

Here lies ... Hermetics, psychoanalysis and ethnocentrism: Using Abraham and Torok to help explain the rise of reactionary social groups

Jacob Glazier 

Department of Applied Psychology, New York University, New York, New York, USA

Correspondence

Jacob Glazier, Atlanta, GA 30324, USA.
Email: jacob.w.glazier@gmail.com

Abstract

The thinking of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok reinvigorates traditional Freudian psychoanalysis by shifting its metaphorical register to a rubric with a more occult sensibility. This creepier and darker metaphoric brings to life beings like the crypt, ghosts, goblins and phantoms. In this essay, the latter is used, along with the help of its shadowy companions, to demonstrate how the transgenerational transmission of trauma passes through time and manifests itself in social and political groups. The analysis reveals that the recent wave of political ethnocentrism, that of neo-fascism and nationalism, announces a secret in sociality that is guarded by a global spectre.

KEYWORDS

cryptology, deconstruction, ethnocentrism, fascism, hermetics, nationalism, psychoanalysis

1 | INTRODUCTION

A crypt is never natural through and through, and if, as is well known, *physis* has a tendency to encrypt (itself), that is because it overflows its own bounds and encloses, naturally, its other, all others (Derrida, 1986, p. xiv).

Going on to call the crypt an enclosure of artifice, an architecture that partitions secrets, Jacques Derrida introduced an original version of psychoanalysis that is rooted in more occult practices. The analysts that pushed psychoanalysis into this darker and spookier corner are Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. In the foreword to their tome, *The Wolf Man's Magic Wand* (1986), a new science is designated for investigating the eerie and occult beings that dwell on the cusp of meaning, those that persist in different temporal logics than what is normative.

This, Derrida calls *hermetics*. To offer an interpretation of such a place, the dark recesses of space, in general, requires a typology that is cryptographic in nature, a seismic crack in the *topos* that does not call for something new, an invention situated within history, but a decryption of symbols as they have circulated *qua* symbols. Such would be breaking the self-reflexive encoding process that enshrouds the crypt in secrecy.

In this essay, I will argue the general thesis that hermetics or cryptology can be developed into a theory of social group formation. More specifically, this theory can help explain the rise of reactionary social groups such as nationalism and fascism that have recently arisen in political realities around the planet; as I will illustrate using two specific case studies from recent history in the United States. The abstract move from the clinical applications of Abraham and Torok to a larger discursive and planetary conceptualisation is warranted given their emphasis on how language shapes worlds. I begin by explaining their take on narratology, which brings with it an introduction of new technical terms in which to recolour a psychoanalytic imaginary that has been largely shaded by science and Freud's topology.

After advancing this more occult metaphoric, the psychoanalytic application of these cryptic interventions as applied by Abraham and Torok, especially their distinction between introjection and incorporation, will be used to show how fantasy gives rise to a transgenerational mechanism that transmits trauma and ungrievability, namely the phantom. This has the benefit of illustrating how the leader, as designated by Freud in his manuscript on group psychology, acts as an embodied form of this haunt thereby binding reactionary sociality that gives rise to political ethnocentrism. I end with concluding meditations and future avenues to explore.

2 | HERMETICS: SUBJECTING THE CRYPT TO ANALYSIS

The move to metaphors dug out of the crypt is intended to stand in stark contrast with traditional psychoanalytic terms that began with Freud and are still used in contemporary theory and practice. Some of the more well-known notions include Freud's (2010) early articulation of a metapsychology, which he developed under the rubric of the conscious, preconscious and unconscious. In later Freudian theory, these earlier insights were structuralised, therein mapping a topology of the psyche in the three regions of the ego, id and superego (Freud, 1923). This is not to say that Abraham and Torok completely abandoned the original Freudian project that initiated a metapsychology, the study of powers that are not immediately accessible to everyday consciousness. On the contrary, the architecture and partitions that create the crypt within the ego intensify the *secrets of the psyche*—drawing out explicitly the encoded nature of forces and significations that lie latent yet, nevertheless, overwhelming present.

The *crypt*, in its topological treatment, is situated at the heart of the ego and is 'a special kind of Unconscious' (Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. 80). This is the place where a love object that has not been grieved is cast down. What is important is the affect associated with the experience and how this creates an impasse of ungrievability. In other words, as Yassa (2002) articulated, 'the dead object is enclosed in an isolated part of the ego... that is sealed by the repression of the shameful pleasure of the moment of loss' (p. 87). This shameful pleasure is experienced and buttressed up against the social world only to nullify it and send it down to be buried. That is, the aim of cryptological analysis is not a matter of uncovering actual developmental or historical trauma in as much as it aims to resuscitate this lost object in order to mourn and then dispense with it.

