard Shaw and *Penthesilea* by Heinrich von Kleist.

My focus is on the application of specific aspects of the psychoanalytic theory of narcissism to my chosen examples. Narcissism, as a phenomenon outlined by Sigmund Freud, is a very strong libidinal cathexis of a person's own ego. The perception of the Self as powerful, perfect and invulnerable is part of any individual's natural development at the stage of early infancy. Freud calls it "primary narcissism" and describes it as a "total narcissism, in which libido and ego-interest, still united and indistinguishable, dwell in the self-sufficing ego."[1] Later in life we tend to attribute those qualities to the objects of our love, partly depriving our ego of libidinal cathexis. Yet, this process can always be reversed. Freud likens the shift of libido between the Self and the object to the movements of a single cell organism: it pumps plasma into one part of its body, creating a protrusion. But that protrusion can be withdrawn at any moment, the plasma flowing back into the centre of the cell.

An alternate cathexis of the self and the object with libido is therefore a normal process, but the effect of this process does not stop with the individual's own self-perception, it affects other people as well: When

we come across narcissistic characters – be it in real life or in the theatre - they have a strong fascination for us. Their original self-love seems intact; they are still convinced of their omnipotence. Freud has termed this "secondary narcissism", a state in which the libido is withdrawn from the external world and re-integrated into the self. Such people or characters lure our own libido. We admire them and love them for being something we cannot be ourselves. If we wish to function within the rules and boundaries of everyday society, we cannot afford to behave like those people. Yet, they appear to us to be free, devoid of self-restraints, kings and queens of their own worlds. This is what draws us in and lets us admire them. As audience in the theatre, we enjoy the added benefit of not having to deal with the consequences of pure narcissistic behaviour ourselves. If we were to act in the same way in real life, placing our ego at the centre of all things and letting our actions be dictated primarily by our narcissistic impulses and wishes, we would meet with the fiercest opposition from society.

In *Psychopathic Characters On The Stage* Freud writes:

> *The spectator is a person who experiences too little, who feels that he is a 'poor wretch to whom nothing of importance can happen' [...]. The playwright and actor enable him to [...] narcissistically identify himself with a hero. They spare him something, too. For the spectator knows quite well that actual heroic conduct such as this would be impossible without pains and sufferings and acute fears, which would almost cancel out the enjoyment.* (S. Freud: 1905)

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[1] Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* p 518

In analysing the characters of Saint Joan and Penthesilea, I hope to uncover whether they display narcissistic traits as defined by Freud and whether this might explain their fascination for an audience.
Saint Joan is a young girl who has heard the calling of the Virgin Mary. She believes it is her fate to defeat the English and drive them out of medieval France. She revolts against all social conventions dressing as a man, wielding a sword, riding a horse and going to war. No rational arguments or threats to life and limb can hold her back.
Penthesilea is the queen of the Amazons. She has fallen in love with the hero Achilles and goes against religion and tradition by deciding to take him as her lover, rather than letting the god Apollo chose a mate for her. After having alienated all her Amazonian allies by her lonely quest, she cannot even see that Achilles is also in love with her. Driven by what appears like madness, she kills him and partly devours his body to enforce the union she pines for.

The question arising is what lets us, the audience, relate to such extraordinary characters. In *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* Freud proposes that a creative writer's hero represents "His Majesty the Ego"[2]. This is made up of the writer's unconscious wishes and fantasies. Freud suggests the "the author dwells in his [the hero's] soul, realizing his own dreams of greatness within the security and invulnerability of a fictional being"[3]. It is this personal investment on the part of an author that endows the characters with psychic qualities and enables us to empathize with them. And it is this personal investment on the part of the author informing the psychic qualities of the characters that gives them inter-human traits, lets us, the

[2] Freud, S. *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* p180
[3] Freud *On Narcissism: An Introduction* p 89

audience, empathize with the protagonists and allows us to investigate them from a psychoanalytical viewpoint. Their actions may be far from our reality, but their psychological make-up is realistic enough for us to relate to. After all, the author has invested his personal psychology into these characters, disguising possibly offensive qualities by way of sublimation.

In his paper *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (1917) Freud outlines the mechanism of sublimation, which allows a writer (artist) to redirect his "primitive libidinal Instincts"[4] in culturally acceptable ways to produce a piece of writing (an artwork). This mechanism of sublimation spares the primitive instinct the fate of repression - which happens in neurotics - and instead gains the artist "wealth, fame and the love of women". It is therefore a representation of the author's emotional life, which flows out of his pen and onto the paper. Through sublimating his own libidinal drives, the writer fleshes out his characters, breathing life into them not only consciously (on an intellectual level), but unconsciously (on the libidinal plane) as well. In this way, an author's imaginary world becomes real: his libidinal impulses are allowed to break free and establish themselves as character traits in fictional personae. The more talented the author, the more realistic his characters. And suddenly we see ourselves confronted with human beings endowed with intelligence and fantasies of their own. They experience emotions, come across dilemmas and have to deal with their own libidinal drives. These characters can now be investigated using the tool of psychoanalysis to unearth hidden impulses, repressed wishes and fantasies. They will openly state some of their motivations, and other motives can be discovered, deducted from their actions and

interactions in the story or play. We will see that the *Freudian Slip* was understood and used by Heinrich von Kleist almost a century before Freud explained it in scientific terms.[5] It is therefore extremely fascinating to use psychoanalysis to uncover for example such unconscious slips, which show a person's actual motivation while it remains hidden and unknown to themselves.

Focussing on my two woman protagonists, there is an added factor of interest: The phenomenon of *female narcissism* in particular has had an almost universal appeal throughout time. Freud claims that narcissistic women are extremely fascinating because "it seems evident that another person's narcissism has a great attraction for those who have renounced a part of their own narcissism and are in search of object-love"[6]. Freud goes on to describe how children and cats have a similar appeal because they seem so uninterested in us.
It must, therefore, be very enticing for an audience in a theatre to watch a narcissistic character on stage and enjoy the unabridged self-love and greatness of her ego in a way the audience themselves could never experience: they, the audience, have renounced a part of their own narcissism, as most healthy adults have. But for this fascinating effect to be analyzed in such a way, it has to first be established whether Saint Joan and Penthesilea are indeed representations of narcissistic characters, i.e. whether they are endowed with narcissistic qualities and whether it is this phenomenon that makes up their fascination for an audience.

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[4] Freud *On Narcissism: An Introduction* p 89
[5] Penthesilea: "Dann war es ein Versehen. Küsse and Bisse - das reimt sich" (So it was a mistake. Kisses and bites - it rhymes!)
[6] Freud, S. *On Narcissism: An Introduction* p83

In order to understand the two protagonists' motivations – conscious or unconscious – we have to listen very carefully to what they say. In addition, as outlined above, we also have to read between the lines. We have to be aware of allusions, omissions, and metaphors. Lacan has emphasized the role of language in psychoanalysis. Originally named "the talking cure"[7], psychoanalysis has always relied on the use of language to reach into the unconscious mind of its patients. Be it the language of dreams (the unconscious), the language of the patient, the language of the analyst or the language of an author - the use of word and metaphors to express ourselves is something all these fields have in common. Susan van Zyl and Joanne Stein have pointed out parallels between the language of the unconscious and poetic language. One is reminded of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams,* where the cognitive compression of ideas into images or single words is reminiscent of the compression of thoughts and associations in a poem. Finally, one can speak of "a real exchange between two bodies of language"[8]. The language of literature, effective in its poetic and condensed appearance may be enhanced through the scientific and clarifying language of psychoanalysis. Libidinal impulses, artistically disguised and made culturally acceptable by way of sublimation, may be discovered and their effect on the audience's unconscious explained with the help of psychoanalytic concepts.

In *Analysing Performance* Elisabeth Wright writes: "From the beginning, psychoanalytic theory has paid attention to the arts as employing the

[7] The term was coined by Josef Breuer's patient Bertha Pappenheim, whose symptoms and treatment Freud was very interested in.
[8] van Zyl, S. *Psychoanalysis and literature: an introduction* 1990

same processes that Freud uncovered in the workings of the unconscious."[9]

Due to the censorship we are subjected to by society, our parents, seniors and our own super-ego, which ultimately incorporates all of the above, a large part of our own fantasies has to remain unconscious, hidden even from ourselves. When psychoanalysis is used to unravel any person's psyche, we uncover many such hidden wishes and fears. This process releases tension in a patient and ultimately leads to a healing process.

Art can offer a similar effect on a different plane: It can release tension in the audience's unconscious. This, again, increases its appeal for the spectator: "Art offers a lure, setting up a new category of object in the field of illusion, whereby the desired objects remain occult, available only in masked, distorted form to be appropriated in a way that does not disturb either the creators or the spectator's narcissistic idealisation"[10].

It can be argued that both characters exhibit features of narcissism. Whether or not this is true will be investigated in Chapters 3 and 4 of my thesis. But there is an additional question that arises in both Saint Joan's and Penthesilea's stories. We will ask whether those narcissistic traits – if they can be established – are what results in the protagonists' self-destructive tendencies. Saint Joan sacrifices her life rather than recant. Penthesilea kills the object of her love rather than love him on any other terms than her own.

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[9] Wright E. *Analysing Performance* p175

[10] Wright E. *Analysing Performance* p176

Applying Kleinian concepts of *object relations theory*[11], both characters can be seen as having regressed to the paranoid-schizoid position of early infancy. That position is characterized by a split of the ego into "good" and "bad"[12] feelings, whereby the ego's "bad" impulses (hatred, aggression) are projected onto the external object (an/other person/s), while the "good" ones are claimed for the subject alone. This leads to a diminished emotional response to external objects and influences of any kind. Both Saint Joan and Penthesilea appear to me immune to outside influences. They progress along their chosen paths against all advice they receive from people who want to save them. Ultimately, they both meet with their demise.

I have therefore set out to investigate whether G.B Shaw's Saint Joan and Heinrich von Kleist's Penthesilea can be described as narcissistic characters, whether their motivations, words and actions are consistent with "normal" healthy adult behaviour or – if not – what it is that makes them different. I want to investigate whether it is the phenomenon of "secondary narcissism" as laid out by Freud, the luring of the audience's libido on an unconscious level, that makes these two women so compelling to watch. I will examine what drives them to act in the way they do and what drives us, the audience, to keep watching them, to keep sympathising with them, all the way to their downfall. It will be interesting to find out whether we stop sympathising at some point, and if so, at which point that is and why. Perhaps we still keep watching them and drawing satisfaction from their tragic fate. Possibly

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[11] In essence, the Kleinian psychoanalytic object relations theory is a development from the Freudian libido-driven approach to narcissism to an understanding that we as individual psychic structures are object driven [seeking] (Fairbairn) and are always located in relation to external objects [other people] (Klein).

[12] It should be noted that he terms "good" and "bad" are Klein's terms.

we enjoy their downfall as a just punishment for their rebellion against social conventions. At that point, we would have distanced ourselves from the heroines' narcissism because it has "gone too far". Or maybe we continue to identify with them, watching comfortably from our seats, not having to go through what they have to suffer.
It is the characters' narcissism as well as the audience's narcissistic response that I wish to investigate in the following.

B) Methodology

In *Writing and Psychoanalysis* John Lechte writes about "The Debt Psychoanalysis owes to Literature"[13]. He states that psychoanalysis itself is transformed and informed by what it analyses. Sometimes, the object of analysis becomes the subject, resulting in a mutually enriching relationship between literature and psychoanalysis, the two fields complementing each other.
Against the background this research will use psychoanalytical concepts to examine the heroines' psychic motivations but also the impact those psychic processes may have on an audience.

I will explore the characters of Saint Joan and Penthesilea in relation to various approaches to the psychic phenomenon of narcissism. These will include:

A) Freud's notions of *primary* and *secondary narcissism*[14] as well as omnipotence of thoughts and *magical thinking*[15]; the distinction

[13] Lechte, J. *Writing and Psychoanalysis : a reader* 1996
[14] Freud, S. *On Narcissism, An Introduction.* London: Vintage 1995
[15] Freud, S. *Totem and Taboo.* London: Routledge 1960

between *egoism* and narcissism[16] as well as the *narcissistic type*[17]

B) Fromm's *automaton conformity* in relation to the illusion of individualism and narcissism[18] and the destructive effects of narcissism on the self and other[19]

C) Benjamin's *absolute self*, i.e. the projection of what we once were or feel we should be[20] (this is similar to Freud's notion of projecting the idealisation of what we lack onto another person)

D) Winnicott' s development of the Kleinian object relations theory: narcissism in relation to compliance, creativity, the capacity to use the other, the capacity to care for the other[21]

The above-mentioned notions are only a few of those I will be examining. Chapter 2 explores these and numerous other understandings of the concept of narcissism.

I wish to examine how all these aspects of psychoanalytic concepts of narcissism can be applied to greatly enhance our understanding of the protagonists in both plays at various stages in their narratives.

Given the nature and scope of this dissertation, my primary focus is on the relationship between psychoanalytic notions of narcissism and the protagonists in the two plays. Thus, albeit extremely significant,

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[16] Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Lecture XXVI*. New York, London: Liveright 1977

[17] Freud, S. *On Sexuality, Libidinal Types.* London: Penguin 1977

[18] Fromm, E. *Escape from Freedom.* New York: Avon 1965

[19] Fromm, E. *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness.* New York: Henry Holt 1992

[20] Benjamin, J. *Like Subjects, Love Objects.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1995

[21] Winnicott, D.W. Playing and Reality. New York: Routledge 1982

questions of political, class, historical, sociological and cultural context will not be explored.

However, I would propose that an understanding of these characters from a contemporary perspective could give us some insight into the role of the psychic phenomenon of narcissism today. There is a fascinating and complex relationship between narcissism and the aspirations of the ideology of individualism, which finds its expression in late capitalist societies. In this way the two protagonists can be seen as examples of the complexities of contemporary structures of individualist tendencies in our time.

Personal interest

For a long time I have been fascinated by the two characters Penthesilea and Saint Joan, particularly in their insightful depiction by Heinrich von Kleist and Bernhard Shaw respectively. I set out to explore the possible roots of this fascination, and the more literature I studied, the more I began to comprehend that it was their location in complex psychic phenomena that creates such impact for the reader / the audience. On a surface reading one is struck by clichéd observations of the nature of these characters, e.g. power, strength, independence. However, on a much closer examination, one discovers an extraordinarily rich complexity in them. I hope to unearth these deep complexities by applying psychoanalytic notions of narcissism. I further hope that in my own small way I will be able to contribute to the developing field of knowledge, which incorporates theatre texts and psychoanalytic work.

I have chosen to focus on the work of certain contemporary psychoanalytic theorists as well as classic Freudian concepts.

An additional motivation has been my desire to explore what it is in the phenomenon of narcissism, that makes these characters so fascinating to us as audience members / readers. Jessica Benjamin claims we love that which we cannot be ourselves (Benjamin: 1995). In this respect it would appear that the narcissism of the reader/audience is an added dimension to the overall notion of narcissism, i.e. there is a narcissistic relationship between an audience member and the characters portrayed on the stage.

If what Erich Fromm claims[22], is true, then we are all aspiring to a much more narcissistic lifestyle than we can ever dare to lead, longing to identify with ideals such as these protagonists. But since we cannot behave like they do, we come to envy their self-sufficiency and independence. This envy comes "with the wish to spoil them"[23] (Klein: 1988). It must therefore appear as a satisfactory conclusion to both plays that the heroine finds her death in the end. The Aristotelian claim for dramatic irony is met, our feelings are purged and we experience a sense of relief that the character reaches her demise for transgressing societal boundaries; we remain safe within our state of *automaton conformity*[24].

I have been eclectic in my choice of psychoanalytic notions of narcissism as I will not be debating these notions, but exploring their application to my two case studies. Furthermore, I do not claim that

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[22] "The majority of us want to be individuals, free of social constraints and allowed to do as they please. Yet very few of us ever achieve this state of independence. It must remain an illusion, and a dangerous one for that matter." (Fromm: 1965)

[23] Klein, M. *Envy and Gratitude.* London: Virago Press 1988

[24] Fromms's concept of automaton conformity is explained in my literature review. Fromm: 1965

my findings will necessarily be appropriate for other plays or protagonists. The narcissistic traits explored here relate to the characters of Saint Joan and Penthesilea, and are being investigated in this context.

C) The myth of Narcissus

To describe the myth, it is helpful to use the language of the ancient writers as they write with a sense of drama and meaning. So, what is the myth of Narcissus?

When Zeus came to the mountains, the wood nymphs rushed to embrace the jovial god. They played with him in icy waterfalls and laughed with him in lush green glades.

Zeus' wife, Hera, was extremely jealous, and often searched the mountainside, trying to catch her husband with the nymphs. But whenever Hera came close to finding Zeus, a charming nymph named Echo stepped across her path. Echo chatted with Hera in a lively fashion and did whatever she could to stall the goddess until Zeus and the other nymphs had escaped.

Eventually Hera discovered that Echo had been tricking her, and she flew into a rage. "Your tongue has made a fool of me!" she shouted at Echo. "Henceforth, your voice will be more brief, my dear! You will always have the last word - but never the first." From that day on, poor Echo could only repeat the last words of what others said.

One day Echo spied a golden-haired youth hunting deer in the woods. The boy's name was Narcissus, and he was the most beautiful young man in the forest. All who looked upon Narcissus fell in love with him

immediately. But he would have nothing to do with anyone, for he was very conceited.

When Echo first laid eyes upon Narcissus, her heart burned like the flame of a torch. She secretly followed him through the woods, loving him more with each step. She got closer and closer until finally Narcissus heard the leaves rustling. He whirled around and cried out, “Who’s here?”. From behind a tree, Echo repeated his last word, “Here!” Narcissus looked about in wonder, “Who are you? Come to me!” he said.

Narcissus searched the woods, but could not find the nymph. “Stop hiding! Let us meet!” he shouted. “Let us meet!” Echo cried. Then she stepped from behind the tree and rushed to embrace Narcissus.