The kind of specialness attributed to the crypt refers to the liminal character that this space possesses, namely that it provides 'the explanation for the peculiarity of the intra-symbolic and not co-symbolic relationships of the word' (Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. 80, emphasis in original). This is to say that the crypt is not an unconscious in the traditional psychoanalytic sense since it is neither a repository for repressed desires nor is it a receptacle that helps constitute sociality and shared epistemologies. Instead, the crypt is a type of unconscious that straddles the borders between ego and unconscious thereby demonstrating its intra-symbolic nature, that the secret it harbours is precisely one of signification, one that has become encased, deadened and relegated to a macabre existence—a betwixt and between state, straddling not only the unconscious and preconscious, but life and death itself.

In fact, Abraham and Torok (1986) named the spatiality that encases these secrets the *cryptophoria* as opposed to the phantasmagoria. The *cryptophoria* is simply the haunting effects of the crypt (Goodwin, 2016). More specifically, for the approach of cryptology,

Cryptophoria effectively subsumes certain types of “fetishism,” “hypochondria,” “fixed ideas,” “manic-depressive psychosis,” “pathological mourning,” and the like... our clinical and theoretical research focused on cases (of *cryptophoria*) where the symbolic operation is blocked, where introjection is lacking, and where the libido's encounter with the tools of its own symbolic development is wanting (Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. lxxii).

This new concept helps to illustrate the narratological undecidability inherent to the thinking of both Abraham and Torok. That is, it is not a matter of erecting a hard and firm distinction between fantasy and reality, the appeal to the primal scene as a historical fact in the development of the psyche as some interpretations of Freud suggest. *Cryptophoria*, in fact, purposefully upsets the need to adjudicate fantasy from reality insofar as cryptological interpretation is more aligned with literary theory as opposed to more conservative enactments of psychoanalysis. In other words, the point is to uncover how cryptonyms straddle but do not suture the gap between fantasy and reality.

A *cryptonym* acts like a key in the practice of Abraham and Torok (1986) and is called as such in order to designate ‘words that hide’ (p. 18). It is produced through the perverse kind of pleasure that the secret of the crypt harbours. According to Frosh (2013), ‘there is something pleasurable at work [in the crypt], a disturbing pleasure it is true and one that forces the radical excision of certain ideas—of specific words—from consciousness’ (p. 46). Such a pleasure can be harnessed, during analysis, to expel the cryptonym from its hiding place. The term cryptonym is purposefully situated within the realm of linguistics in order to underline the resemblance it has with its lexical cousins, those like *alloseme*, *metonymy* and *metaphor*. Importantly, the cryptonym is different in kind insofar as it calls to be deciphered through decoding its homophony, etymology, and polysemy. As Derrida (1986) stated:

cryptonym would thus not consist in representing-hiding one word by another, one thing by another, a thing by a word or a word by a thing, but in picking out from the extended series of *allosemes*, a term that then (in a second-degree distancing) is translated into a synonym (pp. xli–xlii).

Stated differently, the ‘second degree distancing’ that Derrida spoke of above is achieved through analytic interpretation, which uncovers the place of the cryptonym as keyholder of the analysand's crypt.

The ability of the cryptonym to elude meaning and thwart metaphorisation was developed most rigorously by Abraham and Torok under the umbrella of *anasemia*—naming the process of decryption that is unique to cryptological inquire. *Anasemia* is a fresh narratological approach that, as the analysis above explained, works to decode the secret carried on the back of the cryptonym. Derrida (1986) called it a certain ‘theory of errata [*contresens*]’ (p. xxxi) because it inhabits the linguistic mistakes or bumbles made by the sliding of sense. This is not unlike the *parapraxes* developed under traditional psychoanalysis insofar as these slips are subjected to the domain of relational and historical analyses, not just embodied bumbles. In other words, *anasemia* hunts for the errors in metaphorisation, its failures and missteps, to signal these instances and disseminate the literality they contain over other figurative tropes in the purview of the analysis.

The methodological procedure of *anasemia* is aimed at exorcising the entity that is entombed in the crypt and that the cryptonym helps to awaken. This creature is called the *phantom*. If the spatiality of the crypt provided a schema of how secrets are housed within the crypt itself, then the phantom helps provide a mechanism for its strange temporality. In other words, the phantom is able to span generations and, creepily, represents a sort of possession by the subject from something that was never its own to begin with. It is a connective spectre that haunts genealogically and binds families and groups together through the transmission of its incorporeality.

Following the lead of Dragon (2005), it is helpful to detail the phantom's etymological roots to better get a sense for how it differs from more traditional and colloquial notions:

The Greek word φάντασμα translates as “vision,” “specter,” which is the synonym of “phantom.” When looking further, it becomes apparent that the word φαυτάζετς means, “to display.” This etymological trace discloses that the very word “phantom” encrypts in itself the condition of visibility, of being a ghost-like medium, and also the potential to show and to present. But this definition also calls attention to a crucial detail: the phantom never appears – it returns in silence, hiding itself and the cause of its return (p. 266).

The phantom, then, literally forms the spectres themselves, which in turn reveal the presence of a crypt, *divulging an unknown knowledge but not the knowledge itself*.