But the youth panicked when the nymph flung her arms around his neck. He pushed her away and shouted, “Leave me alone! I’d rather die than let you love me!” “Love me!” was all poor Echo could say as she watched Narcissus run from her through the woods. “Love me! Love me! Love me!”

Humiliated and filled with sorrow, Echo wandered the mountains until she found a lonely cave to live in. Meanwhile Narcissus hunted in the woods, tending only to himself, until one day he discovered a hidden pool of water. The pool had a silvery-smooth surface. No shepherds ever disturbed its waters - no goats or cattle, no birds or fallen leaves. Only the sun danced upon the still pond. Tired from hunting and eager to quench his thirst, Narcissus lay on his stomach and leaned over the water. But when he looked at the glassy surface, he saw someone staring back at him.

Narcissus was spellbound. Gazing up at him from the pool were eyes like twin stars, framed by hair as golden as Apollo’s and cheeks as smooth as ivory. But when he leaned down and tried to kiss the

perfect lips, he kissed only spring water. When he reached out and tried to embrace this vision of beauty, he found no one there.

"What love could be more cruel than this?" he cried. "When my lips kiss the beloved, they touch only water! When I reach for my beloved, I hold only water!" Narcissus began to weep. When he wiped away his tears, the person in the water also wiped away tears. "Oh, no," sobbed Narcissus. "I see the truth now; it is myself I weep for! I yearn for my own reflection!" As Narcissus cried harder, the tears broke the glassy surface of the pool and caused his reflection to disappear. "Come back! Where did you go?" the youth cried. "I love you so much! At least stay and let me look upon you!"

Day after day, Narcissus stared at the water, in love with his own reflection. He began to waste away from grief, until one sad morning, he felt himself dying. "Good-bye, my love!" he shouted to his reflection. "Good-bye, my love!" Echo cried to Narcissus from her cave deep in the woods. Then Narcissus took his last breath.

After he died, the water nymphs and wood nymphs searched for his body. But all they found was a magnificently beautiful flower beside the hidden pool where the youth had once yearned for his own reflection. The flower had white petals and a yellow centre, and from that time on, it was called Narcissus.

And alas, poor Echo, desolate after Narcissus's death, did not eat or sleep. As she lay forlornly in her cave, all her beauty faded away, and she became very thin until her voice was all that was left. Thereafter, the lonely voice of Echo was heard in the mountains, repeating the last words anyone said[25]

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[25] http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/students/mmarassa/mythology/echo.html (28 Aug 2006)

Chapter 1:
Outline of selected psychoanalytical notions of narcissism

1.1) Narcissism as a developmental phenomenon

1.1.1) Freud's approach

Freud believed that narcissism is the first and original stage of human development. In the beginning, an infant's libido is with the subject alone. Only later will it be cathected (attached) to outside objects. In this context he differentiates between the *primary* narcissism of a child, and *secondary* narcissism at any later stage in life.

Primary Narcissism

Freud has described the state of a sleeper as "the primal state [in which] distribution of the libido is restored – total narcissism, in which libido and ego-interest, still united and indistinguishable, dwell in the self-sufficing ego."[26] We can imagine the psychic state of a newborn infant as very similar: the libido has not yet been cathectised [i.e. attached] to outside objects, it belongs to the subject alone. Freud discovered a "fixation of the libido on the subject's own body and personality instead of to an object" in many of his patients. He believed that "... it cannot be an exceptional or trivial event. On the contrary, it is probable that this narcissism is the universal and original state of things, from which object-love is only later developed." The infant, experiencing his mother's breast as the ultimate love object

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[26] Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* p 518

capable of satisfying at once his two great vital needs (nourishment and pleasure), also comes to realize that it is not always available to him. The first sexual object in his life (his mother's breast) comes and goes beyond his control. Freud describes how "... the infant, in his sucking activity, gives up the object and replaces it by a part of his own body. He begins to suck his thumbs or his own tongue." This provides him with some independence. He can derive pleasure without having to rely on an external source. While the activity of granting the subject satisfaction without having to rely on the external object is called *auto-erotism,* this way of re-allocation of the libido was named narcissism, the term having been borrowed from Paul Näcke who described an adult who "treats his own body with all the caresses that are usually devoted to an outside sexual object".[27]

In the course of normal development, the libido is later shared between the subject and external objects (other people), denoting self-love and love for others respectively. "... without the narcissism necessarily disappearing on that account."[28]

Secondary Narcissism can be defined as a state in which the libido is withdrawn from the external world and re-integrated into the self. In his essay on "Infantile Sexuality"[29] Freud claims that the ego-libido or narcissistic libido "seems to be the great reservoir from which the object cathexes are sent out and into

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[27] Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis,* p 517
[28] Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis,* p 389
[29] Freud, S. *On Sexuality.* Volume 7, On Sexuality, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works. Compiled and edited by Angela Richards. New York: Pelican 1977, p 88ff

which they are withdrawn once more"[30]. This can be a pathological reaction to an external trauma or an internal crisis. The subject no longer cathectises his libido to outside objects, but keeps all of it back in an attempt to salvage his own mental stability. While patients suffering from hysteria or obsessional neurosis manage to replace real objects with those in their fantasy (drawn partly or entirely from memory) and carry on relating to them to a certain extent, "paraphrenics [today they would be called schizophrenics] seem to have withdrawn completely from people and things in the external world without replacing them by others in phantasy"[31]. - "But the question then arose of what happened to the libido of dementia praecox patients. Abraham did not hesitate to give the answer: it is turned back on to the ego and this *reflexive turning back is the source of the megalomania* in dementia praecox."[32] (Italics by the author) Having accepted this suggestion, Freud continues: "We thus slowly became familiar with the notion that the libido, which we find attached to objects and which is the expression of an effort to obtain satisfaction in connection with those objects, can also leave the objects and set the subject's ego in their place." This means that there can be a certain flexibility, a reversed flow of libido that may be alternately attached to outside objects or to the ego itself.

In order to visualise this flow of libido between subject and object, Freud proposes the image of single cell organisms, which

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[30] Freud, S. *On Sexuality, Libidinal Types (1931).* Volume 7, On Sexuality, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works. Compiled and edited by Angela Richards. New York: Pelican 1977 (p 141)

[31] (S. Freud: On Narcissism: An Introduction, 1913)

[32] Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis,* p 516

put out protrusions by pumping plasma from their body into one part. They can withdraw those protrusions just as quickly, the liquid flowing back into a globule. In a similar way, even in a healthy individual, libido can be cathectised to outside objects or reclaimed by the ego.

The Omnipotence of Thoughts

A third category of narcissism is to be seen in " [...] the mental life of children and primitive peoples. In the latter we find characteristics which, if they occurred singly, might be put down to megalomania: an over-estimation of the power of their wishes and mental acts, the *'omnipotence of thoughts'*, a belief in the thaumaturgic [i.e. magic] force of words, a technique of dealing with the external world [...] which appears to be a logical application of these grandiose premises." (S. Freud: *Totem and Taboo, 1913*)

Freud claims that "His [The primitive man's] wishes are accompanied by a motor impulse, the will, which is later destined to alter the whole face of the earth in order to satisfy his wishes. This motor impulse is at first employed to give a representation of the satisfying situation in such a way that it becomes possible to experience the satisfaction by means of what might be described as motor hallucinations. This kind of representation of a satisfied wish is quite comparable to children's play, which succeeds their earlier purely sensory technique of satisfaction. If children and primitive men find play and imitative representation enough for them, this is *not a sign of their being unassuming in our sense of their resignedly accepting their actual impotence*. It is the early understandable result of the paramount virtue they

ascribe to their wishes, of the will that is associated with those wishes and of the methods by which those wishes operate. "It thus comes to appear as though it is the magical act itself, which, owing to its similarity with the desired result, alone *determines the occurrence of that result*." (My italics).

In the timeframe of a human being's development, this stage must therefore come second, after the primary, but before the secondary narcissism. Having used pure hallucinatory ideas to shift the focus of events onto himself and his wishes as a new-born baby, the child now moves on to use play, staged and performed by himself, to gain (apparent) power over what is happening around him. His wishes are expressed in scenes, which he creates and alters according to his needs. The past and the present are merged into one another: "Things become less important than ideas of things. [...] Since distance is of no importance in thinking – since what lies furthest apart both in time and space, can without difficulty be comprehended in a single act of consciousness – so, too, the world of magic has a telepathic disregard for spatial distance and treats past situations as though they were present." This helps the child deal with past occurrences in the presence and alter unsatisfactory experiences ex post. However, it must be obvious that this creative way of handling the world is operating in what seems to be a universe next to and largely removed from reality. Freud writes: "In the animistic epoch the reflection of the internal world is bound to blot out the other picture of the world – the one which *we* seem to perceive."[33]

[33] Freud, S. *Totem and Taboo (1913).* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1960, p85

Furthermore the illness of paranoia and megalomania both stem from an inability to let go of this narcissistic belief: the self is seen as the centre of the universe, all other beings revolving around it and being either controlled by it (megalomania) or aiming all their acts at harming it (paranoia).

Narcissism versus Egoism

In his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* Freud clearly distinguishes between *egoism* and narcissism. He draws a clear line between ego-instincts and sexual instincts. These two kinds of instinct undergo a different development; they respond differently to "Necessity the Educator"[34] and can even come into opposition to each other. Both kinds of instinct "come before us as mere designations of sources of energy in the individual" and their differentiation "must keep to the biological facts lying behind them".[35] While the ego-instincts are mainly concerned with physical needs such as hunger and thirst, sexual instincts appear to be attached primarily to libidinal needs.

Egoism is an ego-instinct and represents the individual's concern with his own advantage. Narcissism, on the other hand, is a sexual instinct and comprises the libido's cathexis of the self. Here we have to take an individual's libidinal satisfaction into account. This means that one can be egoistic but still attach one's libido to another object, i.e. be in love with somebody else while still focussing on one's own advantage. In this case "the

[34] By "Necessity the Educator" Freud expresses the process of adaptation to and compromising with reality, a process every human being has to go through as he grows up. The individual learns to understand that some of his wishes and instincts have to be weighed in relation to those of other people and the world around him.

[35] Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis,* p513

libidinal satisfaction in relation to the object forms part of the ego's needs", i.e. it is to the subject's advantage to attach its libido to an external object. It is also possible to be egoistic and excessively narcissistic at the same time. In this case one would have very little need for an object, be it for physical sexual satisfaction or for more idealized purposes such as sensuality, love, companionship, etc. Similarly, "altruism, as a concept, does not necessarily coincide with libidinal object-cathexis, but is distinguished from it by the absence of longings for sexual satisfaction."[36] This means a subject can have someone else's advantage at heart without choosing that other person as a libidinal object. In the case of being completely in love, however, "altruism converges with libidinal object-cathexis". Part of the subject's own libido is attributed to the loved object along with the ego's narcissism, making it desirable and putting the object's advantage at the centre of the subject's interest[37].

The Narcissistic Type

Freud distinguished between three *Libidinal Types*[38]*:* The *erotic type* is mainly focussed on loving and being loved. People of this libidinal type strongly depend on others to love them and be there for them. What they fear most of all is abandonment. Their standpoint represents the instinctual demand of the id to which their other psychical agencies have to comply. The *obsessional type* is governed by its super-ego. The subject develops a high

[36] Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* p517
[37] Freud: Lecture XXVI, The Libido Theory and Narcissism
[38] Freud, S. *On Sexuality, Libidinal Types (1931).* Volume 7, On Sexuality, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works. Compiled and edited by Angela Richards. New York: Pelican 1977 (p 362f)

degree of self-reliance, its greatest fear being the fear of its own conscience rather than the fear of losing love. From a social standpoint, those people represent the true conservative elements of civilisation. The *narcissistic type* is characterised as being free of any tension between ego and super ego. The subject's main interest does not lie in needs of an erotic nature, but focuses mainly on self-preservation. There also is no fear of conscience, since the super-ego as such seems hardly developed at all. Such a character would be independent and not open to intimidation, but highly aggressive and active. These individuals come across as "personalities" and natural leaders, able to enhance cultural development or damage the established state of affairs. While all this can be said for both Penthesilea and Saint Joan, the following would mostly apply to Penthesilea: In their erotic life, loving is preferred above being loved. This is a very interesting statement and may well explain why Penthesilea cannot cede to her beloved's wishes, so similar to her own, but ultimately has to destroy him. Joan on the other hand, appears to be a mixture between the obsessional and narcissistic type. Her conscience consists of her strong religious belief, God himself acting as her super-ego. Yet while her self-reliance must be obvious, there is also a high degree of loving (Jesus, Saint Mary) above the need of being loved.

1.1.2) Klein's approach

Klein greatly develops Freud's notion of primary narcissism in so far as she claims a relation to objects, primarily the mother (her breast),

from birth onwards. She believes this early relation to be *preceding* auto-erotism and narcissism.

The good object (mother, breast) is loved first. "Auto-erotism and narcissism include the love for and relation with the *internalised*[39] good object which in phantasy form part of the loved body and self. It is to this internalised object that in auto-erotic gratification and narcissistic *states* a withdrawal takes place. [...] This hypothesis contradicts Freud's concept of auto-erotic and narcissistic *stages* which preclude an object relation"[40]. Consequently, however, Klein mentions that the difference in viewpoints is minor to what it may seem at first glance. Freud's statements on this issue are not unequivocal, and as we have seen earlier, he also recognizes the infant's capacity for auto-erotism and narcissism as a means to replace the loved object and feel less dependent – of an object he must have felt love for earlier.

Melanie Klein claims that in the infant's endeavour to overcome his painful dependence on the mother, he resorts to hallucinatory gratification. In this context "[...] two interrelated processes take place: the omnipotent conjuring up of the ideal object and situation, and the equally omnipotent annihilation of the bad persecutory object and the painful situation. These processes are based on splitting both the object and the ego."[41] "Good" and "bad" parts of the self as well as the object are being separated from each other in the child's mind. In this context we should remember that delusions both of persecution and of grandeur are based on an underlying belief in the omnipotence

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[39] (my italics)

[40] Klein, M. *Envy and Gratitude; Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)* London: Virago Press 1988 (p 51)

[41] Klein, M. *Envy and Gratitude; Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)* London: Virago Press 1988, p 7

of the subject and may recur later in life in the pathological form of schizophrenia.

The “good” and “bad” parts of the mother and infant can come across different fates:

Projection

a) *“Bad” parts* of the self are projected into another person, i.e. the mother. The infant perceives his anger and desperation as caused by the mother / breast whom he cannot control to satisfy his needs. The following (imaginary) attacks on the mother’s breast range from sucking dry to biting up, scooping out and robbing the mother’s body of all good contents. “The other line of attacks derives from anal and urethral impulses and implies expelling dangerous substances (excrements) out of the self and into the mother. These excrements and bad parts are meant not only to injure, but also to control and to take possession of the object.” Here lies the first step towards a narcissistic view of the world: In becoming obsessional and trying to control the object, the infant tries to control himself and his own impulses. In his phantasy the mother has become *the* bad self. Much of the hatred against parts of the self is now directed towards the mother. This leads to a particular form of identification [of an object with the hated parts of the self] which “establishes the prototype of an aggressive object relation.” Melanie Klein sums these processes up with the term “projective identification”.

Apart from perceiving other people as persecutors, the ego suffers another deficiency through this complete splitting off its

aggressive side: power, potency, strength, knowledge and many other desired qualities are lost to outside objects.

b) If the ***ego-ideal*** (the "good" parts of the self) is projected into another person, that person will be admired because it contains the "good" parts of the self. Excrements are then perceived as gifts to the mother. They "are expelled and projected into the mother as good, i.e. loving parts of the self." This projection of good parts and good feelings into the mother is vitally important for the infant's development of good object-relations and to integrate his ego.

However, if this projective process is carried out excessively, good parts of the personality are felt to be lost, and in this way the mother becomes the ego-ideal. "This process, too, results in weakening and impoverishing the ego."[42] The person may become dependent on external representatives of his own good parts in later life. Concurrently he may lose the ability to love altogether because loved object are seen merely as representatives of the self. The narcissism has diffused the ego's boundaries, blurring them and making it impossible to relate to outside objects as different entities from the self. The ego has "overspent" itself, there is not enough good left inside, the ego-ideal has been entirely projected outside the self.

Both forms of projection can lead to a narcissistic form of schizoid object relations in later life. When the ego-ideal has been projected into another person, that person becomes loved and admired *because*

[42] Klein, M. *Envy and Gratitude; Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)* London: Virago Press 1988, p 9

he contains the good parts of the self. “Similarly, the relation to another person on the basis of projecting bad parts of the self into him is of a narcissistic nature, because in this case as well the object strongly represents one part of the self.” In both cases the subject will exhibit a high degree of obsessional features. His “need to control others can to some extent be explained by a deflective drive to control parts of the self.”[43]

Klein also notes that both types of narcissistic persons become less open to therapeutic influence. Having split off and projected part of their self outside the ego, they cannot react to interpretation. Part of them is not available and can neither accept nor reject the analyst’s input.

Introjection

Klein emphasises that “the introjection of the good object, first of all the mother’s breast, is a precondition for normal development.” It forms the core of the later ego, a good centre around which the personality can grow. The good object is idealized and serves as a safe haven to resort to when anxiety or frustration become too much to bear. However, this escape mechanism can have two serious negative effects: if the persecutory fear is too strong, the flight from the outside world becomes excessive. The ego cannot develop normally and later object relations are hampered. A high degree of dependence and subservience to the introjected “good”, the internal object, lets the ego appear self-reliant, when it really is nothing more than a shell incapable of relating to the outside world.

[43] Klein, M. *Envy and Gratitude; Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)* London: Virago Press 1988, p 13

Alternatively, if the idealized object is not assimilated, i.e. does not become part of the ego, it can act as a foreign body embedded in the self. The self will remain dependent on it as if on an outside object, and with it "there goes a feeling that the ego has no life and no value of its
own." This can lead to further splitting within the ego itself. A part of the ego tries to unite with the idealized object while another part has to deal with internal persecutors. More will be said about this in the section headed the *paranoid-schizoid position.*

Klein differentiates between two **developmental stages**:

1) The "paranoid-schizoid position"

This earliest state sees the infant split his own good feelings from the bad ones (schizoid), projecting the bad ones out of himself onto his mother's breast, consequently fearing it and experiencing himself to be persecuted by it (paranoid).

As we have seen earlier, splitting is a normal process in infants of a very young age. Not only the ego itself, but also the object is split into various parts, "good" and "bad", internal and external, projected and introjected. The result must be a general feeling of disintegration, the ego feels "in bits". In the normal course of development, this disintegration is transitory. Regular gratification by a good external object lets the child overcome temporary schizoid states. If, however, those states of splitting

and subsequent disintegration which the ego is unable to overcome occur too frequently and go on for too long, the cornerstone for a schizophrenic illness has been laid.

2) The "depressive position"

This second stage re-unites "bad" and "good" impulses, re-integrating them into the infant's psyche. He now experiences his aggressive impulses as his own and starts to feel guilty about them (depressive). This stage has been re-named the stage of being capable of feeling "ruth" or "concern" for others. The super-ego (conscience) develops, using as its roots the ideal and persecutory objects, which have been introjected in the paranoid-schizoid position[44]. Before the infant has reached this stage, he is "ruthless", though he does not know it. It is thus to be seen as a normal developmental process to go through an early narcissistic or "ruthless" stage which is "pre-moral and allows no concerns for others"[45]. Only afterwards can a child attain a healthy interest in other people's feelings.

1.1.3) Winnicott's approach

Winnicott further develops this Kleinian notion of the two positions. In addition, he lists three stages of relating to an outside object; these stages are contained in what Winnocott terms the "*change to the reality* principle":

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[44] Segal, H. *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein.* London: The Hogarth Press 1988, p74

[45] Guntrip, H. *Schizoid Phenomena, Object Relations and The Self.* London: The Hogarth Press Ltd. 1992, p57

The subject (i.e. infant) starts relating to an external object, which is still felt to be a projective entity, i.e. part of the self.
The object is placed outside the area of the subject's omnipotent control; the object is now perceived as an external phenomenon, there is a recognition of the object as an entity in it's own right.
The subject can now use the object for it's own needs.

1.1.4) Jessica Benjamin's approach

Benjamin writes about the *self's absoluteness*: "I am one (everybody is identical to me, everybody's needs are identical to mine) and I am alone (outside of me there is nothing, I control everything). (Benjamin, 1995)
She contradicts Freud's notion that object-love leads to identification, claiming that it must be the other way around: identification, which Freud called the *earliest tie to the object* (Freud, 1921), consequently leads to object love. This seems to recall exactly the story of Narcissus who chose himself as a love object, the identification in his case being real and absolute.
Identificatory love remains linked to strong feelings of idealization and excitement throughout life. It derives its power from control-phantasies, providing the ego with a practical grandiosity and helping it overcome feelings of vulnerability and dependence. Similar to the Kleinian notion of projecting and introjecting good parts, Benjamin explains that an important defence mechanism can grow out of loving parts of oneself within another person. She writes about the little boy's identification with his father, which helps him to phantasize having access to and control over his mother. In this way he manages to overcome his feelings of helplessness, but the idealized father also acts as a role model, and trough the identification the child may gain

"freedom, agency and contact with the outside world of other people that partially compensate for the loss of control."[46]

1.2) Narcissism as a socio-cultural phenomenon

1.2.1) Erich Fromm claims that human beings are afraid of their own freedom. Too many possible choices overpower and ultimately paralyse them. He describes various psychological mechanisms to escape the terrifying outside world, overwhelming in its power, that the individual feels intimidated by and lost in. One such escape mechanism may be submission to a leader, as has happened in Fascist countries over the years. The individual hands over responsibility to a higher authority, giving up his freedom to make decisions, but gaining security by being rid of the choice between too many options. He does not have to bear "the burden of freedom"[47] any longer. A second escape mechanism is to be seen in what Fromm calls *automaton conformity*:

"The individual ceases to be himself. He adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns; and he therefore becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be."[48] Similar to a chameleon, eluding predators by changing its colour and visually melt into its background, human beings tend to adapt completely to the world around them. They give up their individuality and become automatons, so conform and similar to everybody else as to become less exposed and threatened.

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[46] Benjamin, J. *Like Subjects, Love Objects.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p58

[47] Fromm, E. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Avon Books, 1965, p155

[48] Fromm, E. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Avon Books, 1965, p208

Yet another option is to block out reality and withdraw from the world into psychosis. This is the case with *narcissistic personalities.*

While the latter is an obvious malfunction of the psyche, Fromm sees the blending-in as a common and "normal" escape mechanism, while the dream of individuality may be widespread and enticing, but "an illusion in most case, and a dangerous one for that matter, as it blocks the removal of those conditions that are responsible for this state of affairs." [49]

1.2.2) Winnicott, however, contradicts Fromm and claims that conformity and compliance carry with them a sense of futility and are to be regarded as a sick basis for life and an illness in psychiatric terms.[50] The author opposes it to a universal creativity, which "belongs to being alive". He claims that there is "an initial creative approach to external phenomena" in every human being. To accept the outside world as it is must be seen as uncreative and ultimately the opposite of being alive. Every individual is endowed with the gift of creativity, and therefore capable of and responsible for shaping and changing his environment. The root of all progress can be seen in the individual's discontent with the state of affairs around him. By using his creative capacities he not only improves his personal lot, but also furthers the state of the world we all live in. Winnicott further writes that there is clinically *no sharp line* between health and the schizoid state, thereby bringing an unrealistic narcissistic approach to reality closer to a healthy, creative alternative to compliance.[51]

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[49] Fromm, E. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Avon Books, 1965, p209

[50] Winnicott: D.W. *Classification: Is there a Psychoanalytic contribution to Psychiatric Classification? (1959-64)*

[51] Winnicott, D.W. *Playing and Reality* 1971

1.2.3) Jessica Benjamin, Freud and Hegel's paradox[52]

Hegel's notion of the conflict between independence and dependence meshes with the classic psychoanalytic view in which the self does not wish to give up omnipotence. Freud's concept of the earliest ego with its incorporation of everything good into itself (libido cathexis of the self) is not unlike Hegel's *absolute self.*

Hegel believes that a breakdown in a relationship is inevitable because at the very point of realizing one's own independence, one is dependent on the other to acknowledge that independence[53]. In other words, the self's need for independence clashes with the self's need for recognition. Hegel and Freud[54] argue that this tension inevitably leads to a breakdown, which produces an insolvable conflict of domination between the self and the other.

Extending Hegel's paradox to the master/slave relationship[55] and the extremes of domination one can argue that Hegel sees the self as needing to affirm its omnipotence in its encounter with the other. The self (master) cannot live with this paradoxical tension and consequently affirms itself by denying recognition to the other. Further, to even acknowledge the other (slave) would be to deny the absoluteness of the self (master).

This mechanism can be diagnosed as narcissistic because the master's dependence on the slave for recognition of his master status confronts

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[52] Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Mind*. New York: Harper Torchpress 1952; Chapter 4.
[53] This is the essence of Hegel's paradox.
[54] Freud, S. *Civilisation, Society and Religion.* London: Penguin 1964; p145
[55] Benjamin, J. *The Bonds of Love.* New York: Virago 188; Chapter 2

the self with such an overwhelming tension that recognition has to be denied to the slave. The master's self has to block out part of reality in order to re-gain an illusion of independence[56].

Benjamin adds that in normal development one will eventually come to understand the meaning of the *self* as an entity apart from the outside world. This realization forces the individual to accept the limitations of that self: "At the moment when we understand that separate minds can share similar feelings, we begin to learn that these minds can also disagree"[57].

1.3) Narcissism as a sociopathic phenomenon

1.3.1) Fromm's notion

Fromm differentiates between two kinds of narcissism: *grandiosity* on the one hand and *negative narcissism* (bordering on or leading into hypochondria) on the other hand.

Grandiosity can be compared to the psychiatric term of megalomania: a person perceives himself as the centre of the universe, allotting his own person more importance than any other individual. His needs and wishes are seen as superior and higher in priority than those of other people around him. Whether he believes himself to be capable of changing the course of history is a matter of psychological structure. In the social context, however, it makes it difficult for him to relate to others normally since he perceives them and their problems to be secondary to his own.

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[56] Fromm, E. Escape from Freedom. New York: Avon Books, 1965; p209

[57] Benjamin, J. *Like Subjects, Love Objects.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1995, p37

Negative narcissism, on the other hand, can be related to the psychiatric state of paranoia. The individual sees other members of society as "out to get him", envying him his luck, fortune, status etc. Again, the person perceives himself as the centre of everyone else's thoughts, but in a negative sense. If he fails in his endeavours, it is because other people want him to fail, if he succeeds in achieving a goal, he has to fear his peers' envy, anger and revenge. This sets him apart from society, isolates him and hampers his social skills considerably.

In both cases a person can only perceive of his or her feelings, thoughts, properties, etc as fully real, while everything not appertaining to them "is perceived only by intellectual recognition, *affectively* without weight and colour". While such dissociation alleviates the pressure of having to deal with outside realities and allows the subject to feel less insignificant in relation to the world, it contains potentially disastrous consequences.

Fromm lists among man's motivations, his rational and irrational passions: "... the drive to control, to submit, to destroy; narcissism, greed, envy, ambition" Through emotional dissociation from other objects, these drives can be satisfied more readily. An individual may well end up "destroying others, so that the world ceases to be threatening"[58].

[58] Fromm, E. *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* 1973, p297; Ibid. *Escape from Freedom* 1965, p208

Chapter 2:
Narcissism in Saint Joan

2.1.) The Play

Bernhard Shaw's *Saint Joan* is divided into six scenes and an epilogue.

Scene 1 introduces Joan as she comes to ask Captain Robert de Baudricourt for support in her military campaign. Having managed to gather the support of the French knight Bertrand de Poulengey as well as all his soldiers in the field, she achieves her goal with Robert de Baudricourt and leaves with a horse and armour and a small army. Her plan is to crown the Dauphin (Charles VII) and rid France of the occupying English armies.

Scene 2 is set in the Dauphin's castle in Tourine. Her reputation has preceded Joan, and all clergymen and aristocrats expect to meet either an angel or a lunatic. They set her a test, disguising one of the lords as the Dauphin to catch her out. But Joan passes the test with flying colours, picking out the real Dauphin immediately. Albeit showing him all due respect, she behaves even more devoutly towards the archbishop, winning him over to her side in the process. Her call for war finally draws La Hire to her side, a "war dog", who is happy to see action at last: Joan is to lift the siege of Orleans and crown the Dauphin in Rheims.

Scene 3 - Dunois, a French general, is waiting outside Orleans. The wind blows from the East and makes it impossible for his troops to approach the town by boat. As soon as Joan arrives, the wind changes. The French storm Orleans and lift the siege.

Scene 4 - The French bishop Cauchon has been invited for a talk at the English camp. The Earl of Warwick and his chaplain (John de Stogumber) try to convince him that Joan is a sorceress. They want to see her burnt at the stake. But the church's furthermost interest must lie in saving her soul. However, they find some common ground: Joan endangers the role of the church as much as she threatens the position of the nobility, claiming that she can converse directly with God and the king respectively. The plan is to "save her soul without saving her body"[59].

Scene 5 - After Charles VII has been crowned, Joan remains inside the cathedral, praying. Her voices are telling her that her work is not yet completed. She wants to carry on fighting until all English armies have been removed from French soil. The king wishes peace and plans to sign a treaty, Dunois is worried about rumours that the English have pledged a ransom for Joan's head, and the archbishop is starting to feel that Joan's stubbornness is turning into insubordination. As Joan decides to leave for Paris all the same, everybody has given up their support for her except La Hire who is still keen to follow her into war.

Scene 6 – Joan has been captured by the Burgundians sold to the English. She stands trial in front of an Inquisitional court. An array of charges has been reduced to the main charge of heresy. She has ignored the intermediary, which is the church, claiming that her orders have come to her directly from God through the voices of Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret and the Archangel Michael. When she realizes that her life is at stake, Joan quickly recants, only to relapse when she

finds out she is to be imprisoned for life. Joan prefers being burnt at the stake to spending the rest of her days in confinement. She is excommunicated by the church and executed by the worldly powers, the English military. The French bishop and the inquisitor know they are doing wrong, but do nothing to stop it. After her death the English chaplain and Lord Warwick are full of remorse for different reasons: it was a cruel spectacle and they may have made a martyr of her, granting her eternal life and influence.

Epilogue – 50 years later. Charles VII is asleep and dreams. Ladvenu, a Dominican monk who was present at Joan's trial, appears to him and tells him that Joan's conviction has been rebuked, her name cleared. The king is now officially ordained, he was not crowned by an heretic after all. Joan appears and learns that she has been canonized as a saint. Cauchon (the French bishop) joins them as well as Dunois (the French general). Dunois has become a better soldier through Joan, Cauchon has helped her martyrdom by having her burnt. The English chaplain has been saved by her, the soldier who gave her a cross got one day of sainthood a year for it. The inquisitor and the executioner re-appear, and all together they kneel to Joan and praise her for her good deeds in life. Yet none of them want her to come back. It is easier to venerate the dead than the living.

2.2) Investigating narcissism in Saint Joan

Scene I – The First Miracles

[59] Shaw, B. *Saint Joan.* London: Penguin Books 1924, *Warwick* p94

The first description we get of Joan is that she is "so positive" and that "she really doesn't seem to be afraid of anything"[60]. When she first appears, she tells Captain Robert de Baudricourt that he is to give her a horse and armour and some soldiers and send her to the Dauphin – "Those are your orders from my Lord"[61]. By her Lord, Joan means God, "the King of Heaven". The Steward is impressed by the fact that the hens have stopped laying eggs and the cows are not giving any more milk since the day Joan arrived and would not be heard by Robert. Why is she "positive" and unafraid?

Joan's father is a farmer. "Not a gentleman farmer: he makes money by it, and lives by it. Still, not a laborer."[62] Robert describes her as a *bourgeoise*. Her father could have a cousin who is a lawyer, he may cause considerable inconvenience if his daughter was ill treated or abused by one of the soldiers. Her social status, therefore, is within the lower middle class. At her trial Joan herself emphasises that she is "no shepherd lass" and would do "a lady's work in the house – spin or weave - against any woman in Rouen"[63]. Undoubtedly, the character of Robert de Baudricourt, and probably Shaw himself through Robert's words, sees Joan as a difficult customer who cannot be disposed of as easily as would be convenient. He does not take her "sacred mission" seriously for one minute, bur fears her relatives who might give him a hard time. The steward, on the other hand, is impressed by the "miracles" she can work, and here we can see Shaw's sarcasm shining through again. The miracles are petty enough, but annoying: no eggs, no milk until Joan gets her way. And indeed, as soon as she has been

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[60] *Steward* p51
[61] *Joan*, p52
[62] *Robert de Baudricourt*, p55
[63] *Joan*, p 128

granted her wishes, the hens start laying again and the cows yield more milk than ever before.

But what is Joan's stance? She has found a sword behind the altar of St Catherine where God himself had hidden it for her[64]. In the sound of the church bells she hears the voices of St Catherine, St Margaret and the Archangel Michael who tell her what to do. She must dress as a soldier, lift the siege of Orleans, rid France of the English and crown the Dauphin to make him king Charles VII of France.

In this context it is not surprising that she comes across as positive and unafraid. From a Freudian point of view one can say that God himself has been integrated into her self as the super-ego, determining what is right and wrong. The fact that these determinations differ decidedly from what society around her would expect (to dress as a woman, to stay at home, find a husband and show obedience to him) does not seem to impress her at all. This correlates to Freud's *narcissistic type* in that she is *independent and not open to intimidation, but highly aggressive and active*. *A "personality", a natural leader.* Freud claims that in the *narcissistic type* the super-ego is hardly developed. Exactly this is the case here: Joan has introjected God (her image of a good object according to Klein) as such, without ever developing her own super-ego. As a consequence, she does not waver. But she also impresses other people as proud and disobedient:

> THE ARCHBISHOP: You have stained yourself with the sin of pride […] I have no blessing for you while you are proud and disobedient.

Recalling Fromm's *narcissistic type*[65], we could say the Joan is *blocking out reality*. She cannot understand why particularly the clerics would

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[64] *Joan,* p 83

[65] see page 26

object to her absolute loyalty to God, her personal king. She lives in an illusion, disregarding the social structure of the Middle Ages where the position of the church was unquestioned and unquestionable. By ignoring the hierarchy of the church and claiming a direct relationship with God devoid of any intermediates, she enters a dangerous territory. Thus her partial withdrawal from reality makes it impossible for her to adapt her behaviour to the conditions around her. Consequently, she will be helpless in her defence at the trial because she is unaware of her problem and incapable of solving it.

But why does she have to dress like a soldier? At her trial, she gives a plausible explanation: She will have to live with soldiers and be respected by them. They must not see her as a woman because it would distract them or even put her at risk. However, this explanation must be seen in the light of what Joan says to her friend Dunois in Scene 5. Dunois tells her that he believes in her because she always gives "very sensible reasons" for what she does. Joan replies:

> JOAN: Well, I have to find reasons for you, because you do not believe in my voices. But the voices come first and I find the reasons after.[66]

She tells us that her "reasons" are nothing but rationalisations, attempts to back up irrational decisions by conjuring up a logical explanation ex post.

In this context, her decision to dress as a soldier must be seen more in relation to what she tells Robert de Baudricourt:

> JOAN: They all say I'm mad until I talk to them, squire. But you see that it is the will of God that you are to do what He has put into my mind[67].

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[66] p 103

Shaw's cynicism meets with Joan's perception of herself. Normally, a person puts something into his/her *own* mind. And so does Joan. When she says it was God who has put these thoughts into her mind, she refers to that introjected part of her self, which makes her decisions. Alternatively, we can say that it is her ego ideal that she has *projected* into God, giving her own wishes the weight of a divine order. By saying "He has put it into my mind" she also exhibits signs of splitting. The self consists of different parts that communicate with each other as if they were different people.

So, once we have established that the wish to dress as a soldier comes from Joan herself, even though it may be disguised as an order from above (her super-ego), we can ask why: Why does she not accept her role as a woman but decides to break with convention and change her appearance to that of a man?

There are various possibilities. One is that since her narcissism makes it impossible for her to relate to outside libidinal objects (a lover), she has to suppress her sexuality along with her womanhood.

Also possible is the vow of chastity in terms of magical thinking: Joan believes, along with many people of her time, that the state of virginity enhances her strength and power as well as pleasing God and making it more likely for her endeavours to bear fruit. Then the male attire could indeed help to distract men from her body, thus making it easier for her to remain a virgin.

A third option is that she identifies with a male introject (be it Jesus, God or the Archangel Michael), which would explain why she has to dress like a man. Her difficulties in interacting with the inquisitional court later could also be put down to this *high degree of dependence and subservience to the introjected "good", the internal object,*

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[67] p 53

[which] *lets the ego appear self-reliant, when it really is nothing more than a shell incapable of relating to the outside world*[68].

Freud's claim that narcissistic types come across as "natural leaders" corresponds with what Bertrand de Poulengey says about Joan:

> POULENGEY: There is something about her. They are pretty foulmouthed and foulminded down there in the guardroom, some of them. But there hasn't been a word that has anything to do with her being a woman.[69]

So the dress of a soldier is helping to cement her genuine appearance as a leader. She impresses people as a person, a genderless individual. Even the common soldiers accept her unusual dress code and are taken in by her persuasive personality. Poulengey then goes on to explain Joan's effect on himself:

> POULENGEY: Her words and her ardent faith in God have put fire into me.
>
> ROBERT: Whew! You are as mad as she is.
>
> POULENGEY: We want a few mad people now. See where the sane ones have landed us!

The reasoning that a mad person may be better equipped to come up with unorthodox ideas to solve a difficult situation, relates directly to Winnicott's concept of *universal creativity*[70]: He claims that every individual is endowed with the gift of creativity, and therefore capable of and responsible for shaping and changing his environment. Formerly Fromm had suggested that conformity is the "healthy" way of dealing with an overpowering world. He argued that dreaming of individuality may be widespread and enticing, but "an illusion in most case, and a

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[68] Klein, M. *Envy and Gratitude; Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms (1946)* London: Virago Press 1988, p9

[69] p 56

dangerous one for that matter, as it blocks the removal of those conditions that are responsible for this state of affairs"[71]. He called people who attempted to shape the outside world instead of adapting to it *narcissistic personalities*. In Saint Joan we come across a direct opposition of these two points of view in the characters of Captain Robert de Baudricourt and Bertrand de Poulengey. While the former calls her "mad", in line with what Fromm has suggested, the latter believes that there may be hope in this madness, supporting Winnicott: The narcissistic personality may be able to shape her environment and bring forth changes. He even points out that the "sane ones" (adapted in the sense of Fromm) have not been able to achieve such progress in the past. From the point of view of an audience member it must definitely be more interesting to experience the journey of an unusual individual, someone who makes decisions that we would not normally make in our everyday lives. Our own narcissism, suppressed and adapted most of the time, is being displayed and expanded before our eyes. We cheer on Joan as a projected part of ourselves. She dares stand up to authority, and she gets away with it. Joan is asking the impossible, but with such vigour that she achieves it. As spectators, we enjoy the fact that reality is being conquered, that the rules are shifted in favour of the will of one person.

> *"The spectator is a person who experiences too little, who feels that he is a 'poor wretch to whom nothing of importance can happen' [...]. The playwright and actor enable him to [...] narcissistically identify himself with a hero. They spare him something, too. For the spectator knows quite well that actual heroic conduct such as this would be impossible without pains*

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[70] see page 27
[71] see page 26

> *and sufferings and acute fears, which would almost cancel out the enjoyment."* [72]

We, the audience, can sit back and enjoy what may happen if we ignored necessity and reached for the stars: at least in Scene 1 all seems to work out in Joan's favour.

Scene II – At Court

Before Joan appears at the court of Charles VII (presently still the Dauphin), there is a lengthy discussion between the Dauphin and the archbishop about what they have come to expect. The playwright's cynicism is expressed by the archbishop who does not believe in saints or miracles, having seen and heard too much of both in the past. The Dauphin, on the other hand, is flattered by the fact that Joan has chosen him as part of her "divine plan". She is coming to take him to Rheims and have him crowned as king. For Charles, who has no other qualifying properties to show for his royal descent, Joan's arrival opens the door to the hall of his ancestors.

> CHARLES: My grandfather had a saint who used to float in the air when she was praying and told him everything he wanted to know. My poor father had two saints, Marie de Maillé and the Gasque of Avignon. It is in our family; and I don't care what you say: I will have my saint too.[73]

We hear that Joan has already worked several miracles, one being the death of a soldier prone to bad language who drowned in a well. This occurrence receives differing interpretations from different parties:

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[72] Freud, S. *Psychopathic Characters On The Stage (1905-6)*
[73] p 67

> LA HIRE: This must be an angel that struck Foul Mouthed Frank dead for swearing.
>
> […]
>
> ARCHBISHOP: Rubbish! Nobody has been struck dead. A drunken blackguard who has been rebuked a hundred times for swearing has fallen into a well, and been drowned. A mere coincidence[74].

Joan herself has never mentioned her disapproval of bad language. The idea that a person who had "taken the Lord's name in vain" came to meet with his demise as a consequence is a typical example of *magical thinking*[75] on the part of the eyewitnesses. La Hire, as well as the other soldiers believe there to be a connection between events that cannot be put down to empirical experience. They over-estimate Joan's power and come up with the explanation that she must be a saint. Yet it is not Joan herself that makes this connection. It is not her narcissism that lets her believe that her will can change the course of events. Here, others are projecting their own narcissistic phantasy of omnipotence into her, thus allowing themselves to follow her. But we can say that her natural charisma as a leader is "contagious" in so far as her followers are willing to attribute her supernatural powers, using their own narcissism to contribute to her greatness. This can be compared to a snowball effect: Joan herself believes to be chosen, having integrated God as her personal super-ego. The resulting determination of her personality draws others in, at first they are simply attracted by her zeal, later they want to be part of her glorious status and contribute to it. So they start to spread rumours of miracles, thereby impressing third parties, increasing her image as an

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[74] p 68

[75] Freud, S. *Totem and Taboo.* London: Routledge 1960

extraordinary person and simultaneously justifying why they themselves have succumbed to her greatness.

Again, Shaw's cynical stance shines through very clearly: the fact that Joan has managed to sway Robert de Baudricourt now gains her some extra points and accelerates her fame:

> LA HIRE: De Baudricourt is a blazing ass; but he's a soldier; and if he thinks she can beat the English, all the rest of the army will think so too.

We know from Scene 1 that Robert de Baudricourt was not at all convinced by Joan but chose the path of least resistance, not wanting to cross her father who he thought might be connected to a lawyer. But that doesn't matter as long as there is a chain of "believers" which grows longer at every step of the way.

Before Joan enters, the Dauphin devises a plan to test her. Gilles de Rais (Bluebeard) is to take the Dauphin's place and pretend to be him.

> LA TREMOUILLE: I wonder will she pick him out!
>
> ARCHBISHOP: Of course she will.
>
> LA TREMOUILLE: Why? How is she to know?
>
> ARCHBISHOP: She will know what everybody in Chinon knows: that the Dauphin is the meanest-looking and worst-dressed figure in the court, and that the man with the blue beard is Gilles de Rais.[76]

The archbishop then proceeds to explain the difference between a fraud and a miracle: a fraud deceives, but a miracle is an "event, which creates faith". He who knows how it is done may not be impressed.

> ARCHBISHOP: But as for the others, if they feel the thrill of the supernatural, and forget their sinful clay in the sudden sense of the glory of God, it will be a miracle, and a blessed one. And you

[76] p 70

> will find that the girl herself will be more affected than anyone else. She will forget how she really picked him out[77].

This speech elucidates the effects of the sub-conscious. Even though there is a perfectly logical explanation for Joan's recognising the Dauphin immediately, it will remain in the dark. When Joan does indeed pick Charles out, the miracle is complete. Joan herself is re-assured that God is with her, and everybody else is taken in by that belief as much as by the "miracle" itself.

When Joan enters, she recognizes the Dauphin exactly as predicted by the archbishop. We, the audience, know how it has been done, and are able to enjoy the humour of the situation. We laugh at the Dauphin and his credulity, his naïve belief in miracles. This may distance us for a moment from Joan and let us withdraw our own narcissism and its projection onto this figure that seems to be worldly enough after all. But then G.B. Shaw immediately wins us back, draws us in and lets us identify with Joan once again: Her behaviour towards the archbishop is one of such sheer reverence that, were it not for her strong religious belief, it might be construed as blatant flattery. And the archbishop, so cynical and rational only a few minutes ago, is now taken in himself. Joan falls to her knees and kisses the hem of his robe. In her view, the archbishop is the highest authority present because he serves God and not the worldly powers.

> JOAN: My lord: I am only a poor country girl; and you are filled with the blessedness and glory of God Himself; but you will touch me with your hands, and give me your blessing, won't you?

The fact the "the old fox blushes[78]" is called "another miracle" by La Trémoulle. And now the archbishop suddenly changes his mind about Joan:

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[77] p 71

> THE ARCHBISHOP: Come gentlemen. The Maid comes with God's blessing, and must be obeyed.

What does this do to our own narcissism as audience? We must be aware that Joan's behaviour is genuine, a logical consequence of her serious belief in God and his ministers. Yet we cannot but enjoy the way she turns things around for herself once again. The fact that the archbishop has clearly succumbed to what appears to us as flattery does not take away from another success for Joan's cause. As a consequence, we identify with Joan once more, we applaud her triumph as if it was down to cunningness. We can laugh at the archbishop's vanity and sit back again full of anticipation: how will the play proceed? Will the protagonist continue to swing even the most sceptical characters and bring them to her side? Our feeling is that of satisfaction with a job well done. The battles still lie ahead, we know that Joan is about to face the near impossible task of beating the entire English army. So we do not envy her in the least. But she amuses us and has won us over to her side.

When, however, at the end of Scene 2, she cries: "Who is for God and His Maid?", she seems to overly test our sympathy. All the people who have been swayed by *her* are now supposed to be on *God's* side. She clearly claims to have spoken for Him, her cause is His cause. This apparent hubris will not go unpunished.

Scene III - Orleans

When Joan arrives at Orleans, she finds Dunois anxiously waiting for her. He has been trying to lift the siege with his army, but the wind was against him. In order to go upstream with their rafts, the soldiers

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[78] *Bluebeard*, p 73

need the wind to change and have been praying for this all along. Joan is impatient. She wants to go into battle immediately and takes some time understanding the reason for the delay.

> JOAN: I dream of leading a charge, and of placing the big guns. Your soldiers do not know how to use the big guns: you think you can win battles with a great noise and smoke[79].

Her know-it-all attitude is no less than impertinent. She implies that Dunois doesn't know what he is doing, that he needs her to show him the way. She even dares him to follow her up the ladder to the fort once they get there. Naturally she will ascend before all others, full of courage and completely unafraid.

Dunois tells her that she is welcome to him as a saint. As for daredevils, he has more than enough in his own army. But Joan replies:

> JOAN: I am not a daredevil: I am a servant of God.

What does this mean? Is she delusional? Can she not see the overwhelming strength of the opposing armies? Joan has been given a sacred sword by God himself (so she believes). She is not allowed to strike a single blow with it[80]. Yet she is convinced it will lead her safely through battle and to victory.

What is the difference, in Joan's mind, between a daredevil and a servant of God? A daredevil is someone who faces danger as a challenge. It would be the ego proving itself against adversity. But Joan does not have such a strong ego. As we have seen earlier, her ego is, if anything, under-developed. It is entirely dependent on the super-ego, like a child depends on its parents: trusting and feeling secure as long as the parent is close by. But the child draws this security also from the belief that the parent knows what is right or

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[79] p 83

[80] *Joan*, p 83

wrong. Obedience to parental guidance must therefore appear as the key to being on the right path.

Concerning Joan, a "servant of God" can be translated as a servant of the super-ego. She does not fear danger – or indeed death – because she does not feel responsible for her own actions. In her mind, everything she does is right because it is inspired by God. According to Freud[81], the super-ego is largely located in the subconscious, outside the sphere of logical thinking or conscious reflection. Consequently, it cannot be questioned. Joan's very own ambition, indeed her narcissistic wish for grandeur, can therefore gain the status of a divine order. While she claims to be serving God, she actually makes *God* serve *her* as a camouflage to grant her personal wishes the importance of His will.

Joan criticises everything Dunois has done so far. He has approached from the wrong side of the river, he should be attacking the English via the bridge, he should have built rafts to go upstream. Yet Dunois has been in many battles, while Joan is a novice, only recently drawn towards the art of war.

Patiently, Dunois explains the situation to her. The English on the other side of the stream outnumber the French, the bridge is heavily guarded, rafts have been made, the soldiers are ready, it is only the west wind they are waiting for. What Joan needs to do is go to the church and pray for the wind to change and send the rafts upstream. Joan agrees and promises to do her part in convincing Saint Catherine to come to their help. But just at this moment and *before* she can start to pray, the wind does change. A miracle? To Dunois and his soldiers it certainly is. But the playwright has timed it very cleverly, still

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[81] Freud, S. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1933[1932]).* London: Pelican 1973, p101

leaving us to doubt Joan's sainthood. It is of course very lucky that the elements should turn favourable right after Joan's arrival. But the connection is clearly unconfirmed. There hasn't been time for her to get to church, she hasn't even said a short prayer concerning the wind. But this was the sign they needed, after all the self-assured talk from before. Joan believes to be sent by God, the soldiers (and the audience?) *want* to believe her.

Scene IV – The English Conspiracy

While the first three scenes have displayed Joan's narcissism mostly as a personal trait, fascinating and contagious to those around her, the play now enters the world of politics and social hierarchies. A narcissistic personality stands to encounter other problems aside from a loss of reality in their perception of the world. We begin to see the repercussions brought about by Joan's lacking to adapt to important structures within the community. This may be the reason why Shaw chose to keep her absent during this scene. The audience is not to be distracted by her charisma, her charm or indeed the humour her stubbornness provides in other scenes of the play.

The three characters introduced here are the Chaplain, an English cleric, who stands for the nationalist, imperialist British point of view; next to and socially above him is Warwick, an English nobleman who represents the English aristocracy as such – strictly distinct from the church and in competition to the king. The third character is that of the French bishop Cauchon (i.e. Pig) who stands for the interests of France as well as those of the church – the two being quite incompatible under the circumstances.

The Chaplain claims that Joan is a sorceress. Given the fact that she has defeated the English army – the bravest and strongest in the entire world – there seems no other explanation possible to him. Cauchon defends her at first – she is French after all. But soon he denies any divine intervention in her favour.

> CAUCHON: The woman's miracles would not impose on a rabbit[82].

If anything, her claim to divinity must be seen as heresy and an insult to the Holy Catholic Church. The only thing proven through her victories must be the fact that she has a better head on her shoulders than the English knights. At this, the Chaplain is outraged. But Warwick, being a lord, finds it easy to concede Cauchon's point. He sees the lower ranks of the aristocracy insulted but takes no offence himself. The real problem for him lies in the bishop's resolve in saving Joan's soul if possible. Both Englishmen want to see her executed. But the Chaplain sees himself outranked by the bishop on the church's side and Lord Warwick as his social superior.

This hierarchy is essential in order to understand the difficult situation Joan has manoeuvred herself into. If the Chaplain, a nobleman and representative of God on Earth, is treading on thin ice, Joan must be seen as all but devoid of rank: She is of peasant descent, uneducated and a woman. She may have been able to unite masses of soldiers behind her, but seeing the Chaplain frustrated in his efforts to be heard or respected by his two superiors gives us a clear picture of Joan's non-entity as a "zoon politicon". The audience loses heart for her cause as they listen to the conversation between men of real power in this world, not the next.

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[82] p 92

Having defended the French woman enough, Cauchon moves on to the real problem Joan is posing: her undermining the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

> CAUCHON: She acts as if she herself were The Church. She brings the message of God to Charles; and The Church must stand aside. She will crown him in the cathedral of Rheims: she, not The Church![83]

Cauchon can see parallels with Hus in Bohemia, WcLeef in England Mohammed in Arabia. Joan seems to be taking Holy Mary's place as the woman whom one must ask for intercession. Just like them, she has been "puffed up by devil with the monstrous self-conceit of being directly inspired from heaven"[84]. The only person within the Church, the only living person on earth, who might claim as much would be the Pope. Yet Cauchon emphasizes:

> CAUCHON: The Pope himself at his proudest dare not presume as this woman presumes.[85]

The hierarchical rungs within the Church have been designed very carefully. The Pope is the *only* representative of Christ on earth, and he himself must rely on the cardinals to elect him. The vow of celibacy has been introduced in order to prevent heirs to the papal position, diminishing the power of the cardinals. There must not be any communication with God other than through the "proper channels" of the Church. For this reason "heretics" like Hus were executed. Similarly, Warwick explains to us the system of feudal aristocracy, and the threat Joan's behaviour has posed to him and his peers. Nominally, they hold their land and dignities from their king, but in reality they own and defend them in their own right. The king is simply seen as a

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[83] p 94
[84] *Cauchon*, p95
[85] p 94

primus inter pares, and it has taken years and many confrontations to establish this state of affairs. But Joan is jeopardising their position.

> WARWICK: Her idea is that the kings should give their lands to God and then reign as God's bailiffs.

If Joan were to convince the broad masses of this idea, the status of the aristocracy would be in tatters. Noblemen would become liveried courtiers in the king's halls[86], devoid of all influence.

Neither Cauchon nor Warwick can see much importance in the other's cause nor get exceedingly worried about it. Yet, they decide to pull together against the common enemy.

> CAUCHON: I see now that what is in your mind is not that the girl has never once mentioned The Church, and thinks only of God and herself, but that she has never once mentioned the peerage, and thinks only of the king and herself.
>
> WARWICK: These two ideas are the same at bottom [...] if you will burn the protestant, I will burn the Nationalist.

Now that the powerful have made their decision, the Chaplain comes in with his conclusion: He hasn't been able to follow the arguments of his betters, but he understands that the woman is a rebel.

> CHAPLAIN: She rebels against Nature by wearing men's clothes. She rebels against The Church by usurping the divine authority of the Pope. She rebels against God by her damnable league with Satan and his evil spirits against our army. And all these rebellions are only excuses for her rebellion against England. That is not to be endured.

I believe that the Chaplain's voice is the voice of envy within automaton conformity[87]. The ordinary person, adapted to society's rules and regulations in the sense of Erich Fromm cannot abide another

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[86] *Warwick*, p 94

[87] Fromm, E. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Avon Books, 1965

individual breaking those rules. This would question his whole view of the world, his personal narcissism, and delve him into unbearable doubt regarding the necessity of those rules. According to Rousseau[88] our *contrat social* is built on the premise that each individual has to forsake certain freedoms in favour of the common interest. There is no room for idiosyncrasy or the "expression of narcissism through shaping one's environment"[89] the way Joan does. A behaviour which Winnicott may have appreciated as creative and beneficial to progress, is regarded here as obstinate, conceited and heretic. In the society of her time there was no room for individuality. The rules were made by the authorities of the Catholic Church, professing a direct inspiration from God and Jesus Christ. By claiming a direct inspiration from God herself, Joan, in circumventing those authorities, treads on dangerous territory. Her belief is inspired not by the teachings of the Church but by her narcissistic persuasion that the right answers are coming to her through her visions. She is convinced to be autonomous in her faith, independent of priests, bishops and the Pope himself in her interpretation of God' will. This must gain her not only the indignation of the powerful, but also the wrath of those who feel bound to obedience themselves. The image of Christians promoted by the Church was that of sheep following Christ (or the Pope as his representative on earth) as their shepherd. Sheep don't question, and they are herded together as one entity.

The scene ends with the Chaplain exclaiming that he would burn Joan with his own hand, to which the bishop replies: "Sancta simplicitas",

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[88] Rousseau, J. *Contrat social ou Principes du droit politique.* Paris: Garnier Frères 1800, p. 242.

[89] Winnicott, D.W. *Playing and Reality (1971).* New York: Routledge 1989

sneering at his ignorance but simultaneously blessing him as a faithful member of his flock.

Scene V – Charles Crowned

After Charles' coronation at Rheims a huge crowd has gathered outside the cathedral to celebrate. But Joan refuses to go outside and meet them. Instead, she decides to "let the king have all the glory".[90] Joan prefers to stay in the cathedral praying and listening to the church bells. She can hear "her voices" in the bells, seemingly satisfied on her own, independent of anyone else's praise or approval.
Again, this is a clear narcissistic trait: Joan doesn't relate to the world around her as would be normal for any other human being. She appears to be self-sufficient within her own world, at peace with her super-ego whose demands she has met. If anything, she is disappointed by the lack of more challenges she can overcome, more battles to fight, more adrenalin she can enjoy. Dunois stays with her trying to convince her that she has done enough. Her mission is accomplished, it is time for her to go home and return to a life of peace in the countryside. She can now be re-united with her family and embrace the life of a normal woman of her time. But this is exactly what Joan is incapable of doing. She longs for more action, is setting herself new goals, hopes to expel all English armies from French ground and serve God as a soldier. We can now clearly see that Joan's motivation is more than to be an obedient servant to God and the king. We learn about her ambition, her personal preference of life in the army, even Dunois is taken aback by it.

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[90] *Joan*, p 101

> DUNOIS: I should think you were a bit cracked if I hadn't noticed that you give me very sensible reasons for what you do, though I hear you telling others you are only obeying Madame Saint Catherine.
>
> JOAN: Well, I have to find reasons for you, because you don't believe in my voices. But the voices come first; and I find the reasons after: whatever you may choose to believe.

Joan's answer is an honest account of what Freud would call a *rationalisation*[91]*:* A person's actions are rooted in subconscious wishes and motivations. The explanation given is to be seen as a secondary revision, providing it with a logical foundation ex post. In Joan's case her ego-ideal lets her regard herself as a fighter, a soldier, a rescuer of France. This narcissistic self-image expresses itself in her voices who order her to continue her cause even though it seems to be already won. She now has to find a way to justify her persistence, but this time it is difficult to convince her former allies.

The king is content with her achievements and ready to dismiss her. Dunois reminds her that God has to be fair to the English as well. Another battle may not end in France's favour. And Charles agrees:

> CHARLES: Let us be content with what we have won. Let us make a treaty. Our luck is too good to last; and now is our chance to stop before it turns.
>
> JOAN: Luck! God has fought for us; and you call it luck!

Now the archbishop intercedes and tells Joan to stay in her place. By addressing the king in such a way and usurping the word when her betters were talking she has stained herself with the sin of pride.

> JOAN: But I *do* know better than any of you seem to. And I am not proud: I never speak unless I know I am right. […]

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[91] Freud, S. *On Sexuality, p 239*

> You don't know how to begin a battle; and you don't know how to use your canons. And I do.

After her outburst Joan squats down and pouts like a child.

Apart from the obvious humour, Shaw has chosen an interesting image here that paints the picture of an immature girl. We can see clearly that she wants to have her way and fights to get it against all the odds. There is no saintliness here, no trace of God's Maid inspired by heaven. Instead, the playwright portrays a shrew, an obstinate young woman who is loathe to resume a life of boredom and submission. And now even Dunois shushes her like a small child. People have been following her, but he was the one to raise the armies and make sure they were fed and paid. For all her enthusiasm, Joan has never burdened herself with the realities of costs, politics and planning. In return, Joan launches into a speech about the simple soldiers who followed her. It is not the knights and lord she is after, but the simple people who trust her and are inspired by her enthusiasm.

> BLUEBEARD: Not content with being Pope Joan, you must be Caesar and Alexander as well.
>
> THE ARCHBISHOP: Pride will have a fall, Joan.

But her charm has worked yet again. La Hire is once more taken in by her zeal. He argues her case, pleading for her to be sent back into war. But the king cannot afford it. The coronation – also Joan's idea – has cost him too much money already. It must translate as a simple, mundane argument to talk about funds at this stage, but it is another witty way Shaw uses to point out an important fact: Joan is not concerned with reality. She removes herself from everyday problems, behaving like a child and having only her wishes in mind.

Now the archbishop steps in and tells Joan about Cauchon's endeavour to have her burnt at the stake as a witch. She is flabbergasted. In her

opinion, she has always been obedient to her voices, and hence, to God.

> THE ARCHBISHOP: All the voices that come to you are echoes of your own wilfulness.
>
> JOAN: [...] Even if they are echoes of my own commonsense, are they not always right?

What Freud says about narcissistic characters is that they are immune to outside influence. They are independent and not open to intimidation.[92] This certainly seems to be the case with Joan. Even as the archbishop tells her that she now stands all-alone, without his blessing or that of the church, Joan won't back down. She doesn't need anyone else's help or blessing:

> JOAN: I see now that the loneliness of God is His strength. [...] Well, my loneliness shall be my strength too;[93]

Topping everything that has gone before, Joan now compares herself directly with God. God doesn't have to listen to anybody's advice, and neither does she. Her hubris has reached a point of no return. Even if some of the audience may still be sympathising with her, secretly applauding the way she maintains her independence, we all know that Joan is signing her own death warrant. The other characters are also divided: Dunois has so far been a strong supporter, but is withdrawing from Joan's new cause. Only La Hire is still fully behind her. He "could follow her to hell when the spirit rises in her like that"[94]. The archbishop is uncertain what to think:

> THE ARCHBISHOP: She disturbs my judgement too: there is a dangerous power in her outbursts. But the pit is open at her feet; and for good or evil we cannot turn her from it.

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[92] Freud, S. *On Sexuality, Libidinal Types (1931), p 363*
[93] p 112
[94] *La Hire*, p 113

His statement sums up the fascination emanating from Joan, the unease her rebellious behaviour stirs in him (anger at her disobedience and fear for her life at the same time) as well as the frustration he feels about not being able to reach her through rational talk. Joan's usefulness has run out. For a while her narcissistic determination was a lucky asset, which the king could use in his favour. It spurned on the troops, enthralled the masses and frightened the English. Furthermore, her charisma inspired Charles himself and helped him to become a true king. But now she is going overboard. Her heresy threatens to spoil the causes she has won. The king feels pangs of conscience coming on like someone who knows they will have to shoot their favourite dog because it has contracted rabies. Joan is out of control, she will have to be stopped. The scene ends on a sad, frustrated note:

> CHARLES: If only she would keep quiet, or go home!

This shifts the audience's sympathy towards Charles and all those who have appreciated Joan and would like to see her live. We understand that she doesn't have nearly as many enemies as she thinks. La Hire still believes in her, the archbishop is trying to redeem her soul, and the king wants to save her life. Joan's biggest foe at this stage, apart from the English, is Joan herself.

Scene VI – The Trial

In this last scene Joan has adopted an entirely new attitude. She seems calm and rational in her way of answering questions. When asked why she didn't die when jumping from a sixty-foot tower to escape prison, she even replies with irony:

> JOAN: I suppose because the tower was not so high then. It has grown higher every day since you began asking me questions about it.

Her prosecutor is angered by this and accuses her of heresy by trying to escape from prison. The prison was a church prison, and by undertaking to get away, Joan has turned her back on the Church. Again, Joan points out that this is clear nonsense. She seems focussed and clear in her thinking, intelligently meeting arguments without anger or distraction.

For the first time, this character is freely communicating with the world around her, it appears to be easy enough for her.

Joan refuses to swear on the gospel that she will tell the whole truth. "God does not allow the whole truth to be told."[95] Even though this proclamation gives us the impression of a relapse into her narcissistic self-sufficiency and impenetrability, it is followed by a sober reasoning regarding her possible torture. Of course she would say and promise to do anything if tortured. But what good would it do? She will take it all back as soon as the pain has subsided.

Joan even has the audacity to snub Courcelles, an assessor who stands for the administration, playing by the book.

> JOAN: Thou art a rare noodle, Master. Do what was done last time, eh?

And when he asks her whether the Archangel Michael has appeared to her as a naked man, Joan replies:

> JOAN: Do you think God cannot afford clothes for him?

This earns her the sympathy of his antagonists as well as his betters. But it also draws us, the audience, back into her spell. Joan now begins to exhibits signs of remorse, and even humility. She believes to have

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[95] *Joan*, p126

been punished for her vanity: Had she not worn a gold coat into battle, she would never have been captured by the Burgundians and sold to the English. And she professed to be "a child of the Church and obedient to its rulings" – we take hope – "provided it does not command anything impossible."[96] We lose hope: it would be impossible to abjure her visions and revelations as well as everything God has made her do. God is more important than the Church, she will not mind any clergyman who contradicts the orders she has received directly from Him.

CAUCHON: And you, not the Church, are to be the judge?

Once more, Joan's answer makes sense when she says:

JOAN: What other judgement can I judge by but my own?

We see a mixture of obduracy and intelligence, reminding us of what Joan has said to Dunois earlier and what we have identified as secondary revisions. She is clever enough to rationalise her acts and words, making it difficult for her opponents to argue with her. Accused with the sin of wearing men's clothes, she explains that she has been surrounded by men – soldiers, guards – and would have put them into temptation and herself at risk, had she been living among them in "petticoats"[97]

Chapter 3:
Narcissism in Penthesilea

3.1.) The Play

[96] *Joan*, p 129
[97] Joan, p 132

Heinrich von Kleist's Penthesilea consists of twenty-four scenes, some of which are very brief. Overall it can be divided into three parts:

The first part (scenes 1 – 12) is made up of various battles between Amazons and Greeks.
The second part (scenes 13 – 18) sees Penthesilea and Achilles actually meeting and spending time together
The third part (scenes 19 – 24) is the ultimate tragedy, Penthesilea looses her mind and Achilles his life.

3.2.) Brief Summary of Scenes

SCENE ONE
The Trojan War. The Amazonian army suddenly intercedes, attacking Trojans and Greeks alike. Both are equally confused and unsure which side the women are fighting for. Achilles is smitten by the beautiful Queen of Amazons, Penthesilea.
SCENE TWO
In battle, Achilles is trapped at the edge of a gorge. Penthesilea climbs up from below to overwhelm him.
SCENE THREE
Achilles breaks away with his chariot, the queen pursues him. He makes a sharp turn, and her horse comes to a fall. Achilles escapes.
SCENE FOUR
The Greek army is outnumbered by the Amazons and plans to retreat. But Achilles has set his mind on capturing Penthesilea. He rides back into battle.
SCENE FIVE

The victorious Amazonian army is ready to return to Themyscyra with their captives. But Penthesilea will not retreat before she has taken Achilles prisoner. Against all efforts to dissuade her, she continues the war.

SCENE SIX

The High Priestess is preparing the Festival of Roses. Young girls are collecting blossoms. The prisoners are to be garlanded with flowers and taken back to the capital.

SCENE SEVEN

An Amazon captain informs the High Priestess that the queen has returned into battle. She is risking all the captives only to achieve one more victory and win Achilles.

SCENE EIGHT

The Greek army has gained strength. Achilles strikes Penthesilea in battle, she falls off her horse.

SCENE NINE

The Amazons are surrounded. Girls and priestesses retreat and take the prisoners with them. But Penthesilea stays behind. She tries to kill herself, then faints.

SCENE TEN

Achilles approaches. The Amazons are helpless since the queen has forbidden them to hurt him. Their arrows have to aim innocuously over his head.

SCENE ELEVEN

Achilles arrives. He confesses his love for Penthesilea, but strikes down any Amazon warriors who stand up against him.

SCENE TWELVE

The Greeks attack. They overwhelm the Amazons. Penthesilea is still unconscious. Achilles tells his men to leave him alone with his captive.

SCENE THIRTEEN

The queen's closest friend, Prothoë, implores Achilles to spare Penthesilea's feelings. When she awakes, she must not immediately know she has been captured.

SCENE FOURTEEN

Achilles has fallen in love with the queen and plays along with Prothoë. Awoken from unconsciousness, the queen wants to kill herself out of shame. But Prothoë and Achilles lead her to believe that she has been victorious, Achilles is her prisoner. Exalted, she orders Prothoë's captive to be brought along as well. She wants to share her happiness.

SCENE FIFTEEN

Penthesilea declares her love to Achilles. She gives him a ring and promises to treat him like a king in Themyscyra. She tells him about the Amazon state, its history, customs and laws. She explains why her army attacked at Troy: Mars had ordered them to capture Greek soldiers for their offspring. On her deathbed, her mother told her to find Achilles and make him her lover and father of her child. When the Greek army approaches Achilles is forced to reveal the truth: he has won the battle, not Penthesilea. But he wants to take her back to Greece and make her his wife and queen. Penthesilea is shocked and distraught.

SCENE SIXTEEN

The Amazons are attacking; the Greeks will have to leave quickly with their prisoner. Penthesilea prays for a bolt of lightening to strike her dead.

SCENE SEVENTEEN

The queen implores Achilles to follow her to Themyscyra. He apologizes and tells her they have to leave for Greece right away.

SCENE EIGHTEEN

The Amazons have arrived. Achilles lets go of the queen, she pleads with him to come with her. Then she is lead off by her warriors, Achilles torn away by Odysseus.

SCENE NINETEEN

Penthesilea vents her anger on the Amazons for separating her from her lover. The High Priestess scolds her for being selfish and jeopardising everything for a whim. The queen withdraws into depression.

SCENE TWENTY

A herald delivers a message from Achilles. He wants to meet Penthesilea again in battle. The queen is shocked and hurt. Does he want to defeat and humiliate her anew? She orders all the strongest weapons, carriages, dogs and elephants to be deployed. This time she will triumph.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

Achilles goes into battle all but unarmed. He loves Penthesilea and wants to be with her. If she needs to be victorious to keep face and follow her laws, so be it. He is ready to be taken prisoner and follow her to Themyscyra for a month or two. He hopes that after this she will come with him to Greece.

SCENE TWENTY-TWO

Penthesilea will not be stopped by anything. Maidens who try to assuage her are kicked in the dust. Together with her dogs, she attacks, howling and gnarling. After the fight Amazon warriors bring on Achilles' body.

SCENE TWENTY-THREE

Meroë relates what has happened: Achilles came alone, armed only with a spear. When Penthesilea attacked with her hounds, he called at her to appease her. But she didn't hear him. He called for Odysseus,

Diomede, then sought refuge in a tree. Penthesilea shot an arrow through his throat, dragged him to the ground and tore him apart with her dogs. She ate part of his chest; her mouth is smeared with blood and she won't answer when spoken to.

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR

All the Amazons distance themselves from Penthesilea. She is still in a stupor, drops her bow and cries. Only Prothoë can reach her. When she finally speaks, the queen is elated. She has overcome Achilles; she has triumphed. Then she suspects he may be dead. When she sees his ravaged corpse, she turns angry and demands to know committed such a despicable act. Prothoë tells her what happened, and the queen explains how kisses and bites are almost the same thing. Still, she refuses to believe it was herself. Finally she grieves, kisses Achilles and disavows the law of the Amazons. She will follow her beloved. Prothoë quickly takes away her sword, bow and arrows, but to no avail: Penthesilea withdraws inside her soul, where she finds a stronger dagger, poisoned with remorse and grief. She dies.

3.3.) Investigating narcissism in Penthesilea

First Part – War

In the first part of the play Penthesilea is portrayed as an enigmatic figure. Why does she attack Trojans and Greeks alike? Whose side is she on? What does she want? Why do her warriors not kill, but take men prisoners?

DIOMEDE

More prisoners has she claimed in victory
Than she has left us eyes to mark their loss
Or arms to wrest them from captivity.[98]

Clearly, her army is overpowering in its strength. But there is also an element of surprise in fierce women fighting on horseback. Her behaviour is more than unorthodox, particularly in a world ruled by men. A woman's place in the days of the Trojan War was to be passive, charming, and subservient. Even Kleist's society had a clear idea of what feminine virtue was to be made up of. Kleist himself had very strong views about it.[99] Yet he let Penthesilea reign supreme in this first part of the play. She is intrepid, wild, unpredictable, and mysterious.

I believe it is important that we do not yet know what motivates her. Before we learn about the customs and rituals, the rule of law *within* the Amazonian state, we are to experience Penthesilea as a rebel. She will not fit in with the traditional role she is supposed to play in the eyes of the Greeks. She is depicted as a narcissistic character – one hundred and twenty-four years before Sigmund Freud described the *narcissistic type*. In the first third of the play, the Queen of Amazons is unafraid. She does not adapt to the social restrictions for women of her time, she actively re-creates her environment to accommodate her own needs. She *shapes* her surroundings through creativity.[100] We must get this impression, precisely because we are unaware of her real ratio operandi: In reality, Penthesilea follows the rules and laws that

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[98] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 9

[99] His sister Ulrike liked to dress up as a man and enjoy the advantages this gave her on her travels. Kleist disapproved and urged her to read Rousseau who taught that men were designed by Nature to be active and strong and women "to please men and exercise gentle restraint over them by the ploys of subservience"(Joel Agee in his *Introduction* to Penthesilea p xxiv)

have been passed down through generations of women just like her. To us, the audience, the fascination lies in her apparent independence, the greatness of her ego, which supersedes all obstacles and lets her be daring and immune to intimidation[101]. We are mislead on purpose:

> DIOMEDE
> She seeks the son of Thetis[102], it does seem
> Her heart is filled with hatred for his person.[103]

One moment she appears to be the Greeks' fiercest enemy, the next minute she saves Achilles' life when a Trojan attacks him. The men are confused, and so are we. Yet we cannot help admiring her power and the danger she emanates. The audience gets drawn in, we identify with her while we fear her. The identification with the frightening character is a common psychological defence mechanism in early child development according to Freud[104]. In our case we can use it to enjoy a mighty boost to our own narcissism. We don't know where Penthesilea is going, but we let her take us along. She dares what we would not dare, thereby inspiring us and showing us what might be possible if we stood up against all rules and regulations and turned the word upside-down.

But there is another interestingly narcissistic character. Achilles, smitten by the queen of Amazons, suddenly also refuses to play by the rules.

> ODYSSEUS
> […] he swears he won't relent

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[100] Winnicott, D.W. *Playing and Reality (1971).* New York: Routledge 1989
[101] Freud, S. *On Sexuality, Libidinal Types (1931),* p 363
[102] i.e. Achilles; the nymph Thetis was the mother of Achilles.
[103] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 10
[104] The Oedipus Complex is usually resolved through the identification with the threatening same-sex parent: rather than antagonising him/her, the subject chooses to be like him/her. See Freud, S. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* p 162

> Nor yield an inch to her if she retreats
> Until he's seized her by her silken hair
> And torn her from her spotted tiger-horse.
> Why don't *you* go, Antilochus, let's see
> What happens when you try your eloquence
> Upon a man who's foaming at the mouth.[105]

What Odysseus says about Achilles has two intriguing sides to it. Firstly, it sounds as though the Peleid[106] hated Penthesilea. (Equally, we have heard Penthesilea's behaviour regarded as hostility towards him.) And while there is no mention of killing, his mind is set on defeating and humiliating her, not winning her over as a lover.
At the same time, Achilles is described as rabid, i.e. insane ("foaming at the mouth"). This is not his usual demeanour in combat. He seems obsessed. Obsessed with what?
There are two obvious possibilities: either Achilles' obsession is with victory, or it is with Penthesilea. I will show that both these options are linked, but they are two different things.
Firstly, Achilles is used to being a winner. He has killed Hector, one of the strongest Trojan heroes. In countless battles, Achilles has proved himself. War is his calling; he is the mightiest fighter in the entire Greek army. But now he is up against a new enemy. The Amazonian troops prove to be an equal match to the Greeks. This incenses Achilles. There is no apparent reason for this battle; the Greeks don't even know why they have been attacked or what the Amazons want. It would be the most obvious reaction to let them withdraw when they finally cease their hostilities. But Achilles won't let them get away. He

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[105] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 11
[106] Throughout the play, Achilles is also referred to as the Peleid because was the son of Peleus, King of the Myrmidons in Thessalía.

wants to give chase, punish, avenge and triumph in the end. This may seem like a narcissistic pattern of behaviour: Achilles ignores the rules of battle, neglects the Trojan War and his duties toward the Greek army. He is fixated on winning in a sideshow to keep up his (self) image as the unbeaten warrior. But now we come to the other factor: Penthesilea. From Odysseus' speech we can glean that Achilles has never behaved like this before. He compares him to a hunting dog that has to be called back before it "flies howling into the antlers of the stag". He also tells us that Achilles is "still raving, since the thickets of war revealed to him such rare and precious game"[107]. His frenzy was not triggered by the desire to win as such; it was the desire to win against Penthesilea, or rather to win Penthesilea.

Freud has taught us that the libido can shift freely between the self and outside objects[108]. When he falls in love, a part of Achilles' libido is withdrawn from the subject and cathectised to the object of his affection, Penthesilea. Apart from the positive feeling of being in love, this triggers an uncomfortable emotion: there is a lesser amount of libido left for the self. Achilles identifies with Penthesilea and the qualities he loves in her. We can say that he has fallen in love *because* he identifies with her according to Benjamin[109], or we can claim that his love for her has caused him to identity with her according to Freud. In the latter case, he enters a temporary state of narcissistic depletion, which may well explain his unusual behaviour. He *has* to conquer Penthesilea in order to regain the self-love he has lost to her. He has to gain control over her in order to regain control over his own emotions.

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[107] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, *Odysseus* p 11

[108] see page 5

[109] Benjamin, J. *Like Subjects, Love Objects p 9*

Scene Two and Three show us that Achilles' strength is superior to Penthesilea's. Despite all her efforts she cannot bring him down. This may be an attempt by Kleist to re-establish the proper order of things: the man is stronger than the woman, or, at the very least, he is *not weaker* than she.

Scenes Four and Five see both of them unable to let go. The battle is finished, the Greek soldiers are keen to focus on the Trojan War once again, and the Amazons want to retreat to Themyscyra with their prisoners. But Achilles and Penthesilea both insist on another fight. In Scene Four, Odysseus tries to convince Achilles to set up a trap and lure Penthesilea into the hands of the Greeks. It would be wise to retreat to the bulk of the Greek army. If Penthesilea gives chase, she will find herself in the hands of Agamemnon and all the others.

> ODYSSEUS
> For me too, she's hateful unto death,
> The rampant fury, sweeping all about,
> Crossing our deeds, and I'll admit I'd like it
> If I could see the outline of your heel
> Imprinted on her rosy-petaled cheek.[110]

But Achilles is having none of it. He wants to face her again in open battle and storms towards her before anyone can stop him.

On the Amazons' side, Scene Five shows a fierce argument between the queen and her closest friend, Prothoë. At first, Penthesilea herself doesn't understand why "that mere sight of this one, single hero could touch and paralyse [her] inmost soul and make [her, *her*] the conquered one, the vanquished?".[111] But as soon as Prothoë tries to dissuade her from returning into battle, Penthesilea lashes out

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[110] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 27

[111] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, *Penthesilea* p 31

viciously. She accuses Prothoë of the selfish wish to be united with her own prisoner as soon as possible:

> PENTHESILEA
> Lykaon, the Arcadian, bring him here!
> - Take him, unwarlike maiden, take him with you,
> Flee with him, lest you loose him, far away
> From all the noise of battle […] and let your comfort
> And consolation be your lover's kisses,
> When everything, fame, motherland and love,
> And Queen and bosom friend are lost to you.[112]

Penthesilea threatens to banish her friend for standing in the way of *her,* the queen's, selfish desires. Here we can see a clear trait of *negative narcissism* as described by Fromm[113]: Penthesilea suddenly perceives her best friend as her enemy, jealous and envious of her success. It sets her apart from Prothoë, making it impossible to communicate with or relate to her normally. Fromm coined this term as a sociopathic phenomenon; the subject loses touch with society and becomes isolated from and antagonistic to the world around her.
Penthesilea then proceeds to brief the other warriors:

> PENTHESILEA
> Not one of you, no matter who she be,
> May strike Achilles down. […] I, only I
> Know how to fell him.[114]

Her feelings for Achilles are not so much protective as possessive. He is to be "felled", but only she herself may strike the blow.
At the end of the scene Penthesilea shows herself keen to make peace with her "bosom friend". Prothoë, devastated and humiliated by the

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[112] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 37
[113] see page 28
[114] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 38

queen's earlier attack, willingly takes the olive branch offered to her. And now we see an interesting display of female solidarity:

> PENTHESILEA
> Come, then, we'll fight and conquer side by side,
> The *two* of us or *neither;* and our motto
> Roses to decorate our heroes' temples,
> Or else two cypresses to crown our own.[115]

The queen takes her closest friend on a possible suicide mission, and Prothoë is supposed to consider it an honour. Indeed, it seems that Prothoë herself has no choice but to surrender to Penthesilea's will and go along with her questionable endeavour. She loves her and simultaneously fears her. In this scene, as throughout the play, Prothoë represents the voice of reason; the feeble whisper of rational thought, drowned in a storm of passion and narcissistic determination. Meanwhile Penthesilea clearly displays all features of a narcissistic character: she is immune to outside influence (Klein), unafraid, convincing and a leader (Freud). She disregards the common rules of acceptable behaviour (Fromm), is caught up in her grandiosity ignoring other people's needs and wishes (Fromm) and sets out to shape the world according to her own desire (Winnicott).

This anti-social element in the queen's character is now further emphasized in Scene Six and Seven. The Amazonian maidens collect blossoms for the Festival of Roses. This event is to mark the end of hostilities. It takes place back in the capital, where the prisoners are to be decorated with flowers and enjoy carnal pleasures with their victorious warrior brides.

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[115] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 39

But suddenly this climactic event must be postponed. Penthesilea has gone back into battle, upending all normal procedures and crossing the plans of the High Priestess. This unorthodox behaviour earns her the priestess' wrath:

> HIGH PRIESTESS
> Of what concern's the Peleid to our people?
> Does it behoove a child of Mars, a queen,
> To take her stand upon a single name?[116]

The Amazons believe that Mars will lead them into battle and bring them before the man they are destined for. The women are not allowed to choose their lovers but must conquer the warriors they are faced with and take them as their prisoners. By setting her mind on Achilles, Penthesilea is ignoring this sacred law. In her grandiosity, she appears to choose for herself. This threatens not only the safety of the other maidens and their prisoners, but it also contravenes her religion. But Penthesilea is completely oblivious to the world around her. In what Fromm would call a sociopathic behaviour, she fights for herself, alone in her decision and isolated from tradition. What she has said to Prothoë earlier must in actual fact apply to her:

> […] and let your comfort
> And consolation be your lover's kisses,
> When everything, fame, motherland and love,
> And Queen and bosom friend are lost to you.[117]

If, instead of "queen", one said "god", this could help to demonstrate how precarious Penthesilea's endeavour has become. The danger she is faced with does not lie with Achilles, but within herself. So at the end

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[116] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 47
[117] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, *Penthesilea* p 37

of Scene Seven the High Priestess sees the threat very clearly when she says about Penthesilea:

> HIGH PRIESTESS
> How steep, how straight the downward path she's taken!
> And when she falls, the enemy that fells her
> Will be the one she meets within her breast.[118]

In Scene Eight, an accident occurs. Achilles hits Penthesilea and wounds her. As soon as he realizes what he has done, he is full of regret. He tears off his armour and walks towards the Amazons, speaking of peace. But Prothoë swiftly recovers her queen and brings her to safety.

Scene Nine; Penthesilea is livid. She feels deeply offended that Achilles has hurt her. Her pain is not just physical but mostly emotional:

> PENTHESILEA
> This bosom, Prothoë, how could he strike it
> So shattering a blow? – As if I were
> To smash a lyre because the night wind stirred it
> My name to whisper softly to itself.
> I'd nestle in between the great bear's paws,
> And stroke the panther's fur that came to me
> With such emotions as I brought to him.[119]

But how was Achilles supposed to know this? She expects the object of her love to surrender to her feelings. Yet she faces him with an army of warriors, spears, swords and arrows that must seem life threatening to him. Here we can detect two more typical qualities of a narcissistic character: omnipotence of thoughts and lack of empathy. Penthesilea regards her emotions as the only *true* ones. She loves Achilles, she wants to posses him. And because this is so, it must be obvious to

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[118] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 50
[119] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 54

everybody, including Achilles. Simply by willing him to be with her, he must be wooed. He *must know* how she feels.

At the same time she is completely unaware of and disinterested in his perception of the situation. That her behaviour is more fitting for a warrior than a lover is neither here nor there. In her mind (and culture) the two go together. The fact that Achilles may not know this and misread her advances as hostility does not even cross her mind. She has identified herself with him, in her view they are both one and the same; they should be guided by her wishes, there is no room for contradiction. She is angry:

> PENTHESILEA
> Set all the dogs on him! The elephants,
> Lash them with firebrands so they'll trample him!
> Strap sickles on the cars and mow him down,
> Slice off those rank, luxurious limbs of his![120]

But then her wrath leaves her, along with her determination and her spirit. Suddenly Penthesilea agrees to lead her troops back to Themyscyra and give up on Achilles. She seems to have lost all hope because she feels rejected and unloved. Having identified with the object of her love as Benjamin described it[121], Penthesilea displays hostility to the outside, incorporating everything good into herself and Achilles as one entity. However, since she believes to have lost him, there is nothing left but hostility. When she sees the garlands of roses ready for the Festival, another burst of ire overcomes her and she slashes the wreaths to pieces.

> PENTHESILEA
> Would that the whole celestial wreath of worlds

[120] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 54

Could be dismembered like some woven flowers!

- Oh Aphrodite!

For the first time, there is no mention of Mars, the god of war, or Arthemis, the goddess of the hunt, but Penthesilea calls to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. She is in love with Achilles, a narcissistic love born from identification. And, just like him, she is driven by the need to recapture the libido she has spent on him.

But what if her narcissistic conduct were not founded in her character? It might have been induced by her love and could be a temporary result of a narcissistic depletion of her ego. In that case, the identification would come second, after the love, as Freud has claimed.[122] Indeed, there is another clue in her next mood swing. Having promised to end the war and return home, she now refuses to go with the others, but asks to be left behind. She lapses into an unexpected depression and longs to be killed on the battlefield rather than retreat empty-handed:

PENTHESILEA

[…] So let him come

And drag me headlong from behind his horses

And let this body, full of warmth and life,

Be thrown upon the open field of shame.

Let me be served as breakfast for his dogs,

As offal for the hideous birds. Let me be

Dust instead of woman without charm.[123]

Penthesilea is dejected and suicidal because Achilles has scorned her. But what causes this depression? Is it her seemingly unrequited love for Achilles or her failure to defeat him in battle?

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[121] Benjamin, J. *Like Subjects, Love Objects, p 36*

[122] Benjamin, J. *Like Subjects, Love Objects, p 9*

[123] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 58

The Amazons are frightened. Prothoë tries all her eloquence to rebuild her queen's spirit. But as soon as she regains confidence, Penthesilea appears to have become raving mad. She announces that she will roll the Ida Mountains up Mount Ossa[124] and pull the sun out of the sky by his hair of gold[125]. Comparing Achilles to Helios, the sun god, shows what power and significance he has gained for her. Without the sun, no life is possible. Yet to roll two mountain ranges on top of each other is an absolute impossibility. Penthesilea is doomed because she cannot get what she needs to exist. She has idealized the object of her love to such an extent that he has become unattainable. I believe she suffers from a narcissistic depletion, having spent all her libido on Achilles and being left with no self-love at all. Achilles has become her sun, she has raised him right up into the sky and feels left behind, unable to reach him unless she achieves the impossible: rolling one mountain range on top of the other. Faced with this insurmountable task, she falls into depression and tries to drown herself in the river. When her maidens hold her back, she lapses into unconsciousness.

Scenes Ten, Eleven and Twelve run into each other. Achilles approaches and takes possession of the comatose queen. The Amazons are not allowed to hurt him; their arrows fly harmlessly over his head. But when he has reached Penthesilea, he says to her maidens:

> ACHILLES
> I have been wounded deep inside, I feel it,
> And as a man disarmed in every sense,
> I lay myself before your little feet.[126]

The parallel between Achilles and Penthesilea is obvious. Both have been conquered by their own feelings for each other. Both feel helpless

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[124] ibid. p 63
[125] ibid. p 64
[126] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 67

and defeated, they cannot or will not fight any more. At this stage the play looks like it could end happily: a man and a woman are in love with each other. They each give up their strife and lay down their weapons. Their emotional upheaval is about to end; their temporary narcissistic depletion can be undone. To learn about the other one requiting their love would replete their narcissism, they could thrive on the reciprocal libidinal cathexis that is in store for them.

Second Part – Love

Scene Thirteen takes place between Prothoë and Achilles. Penthesilea is still unconscious and in this state has been taken prisoner by Achilles. Prothoë pleads with him not to make her aware of her shameful position too soon.

> PROTHOË
> She could not bear that you had won against her; […]
> If in the end, as destiny demands,
> She must in pain salute you as your captive,
> Do not insist upon it, I implore you,
> Until her spirit has put on its armor.[127]

Prothoë believes that her queen is about to receive the demeaning treatment of a defeated enemy. After he had slain Hector, Achilles denied him all dignity and respect even in death[128]. There is good reason for Prothoë to fear for Penthesilea. It is not only the queen's pride she is worried about, but also her physical safety. As soon as

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[127] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 74, 75

[128] Achilles dragged the great Trojan hero's corpse through the sand outside Troy until there was nothing left of his body. Hector's father Priamus humbled himself coming to Achilles' tent and begging him to hand over his son's body. But Achilles refused; he would not even let his adversary receive a proper burial.

Achilles assures her what his intentions are, Prothoë rejoices. Penthesilea is to become Achilles' wife. He wants to take her to Greece and make her his wife and queen. Despite all we have learned about the Amazons and their customs, Prothoë does not seem worried by this idea. Achilles loves Penthesilea, and she knows about the queen's love for him. Now what could be better than a match between the two, whether in Themyscyra or in Greece? Prothoë's approach is very practical. Achilles intends to honour Penthesilea; the queen will be delighted to hear that her love is reciprocated.

I believe this to be an important moment in the play. Prothoë comes from the same cultural background as Penthesilea. She also has to fight for a lover and conquer him with the sword. Just like her queen, she is bound by the rules of Arthemis, the Festival of Roses and the High Priestess. She appreciates the shame and humiliation it must mean for an Amazon to be defeated in battle. Yet she also sees the positive side: not slavery, mutilation or death is store for her queen, but love, marriage and prosperity. We should keep this in mind later when we encounter Penthesilea's reaction to her impending fate.

Scene Fourteen – the queen awakes. Achilles has hidden himself from view, giving Prothoë the opportunity to gently prepare her friend for the shock of defeat. As soon as she has re-gathered her senses, Penthesilea talks about a nightmare she has had: the nightmare of being struck down in battle and captured by Achilles.

> PENTHESILEA
> I am a prisoner, with mockery
> And laughter I am taken to his tent.

Prothoë assures her that Achilles is much too magnanimous to mock her. He would never stoop to rape her in his tent against her will. On the contrary, what if he adored her and treated her well?

PENTHESILEA

Accursed if I should live to see the shame!

Accursed if ever I receive a man

Not honourably conquered by the sword![129]

Seeing as there seems to be no room for compromise at this moment, Prothoë refrains from revealing her the truth. Instead, she holds and comforts her. And when Achilles finally approaches, he and Prothoë collude in a game of make-believe, pretending Penthesilea has been victorious.

PENTHESILEA

My prisoner – he?

ACHILLES

In every nobler sense, exalted Queen,

Prepared henceforth to flutter out my life

A captive bound and fettered by your eyes.[130]

Suddenly, bliss is upon Penthesilea. Things are as they should be; she has captured the man she loves. Interestingly, her joy was not triggered by Achilles' love for her, but by her apparent victory over him. Freud said about the *narcissistic type* that loving is more important to them than being loved[131]. The narcissist's own feelings are valued higher than anybody else's. Penthesilea has a clear image of her ideal self. It is powerful, intrepid and determined. It seems as though her love were more for that idealized self than for the object of her passion. For the first time, we can see a clear difference between her narcissistic character and Achilles' temporary narcissistic depletion. Achilles was driven again and again into battle to find her. But now that he has won, we encounter a man in love. He has no problems to

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[129] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 79

[130] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 80

[131] see page 11

downplay his victory, even to deny it as long as it makes Penthesilea happy. Of course, one may argue that he *has* defeated her and therefore can allow himself to bend the truth in order to win her feelings as well. Even if his personality contained narcissistic traits as strong as Penthesilea's, there would be no threat to his ego in *pretending* to have lost. However, we shall see later that Achilles is genuinely in love with Penthesilea, not just with his self-image of a conqueror. The Queen of Amazons, on the other hand, seems to find it impossible to love somebody else unless she has defeated them. The other person's love for her does not make the slightest difference. Penthesilea's actual detachment from reality is very well summed up in Prothoë's line:

> PROTHOË
> Both joy and grief are ruinous to you,
> One drives you mad as surely as the other.[132]

What does this mean? I believe that "mad" refers to the self-involvement which Penthesilea displays, whether she is sad or happy. In her depression she felt unloved and worthless, rejected by Achilles and all men. As a matter of fact, it was her own super-ego that disowned her because she had failed to win her lover on the battlefield. Now, in her victorious glee, she is still self-involved. She does not even appreciate the fact that Achilles loves her and has loved her all along. Her ego has regained the approval of her super-ego, she can love herself again, and that's all that matters.

Prothoë's reminder of reality has a dampening effect on Penthesilea's spirit.

> PENTHESILEA
> You stand beside me like a frost in May

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[132] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 81

And hem the nascent life of joy within me[133].

So she orders Prothoë's captive to be brought along as well. Unable to gage her friend's real feelings – Prothoë is worried about the queen's sanity – Penthesilea guesses that it must be the absence of Prothoë's conquest that makes her bitter and jealous. Again, we experience Penthesilea's complete lack of empathy. Her friend wants her to stop being fixated on victory and enjoy Achilles' devotion instead. But Penthesilea is unable to think "outside her box". She thinks what makes her happy (victory) will make Prothoë happy too. Achilles, on the other hand, is clearly capable of empathy: he appreciates Penthesilea's need for triumph and plays along to please her. This is another difference between the two lovers, and the play continues to show us a widening gap.

In Scene Fifteen, Penthesilea opens her heart to Achilles. She wants to uplift him and offers to increase his status;

PENTHESILEA
Then I salute you with this kiss, of human
Beings the most unbridled, mine! It is I,
Young god of war, to whom you now belong!
And when the people ask, you shall name *me*.[134]

She gives him a ring confirming him as her property. The most honourable, the most precious things she can bestow on him, are *her* kiss, *her* ring, *her* name. Her ego being the supreme power that rules her world, inside herself and within her society (where she is queen), there is nothing greater or more valuable. We could say that Penthesilea is self-obsessed. But she is also self-possessed. Nobody must own a part of her, while everything and everybody must feel ingratiated to be owned by her. Happy and in love, Achilles plays along.

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[133] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 83

He is not lying when he says: “by the power of love I am your slave”[135]. He means it and finds it difficult to tell her the truth about what happened “by the luck of arms”.

In this scene, the audience, along with Achilles, learns all about the Amazon state. Every single one of his questions is answered. And there is one really important thing we also learn about Penthesilea: she did not contravene the laws of her tribe when she set out to capture Achilles in particular. It is true that each Amazon must wait for the call from the High Priestess to go into battle. Then the god Mars destines a lover for her and leads her in front of him. If she wins the fight, she is allowed to take him prisoner, garland him with roses and let him father her child. But Penthesilea had been ordered to capture Achilles and no other. On her deathbed, her mother Ortrerë, the former queen, made that decision:

> PENTHESILEA
> She said: “Go, my sweet child! Ares[136] is calling!
> Your garland shall adorn the Peleid’s brow:
> Become a mother, proud and glad as I am – “
> And gently pressed my hand and passed away.[137]

This casts a new light on Penthesilea’s character. The accusations made by the High Priestess were false. The young woman is not a rebel but an honourable daughter who followed her mother’s dying wishes. Her narcissism is not a reaction to automaton conformity[138] as described by Fromm, but rooted in her personality. Kleist lets her explain her earlier behaviour and clears her from the charge of going

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[134] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 89
[135] ibid. *Achilles* p 104
[136] Ares is the Greek God of War, equivalent to the Roman god Mars. Throughout the play, Kleist uses the names of Greek and Roman gods interchangeably.
[137] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 100

against society's laws and regulations. On the contrary, Penthesilea was following an order in accordance with the late queen's demands. However, this comes at a moment in the play where we have learned more about her character. She is still a narcissist, but on a psychological level, not a social one. Her lack of empathy, her preference to love rather than being loved and her inner determination speak a clear language. Penthesilea is driven by her idealized self, which may have been forged by - and be a representation of - her mother. When the Greek army approaches, Achilles is forced to reveal the truth to Penthesilea. Immediately her feelings change. After all his assurances of love and devotion, after her experience of bliss and happiness she turns around and calls him a "monstrous fiend"[139]. Her love seems evaporated. She calls on the powers of heaven, asks Zeus for a flash of lightening. It's not clear whether she wants herself struck down or Achilles, but I believe it does not make any difference at this stage: Penthesilea cannot bear the situation as such, she wants it to end. She wishes herself annihilated along with her lover whom she perceives as a traitor and a liar. To see herself as his prisoner, *a* prisoner, *anyone's* prisoner, is insupportable. He immediately becomes her enemy again, someone she would fight to the death, his or hers alike.

As their respective armies separate them, she makes one last attempt:

> ACHILLES *(fully armed now, approaching her and offering her his hand)*
> My Queen – to Phthia.
> PENTHESILEA
> Oh! – To Themyscyra!
> Oh Friend! I tell you, it's to Themyscyra,

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[138] see page 19

Where Diana's temple looms above the oaks!
And if in Phthia the Blessed had their dwelling,
Still, sill, oh friend! It's still to Themyscyra,
Where Diana's temple looms above the oaks![140]

Diana is the goddess of the hunt. There is no mention of Aphrodite now; this is not about love. Penthesilea wants to take her captive, her *prey*, back home with her. Otherwise there can be no union. Achilles pleads with her, making her a final offer:

ACHILLES
You must forgive me then, my precious one.
I'll build you another temple just like yours.[141]

Naturally this could never be a solution to her problem.

PENTHESILEA
So you won't follow me? Won't follow?

Her problem is not the temple, it's her narcissism. Achilles must follow *her*, not she him. Although she is being torn away by her maidens, we can rest assured that she would never have ceded to his request anyway. Let us assume for a moment that her driving force is her mother's wish. If we consider the rules of the Amazon state, Penthesilea would indeed be obliged to take Achilles prisoner and not go to Greece as his wife. Her daughter is destined to become the next Queen of Amazons. Her son, if she bore one, would have to be killed. In Greece, a son would be considered a blessing and follow in his father's footsteps. A daughter would grow up to be a placid, passive woman subservient to her husband. Is it possible that Penthesilea is simply following the rules of her culture, being true to her faith? Maybe she is

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[139] Penthesilea, p 104
[140] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 106, 107
[141] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 107

the helpless victim of an internal struggle: her selfish interests versus her duties as a queen.
But we have seen that Prothoë did not find it difficult to give in to necessity. When she saw her queen captured, she was mostly worried about her life and safety. These two guaranteed, she could rejoice in her friend's new fate. She saw her as a wife and queen, sheltered and cared for by a loving husband. Penthesilea's expectations are obviously higher. Why? Because she is a queen and has to uphold tradition? Because she made a promise to her dying mother? Or because she does not really love Achilles unconditionally? Could his following her to Themyscyra be the one necessary condition for her love?

Third Part – Tragedy

Once her maiden warriors have freed her, Penthesilea vents all her anger and frustration on them. Why did they abduct her, how could they dare to break her bondage? She was defeated by her better and belongs to him. This is a most remarkable change of argument. Only moments earlier, we have seen the queen full of hatred and outrage in the face of imprisonment. Yet now she scolds her followers for liberating her. I believe Kleist has chosen this sudden turn to demonstrate an inner ambivalence, a tug of war inside Penthesilea's mind. On the one hand she cannot bear to be conquered, on the other hand she doesn't want to be separated from Achilles. The latter motive leads her to curse her freedom, which a minute ago seemed indispensable for her sanity.
Promptly, the High Priestess reacts with anger and despise. She cynically apologizes for having sacrificed blood and risked lives to rescue the queen. The other prisoners have been lost, needlessly, as it

seems. May Penthesilea run after her master "with fluttering garments"[142]; she is expelled from the Amazonian tribe. The others will now depart and try to re-capture their Greek hostages since they cannot "*implore* them off their feet into the dust"[117] like the soft woman Penthesilea has obviously become.

Prothoë stands by her friend. She comforts the trembling and desperate queen, assuring her all will be fine. They will win more prisoners in another war. But Penthesilea has already lapsed back into depression:

> PENTHESILEA
> Oh never!
> I want to hide in everlasting darkness!

When the herald comes to bring the message of Achilles' new challenge, she almost faints. She cannot take it in; Prothoë has to repeat it to her word for word. Her reaction is a combination of shock and disbelief.

> PENTHESILEA
> The son of Peleus summons me to battle?
> […] He knows my weakness, and would challenge me
> To match his strength in battle?
> This faithful breast leaves him unmoved until
> With his sharp spear he's broken it to pieces?
> Did all the words I whispered in his ear
> Resound on it as vain and speechless music?
> The temple in the trees means nothing to him,

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[142] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, *High Priestess* p 110

My hand laid garlands on a marble statue?[143]

The ingenuity with which the playwright has set up this misunderstanding is made up of two strong components that may be contradictory but go hand in hand: narcissism and love. At first glance, Penthesilea's words sound understandable. Many lovers' arguments begin like this: How could he if he loves me? I have opened my heart to him and now he takes advantage of my weakness! This feeling of betrayal and abuse by a loved one will usually instigate feelings of hatred and revenge, the wish to hurt him back to re-establish a balance of power. The audience finds it easy to identify with this impulse because it is so common. But the tragedy lies in Penthesilea's narcissistic misjudgement of the situation. If she had listened to Achilles earlier on, she must know that he loves her. And if she took a moment to assess their predicament she would see that this is the only way for him to get close to her. If he had wanted to abduct her as a captive, he had ample opportunity when she was in his power. The new challenge must be about something else, he is coming back to let her win the fight and conquer him. We have seen that her thinking is momentarily clouded by depression. This makes it even more difficult for her to be reasonable. However, even when she was not depressed, we observed her lack of empathy. She was not paying attention then, and she is not considering now. All Penthesilea can see is that she is not getting her way. This enrages her as much as the priestess' rejection and the loss of her lover have hurt her. But it is also her narcissistic identification with him that makes it impossible for her to even consider a different motive in his mind. His thoughts are her thoughts; her suspicions are *identical* to his plans of action.

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[143] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 113

Penthesilea is now is a very dangerous state of mind. Like a sick, trapped animal, she feels a lot of pain and anger. She is convinced that she has lost everything. Right at the moment of the play when Achilles is ready to give her all she wants, the Queen of Amazons has given up. She is ready to fight him to the death, his or hers, because her life is not worth living anymore.

The High Priestess can see the desperation and insanity rising within her queen. She apologizes for her harsh words and tries to calm her down. But it is too late. Penthesilea has been pushed over the edge. The struggle between love and duty is lost. She has neglected her duty and lost her love. On top of this, she has a new enemy. Achilles will have to die to re-establish order in her world.

> PENTHESILEA
> To thee, my god, Ares, thou terrible one,
> To thee, high founder of my house, I call!
> Oh! – send thy brazen carriage down to me:
> That I may set my foot into its shell,
> Take up the reigns, fly rolling through the fields,
> And like a thunderbolt from stormy clouds
> Bear down on that Greek's head with all thy force!

As she gets ready for battle, she wants to try out her bow and aims at Prothoë. "Here's to good sport!"[144], she shouts, ready to kill her. The High Priestess quickly distracts her, saving Prothoë's life. But this short moment has given us a deep insight into Penthesilea's state of mind. Prothoë is her only ally; everybody else has given up on her. But she cannot see this. She has closed herself off from reality, aware only of Achilles and herself. In order to cut him out of her emotional life and achieve a separation, her status as queen and leader of the army must

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[144] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee,

be absolute now. She denies her close friend and servant even the last bit of recognition or gratitude. Penthesilea does not need a supporter. Her way of solving Hegel's Paradox[145] is to do away with Prothoë all together. The master cannot rely on the slave's recognition in order to rule. This would make her dependent. But Penthesilea is hell-bent on independence and destruction: destruction of her closest friend, her lover and her own happiness.

In Scene Twenty-One Achilles tells Odysseus and Diomede about his plan. He wants to become Penthesilea's prisoner and follow her to Themyscyra for one or two months. Afterwards she will give him back his freedom, as she has explained is the custom of her tribe. But Achilles hopes that by then she will love him enough to accompany him back to Greece. Odysseus is outraged. He belittles Achilles for neglecting his duty in the Trojan War and letting a woman unsettle his mind. Achilles threatens to punch him if he won't stop sneering. It is now obvious that Achilles is really in love. His libido has been cathectised to Penthesilea to such an extent that he does not care about his self-image anymore. He is clearly not a narcissistic character, or he wouldn't consider being defeated by a woman. Even Odysseus' ridicule won't change his mind. He gives up his duties at Troy, his place in the Greek army. He stands up against his closest friends in order to get what he wants: to be united with Penthesilea. And having experienced her at her most gentle and endearing, he does not even waver when he hears that she approaches with hoards of riders, dogs and elephants.

ACHILLES

That's what she owes to her custom. Fine. Now follow! […]

Penthesilea p 116

[145] see page 21

No doubt they'll eat from my hands – Follow me!
- Oh! They'll be just as tame as she.

In Scene Twenty-Two the High Priestess relates Penthesilea's behaviour to the Amazons and the audience. Interestingly, we are not allowed to see it ourselves. The queen has threatened to kill anybody who tried to hold her back. She set her dogs on Meroë who was kneeling down to implore her to stop. She threw a rock at the High Priestess who had attempted to argue with her. And now she is raging together with her dogs:

HIGH PRIESTESS
Her lips are flecked with foam, calling them sisters;
Those howling, baying brutes, and like a Meanad,
Dancing across the meadows with her bow,
She's prodding them the murder-breathing pack,
Urging them on to catch the fairest game,
She says, that ever ranged upon the earth.[146]

We have seen a similar image described by Odysseus earlier on. He was talking about Achilles and compared him to a hunting dog that has to be called back before it "flies howling into the antlers of the stag"[147]. Now Pethesilea is the hound, Achilles the stag. And this image relates directly to the story of Artemis, goddess of the hunt. She was enraged when she discovered Actaeon spying on her and her nymphs while they were bathing. The goddess changed him into a stag and, with a pack of fifty hounds, tore him to pieces. Artemis is one of the most revered deities of the Amazons. Penthesilea may unconsciously be copying her acts since she also feels her nakedness having been expose to Achilles. By drawing this parallel, Kleist explains her behaviour, making it seem

[146] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 124
[147] see page 67

less random and insane. Comparing her to a Maenad recalls another myth of striking similarity: The Maenads (Greek *mainades*, "the raving ones") were Bacchae, woman under the thrall of the god Dionysus (Bacchus) who wandered about dressed in deerskins, their hair dishevelled, and in their ecstasies tore animals to pieces with their teeth. The king Pentheus hid behind a pine tree to watch the Bacchae's revelries. When the women discovered him, they tore him to pieces. Both these myths are combined in Scene Twenty-Three.

Like Pentheus, Achilles seeks refuge on top of a pine tree. The boughs part as he climbs down to kneel in front of Penthesilea. But she shouts: "Aha! The antlers give away the stag!"[148], in direct reference to Actaeon. Then she shoots an arrow through his throat, bringing him down. She sets the pack of hounds of him (like Diana) and joins them in devouring his body (like a Maenad).

While these events must be shocking and appalling, Kleist is making a strong effort to excuse Penthesilea and put her acts in the context of classic myths and legends. Meroë relates the unspeakable; Kleist tempers the horror with allusions to the goddess Diana[149]. Clearly, he wants us to empathise, if just a little, with Penthesilea's dilemma. This is the man she loves but cannot have. In her delusion she is convinced she has lost him. We should appreciate her ultimate attempt to regain her lover by devouring and thus incorporating him. While the act of killing him has rid her of her obsession, eating him will restore the oneness that has become her image of their relationship. The ultimate identification lies in consuming his body, i.e. *him,* making it part of herself.

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[148] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, *Meroë* p 127

[149] Diana, Roman goddess of the hunt, is the equivalent of the Greek goddess Artemis.

Having destroyed Achilles, Penthesilea believes she has died herself. In Scene Twenty-Four it takes some time and effort to awaken her from the stupor she has fallen into. When she finally regains sentience, she believes to be in Elysium. Prothoë has turned away from her. But seeing as nobody else will help, she finally overcomes her revulsion and tells the queen that she is still alive. Strangely, Penthesilea does not mind, but is happy and content.

> PENTHESILEA
> I feel such bliss, my sister! More than bliss!
> […] I could die this moment and believe
> That I had overcome the son of Peleus.

She does not remember anything that has happened. What she did was done outside the field of her consciousness. Again, it is most remarkable that Kleist captured the power of the unconscious one hundred years before Freud explained its complex mechanism. Freud describes the "id" as a the part of the unconscious that is totally alien to the ego[150]. We may, for instance, make a slip of the tongue and immediately afterwards recognize the hidden message as familiar to our consciousness. In that case, the unknown impulse originated from what Freud calls the preconscious. If, however, the remark we have made appears entirely foreign to us, it has come from the permanently unconscious, the "id"[151].

In our case, Penthesilea has committed more than a slip of the tongue. But the mechanism is exactly the same. Unconscious impulses have managed to break through and assert themselves. And her conscious ego has no affiliation with or recollection of them. The reason for this may well be that those impulses are of an ancient nature, rooted in

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[150] Freud, S. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis,* p 104
[151] ibid., p 103

early childhood. They came from a pre-verbal phase of development and have long been forgotten. I mean the *paranoid-schizoid position* according to Klein[152]. In this phase an infant's object of love and desire is the mother, or the mother's breast. The breast is a place of closeness and physical contact, but also a source of nourishment. The infant "attacks" the breast with hunger and desire, resulting inevitably in its depletion of milk. At the end of a feeding, the breast is empty. Besides the feeling of physical satisfaction, the infant experiences the sadness of having "destroyed" the loved object.

The consequence may be a later fear of destroying loved objects *through love.*

But aggressive impulses also go along with desire, there is a strong feeling of anger born from envy: the child has to depend on the mother for food and love; he cannot attain it for himself. Hanna Segal writes:

> *When envy is intense, the perception of an ideal object is as painful as the experience of a bad one, since the ideal object arouses unbearable feelings of envy. Hence, this type of projective identification may be directed at the ideal object as well as at the persecutory one.*[153]

An immense feeling of guilt takes hold of the ego. This leads into the next stage of development, the *depressive position*[154]. The horrible consequence comes in the form of in the infant's phantasy of having destroyed its loved object *through hate.*

Penthesilea seems to draw her impulses mostly from the earlier stage, the narcissistic *ruthless* stage[155]. She loves Achilles and eats him.

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[152] see page 16, 17
[153] Segal, H. *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein,* p 56
[154] Segal, H. *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein.* Chapter 6
[155] see page 17

Interestingly, she eats his *breast*[156]. Afterwards, she remains in a state of amnesia until Prothoë draws her out of it. And now something uncanny happens: Penthesilea tries to justify her acts along a Freudian slip of the tongue!

PENTHESILEA
Did I kiss him to death? […]
No, didn't I kiss him? Really tore him? Speak! […]
- So it was a mistake. A kiss, a bite,
The two should rhyme, for one who truly loves
With all her heart can easily mistake them.[157]

This is the English translation. In German, the words Küsse and Bisse (kisses and bites) actually do rhyme, and Penthesilea hopes to find justification in this coincidence.

PENTHESILEA
How many a maid will say, her arms wrapped round
Her lover's neck: I love you, oh so much
That if I could, I'd eat you up right here; […]
Look: When my arms were wrapped around your neck,
I did what I had spoken, word for word;
I was not quite so mad as it might seem.[158]

But what follows, is remorse. The feeling of guilt as described by Klein takes hold of Penthesilea. She longs to be punished just as much as she longs to be with Achilles. And the obvious way out for a woman of her time is to follow her lover into the underworld.

PENTHESILEA
I hereby disavow the law of women
And I shall follow him, this youth. […]
For now I shall descend into my breast,

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[156] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 128
[157] ibid. p 145
[158] Kleist, H.v. *Penthesilea A Tragic Drama.* Translated by Joel Agee, p 146

And dig a shaft and quarry out the cold
Ore of a feeling that annihilates.
This ore I purify in fire of grief
To hardest steel; in poison then of bitter,
Burning remorse, I soak it through and through;
Now carry it toward Hope's eternal anvil,
And grind and sharpen it into a dagger;
And to this dagger now I yield my breast:
So! So! So! So! Again! – Now it is done.
[*She falls and dies.*]

Without the use of a physical weapon, Penthesilea kills herself. "A feeling that annihilates" is the depression she has succumbed to. The total lack of libidinal cathexis of her ego must be unbearable to her. She has idealized Achilles, projected her own ideal self into him. And then, failing to possess him, she has destroyed him. She has tried everything to regain the love that was lost to her: the love for herself. Throughout the play, Penthesilea has lost her self-love step by step. First she cathectised part of her libido to Achilles, then he defeated her in battle, undermining her ego and humiliating her. When he re-challenged her, she was hurt and infuriated. And when she avenged her ego by killing him and eating him, she could not recapture her narcissism, but lost the object of her love along with the libido she had invested in him.

Conclusion

Studying various notions of narcissism and applying those notions to the characters of Saint Joan and Penthesilea has greatly enhanced my understanding of these characters.

In *Creative Writers and Daydreaming,* Freud argues that an author's hero is invested with the author's unconscious wishes and fantasies[159]. The character's greatness and invulnerability reflect the writer's secret longings, enhanced and delivered to us through the "*ars poetica"*[160]*,* which allows us to be fascinated even by the most disturbing fantasies. Ideas and images, which might "repel us or at least leave us cold"[161] if recounted honestly and unfiltered, let us "experience great pleasure arising probably from many sources". They become elevated to an entirely new level and achieve greatness through the talent of an author: "How the writer accomplishes this is his innermost secret; the essential *ars poetica* lies in the technique by which our feeling of repulsion is overcome [...] Perhaps much that brings about this result consists in the writer's putting us into a position in which we can enjoy *our own*[162] day-dreams without reproach or shame".[163]

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[159] see Freud, S. *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*, London 1908, p182
[160] Freud, S. *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*, London 1908, p183
[161] see Freud, S. *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*, London 1908, p182
[162] my italics
[163] see Freud, S. *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*, London 1908, p183

It was for this reason that I chose a psychoanalytic approach to my subject; the actual real-life authors whose fantasies have spawned these heroines are informed by the psychological patterns shared by us all. The underlying notions of psychoanalytic theory can be applied to the authors, and implicitly the fictional characters they create as well.

"A conclusion is a place in which to consolidate and reflect upon the method chosen and related to the wider question of what the diagnosis of fictional characters can and has done for [my] particular analysis of these works"[164]
The analysis of the works has helped me to gain insight into the character's motivation, interactions and behaviour.
The heroines' behaviour may seem intriguing, fascinating, insane: Saint Joan_and Penthesiliea both sacrifice their lives for their "beliefs". They stand up against society, convention and the pressure of losing everything if they don't comply. To me, it was unclear what motivated them; they appeared extreme in our contemporary context, yet I was fascinated by these intrepid figures, who are seemingly detached from social restraints.

It is exactly this distance from everyday life that makes them so fascinating. In child's play, in daydreams and in creative writing it is the impossible that becomes possible, the forbidden that may be fantasised[165]. This can bee seen to be a liberating experience for the playwright, and it is also an enticing journey for the reader / spectator. We are allowed to engage with a territory, which is normally taboo,

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[164] Prof. Van Zyl, S. *Response on Martina Griller's Research Report* 2008
[165] see Freud, S. *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*, London 1908, p182

where cannibalism, megalomania and lawlessness occur, and the author permits his Ego to rule and lead the way.[166]

According to Freud, "the dramatist creates a neurotic space where the spectators may live out their conflicts and even gain masochistic satisfaction in identifying with the hero's defeat"[160]. Elisabeth Wright claims that this constitutes "the emergence of a psychoanalytic spectator theory"[161].

The fact that the author invests his own dreams, wishes, fantasies and longings into his characters is what makes the characters so intriguing. This process reflects back on questions of psychic patterns, which the author undergoes and which inform the characters that she/he creates. It is through this process that we as audience can engage with the psychic qualities of the characters as they ultimately originate in the author's longings and fantasies.

At the same time, we as the audience are given the opportunity to indulge in fantasies of greatness. We can live through the rebellion and audacity of these two heroines without having to fear the consequences. "For the spectator knows quite well that actual heroic conduct such as this would be impossible without pains and sufferings and acute fears, which would almost cancel out the enjoyment."[167]

Freud's proposition has greatly informed my chosen method of using a psychoanalytical approach to illuminate the emotional journey of the two characters and try to investigate what motivates them. In this way I would argue that Elisabeth Wright's notions helped articulate with great lucidity my methodological approach.

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[166] Freud, S. *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*, London: Hogarth Press 1908
[160] Freud, S. *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*, London: Hogarth Press 1908
[161] Wright E. *Analysing Performance* p176
[167] Freud, S. *Psychopathic Characters On The Stage (1905-6)*

Analysing the two plays step by step, I discovered many parallels but also important differences between the two characters.

Saint Joan is unlike any other women of her time. In order to achieve her goal and follow the will of God, she renounces all femininity. She believes to have been chosen and lives her life according to her inner voices rather than social constraints. But ignoring the world around her to a great extent, she finds herself trapped by exactly those rules and regulation that she has chosen to ignore: both spiritual and secular powers collude to bring her down. Even in the face of danger, Joan is incapable of stepping down. Her ideal self guides her through battles and trial, but ultimately leads to her destruction. She is helplessly squashed by the might of her ego, which won't bend or cede to intimidation. Her saintliness – pronounced only after her death – lies in her apparent readiness to suffer martyrdom. But in reality she never had a choice. It was her strong narcissistic self-image that caused her to block out reality, having created quite a different world inside her head.

Penthesilea is an example of someone who tries to be independent and fails. At first, we experience her as a woman independent of men, but we soon get to know her as an Amazon bound by the laws of her state. When she wants to be a queen independent of her subjects, we learn that even a master depends on his slaves for recognition. And finally we see her as a lover desperately trying to incorporate the object of her love in order to regain her independence and freedom of emotions. This ends tragically with an inner void and the realisation that nobody can be completely autonomous. Her narcissistic need to

control her feelings, her world and her lover drive Penthesilea into an impasse of loneliness, remorse and depression. In today's world, she would not be regarded as a healthy person. Her personality is highly unstable and dependent on constant reassurance through triumph and success. Ultimately, it is her narcissistic character that makes it unbearable for her to be in love because she cannot accept the love requited by Achilles. Loving is a one-way street for her with a constant flow of libido away from the self, never to be recovered. This leads to the ultimate tragedy. Kleist's genius, however, lies in his brilliant way of placing this narcissistic character at the centre of a struggle between men and women. As unusual and disturbing as the Amazon's law may seem, it worked as long as there were no strong emotions, but a guideline and level-headedness of practicality. Penthesilea's passion had no room within the system. And her narcissism sent it tumbling down.

From a developmental point of view, both women show characteristics of early narcissism in the oral phase according to Freud. Penthesilea in particular seems to make no distinction between loving and devouring at a certain moment in the play. But also Joan's psyche dwells in a state of self-sufficiency, her libido being cathectised mainly on her self. Comparing them on a Kleinian note, we could say that Joan never grew past her paranoid-schizoid position, splitting the world into "good" and "bad". She incorporated the good, fighting the bad outside her. Penthesilea, on the other hand, has progressed just a step further. With her, there is still a paranoid-schizoid fixation in terms of splitting, but we also see strong signs of a depressive position, i.e. remorse and guilt after her tragic transgression.

From a socio-cultural perspective, neither Joan nor Penthesilea have adopted *automaton conformity* as described by Fromm. Instead they are unafraid of their own freedom. They are brave enough to stand up for themselves. They refuse to adopt the personalities offered to them by cultural patterns.

Both characters could be redeemed by Winnicott's claim that accepting the outside world as it is must be seen as uncreative and ultimately the opposite of being alive. Joan's and Penthesilea's refusal to "fit in" could then be seen as a creative alternative to compliance, allowing them to shape they environment in line with their wishes. However, the *change to the reality principle* according to Winnicott does not appear to have been achieved by either of the two women. It is impossible to shape a reality which one is incapable of perceiving. While Joan denies her identity as a woman altogether, Penthesilea refuses to accept the fact that Achilles is stronger than her but loves her nevertheless.

As explained in Hegel's *absolute self,* there is a conflict between independence and dependence in both characters. Neither Joan's nor Penthesilea's self is willing to give up omnipotence.

The breakdown in their relationship with people around them is inevitable because at the very point of realising their own independence, they must depend on the others to acknowledge that independence. Both Joan and Penthesilea lose their last allies in this manner. But while Joan withdraws into solitude, Penthesilea turns aggressive and attacks her closest friend and her lover.

Finally, on a sociopathic note we can say that while Joan displays an overwhelming grandiosity, Penthesilea fits more into the category of negative narcissism. They both experience only their own feelings and

emotions as real, consequently being hampered in their social skills. Yet the motivations listed by Fromm (the drive to control, to submit, to destroy; narcissism, greed, envy, ambition) are mostly true for Penthesilea. The dissociation from outside realities makes it easier for her to destroy others; Joan also dissociates herself from the world around her, but ultimately meets with destruction as a consequence.

APPENDIX 1

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was born in Dublin, the son of a civil servant. His education was irregular, due to his dislike of any organized training. After working in an estate agent's office for a while he moved to London as a young man (1876), where he established himself as a leading music and theatre critic in the eighties and nineties and became a prominent member of the Fabian Society, for which he composed many pamphlets. He began his literary career as a novelist. His earliest dramas were called appropriately *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* (1898). Shaw's radical rationalism, his utter disregard of conventions, his keen dialectic interest and verbal wit often turn the stage into a forum of ideas. In the plays of his later period discussion sometimes drowns the drama, in *Back to Methuselah* (1921), although in the same period he worked on his masterpiece *Saint Joan* (1923), in which he rewrites the well-known story of the French maiden and extends it from the Middle Ages to the present.

Shaw's complete works appeared in thirty-six volumes between 1930 and 1950, the year of his death.[168]

Saint Joan, first produced in New York in 1923 and in London in 1924, is considered by many to be Shaw's greatest play. It remains one of the most frequently performed of his plays and provides a major role for an actress. Joan of Arc was a subject of particular interest around 1920. During the First World War she had been represented fighting alongside French soldiers against the Germans and it is likely that this was a factor that influenced her canonisation by the Roman Catholic Church in 1920.[169]

APPENDIX 2

Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) was a soldier in the German army. In the summer of 1806, while staying in Königsberg, he wrote his first draft of *Penthesilea*. In 1807 he was captured by the French and charged with espionage. He wrote the second draft in French imprisonment and finished the play in 1808. On the 24th of January 1808 he sent it to Goethe writing: “It is on the ‘knees of my heart’ that I present it to you”. Goethe, having depicted a much more romantic image of antiquity in his *Iphigenie*, reacted diplomatically reserved, saying he could “not quite make friends” with Penthesilea,

[168] http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1925/shaw-bio.html
[169] Ken Newton, University of Dundee. "Saint Joan." The Literary Encyclopedia. 30 Oct. 2002. The Literary Dictionary Company. 6 December 2006. <http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=2287>

her people and her world. He cautioned Kleist against "writing for a theatre that [had] yet to come"[170].

Elystan Griffiths wrote that Heinrich von Kleist's emotional investment in his tragedy *Penthesilea* was considerable. His friend Ernst von Pfuel claimed that Kleist announced to him the death of his heroine with tears in his eyes. Kleist claimed that it was Pfuel himself who wept, but the story of Kleist's lachrymosity is consistent with other evidence. In the autumn of 1807 he told Marie von Kleist: "my innermost being is in it [...] all the filth and radiance of my soul".[171] *Penthesilea* was first produced in Berlin in April 1811. However, Kleist's text was not used, instead the whole play was mimed. The second production followed in 1876, still strongly edited. Kleist himself reacted to the severe rejection of his work as early as 1808: "Comedy programme: Today for the first time: Penthesilea, / A Canine Comedy; featuring: heroes and pooches and women."

Kleist had become obsessed with persuading a friend to join him in suicide. Finally he found a willing partner in Henriette Vogel, an incurably ill married woman. On the 20th of November 1811 Heinrich von Kleist went to a secluded lakeside spot with his friend. There he shot Henriette Vogel in the chest. Afterwards he reloaded his pistol and committed suicide.

Other important works by Kleist include: *Amphitryon*, *The Marquise of 0...*, *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg, The Broken Pitcher*, *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn.*

Only the two latter of Kleist's plays were performed in his lifetime.

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[170] Joel Agee in his Introduction to *Penthesilea*, p xxi

[171] Griffiths E., University of Birmingham. "Penthesilea." in *The Literary Encyclopaedia* [online database] 20/12/2004

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