As indicated, the phantom represents a sort of absent presence staged as the ‘secrets of others’ (Abraham, 1994, p. 171). This secret is different from Freudian repression insofar as it is buried and then arises and returns from the other, the love object that was narcissistically cathected to the subject. In a counterintuitive sense, the technical version of the phantom differs from its anecdotal counterpart in that it does not impart a message or does not desire to cause trouble. Instead, as Davis (2007) makes clear, ‘*the phantom is a liar* [emphasis added]; its effects are designed to mislead the haunted subject and to ensure that its secret remains shrouded in mystery’ (p. 10). It whispers deceptions into the ear of its host, protecting the preservation of the shameful pleasure that conjured it in the first place.

3 | CREATING PHANTOMS: INTROJECTION AND INCORPORATION

According to Abraham, the phantom is created through a rejection of libidinal introjection. Of importance here is to understand the key distinction between *introjection* and *incorporation* that serves as pivotal in Abraham and Torok's (1994) analysis. The most succinct way to parse this difference is to associate introjection with a process and incorporation with fantasy. Incorporation designates fantasy because it relies on an intrapsychic state of affairs and rests alongside other psychoanalytic arche-fantasies, those like the primal scene, castration and seduction. Introjection is different in that there is no object in reality to which it refers. Rather, as Abraham and Torok (1994) noted, incorporation ‘merely simulates profound psychic transformation through magic... so in order not to have to “swallow” a loss, we fantasise swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost, as if it were some kind of thing’ (p. 126).

As the foregoing quote indicates, the fantasy created by introjection is intimately connected to the mouth and language. Through the developmental trajectory of the subject, the infant loses its connection to the breast or another libidinally cathected object and instead begins to fill this void with babble and eventually language. When language acquisition finally occurs and the subject has passed from substance or love-object into meaning, the fantasy of incorporation has begun to take shape around the subject's way of being in the world, their identity and so on. Ultimately, the importance of the oral cavity constitutes a sort of catachresis in that material objects give way to the realm of figurative language and metaphor. The subject can and does regress in instances when it is unable to grieve the loss of an object of desire. This amounts to a fluctuation in how stable or consistent the incorporation actually is and the gaps of non-grievability reveal spaces where introjection should have occurred instead; an introjection that would allow the analysand to mourn the loss of times within fantasy that were once reserved for objects of love.

Importantly, there are two concurrent processes at work in incorporation: ‘*demetaphorization* (the taking literally what is meant figuratively) and *objectivation* (pretending that the suffering is not an injury to the subject but instead a loss sustained by the love object)’ (Abraham & Torok, 1994, p. 127). As is evident in this passage is how

incorporation, through its developmental relation with the mouth, impedes and, in fact, annuls figurative language. It is at this point that Derrida (1986) claimed, 'the self *mimes* introjection. But this mimicry with its redoubtable logic depends on clandestinity. Incorporation negotiates clandestinely with a prohibition it neither accepts nor transgresses' (p. xvii). This prohibition is what matters. The subject, in other words, comes to literalise its experience and mistake metaphors for their actual referent wherein words that are closely associated with incorporation, those dirty words that have to do with excrement, sexuality or the body are displaced and ingested, in some cases, creating an impasse in the ability to reduce the symptom and, even more fundamentally, to create sense—a dalliance with psychosis.

It is worth noting, here, the similarities and differences between Abraham and Torok's version of psychoanalysis and that of Lacan, if only briefly. For the latter, the incision of the signifier into the subject occurs even before birth leaving it split and alienated from itself therein containing a lack that meaning then tries to suture. This is more radical than a cryptological analysis insofar as Abraham and Torok do not theorise the subject as originally split by the signifier. One way to see this is the social bondedness and transmission that the phantom facilitates, which is particular to a specific social group (e.g., the nuclear family, a language community and so forth). Lacan would argue for the primacy of the signifier in that even the transmission enacted by the phantom is subject to the polysemy and slipperiness of language. While not completely disagreeing, Abraham and Torok hold up the split of the subject as the exact place where history shows up and bondedness reveals its contextuality. Or, as Rand (1986) articulated, 'what is being obstructed in cryptonymy is not a meaning, but a situation (both intersubjective and intralinguistic) whose interpretation consists precisely in evaluating its resistance to meaning' (p. lx). This is different in kind from Lacan's theory of lack insofar as signifieds can exist transhistorically in the lack of the subject and be subjected to a decrypting kind of psychoanalytic archaeology.

The entire framework of incorporation and introjection may best show itself in the wish fulfilments that find their way into the manifest content of the dreamworld. The play between the gaps and spaces where introjection should have occurred and the block put up by incorporation creates a spectre that returns when ego defences are at their most vulnerable. Abraham and Torok (1994) illustrated this nicely when writing that,

Sometimes in the dead of the night, when libidinal fulfillments have their way, the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations (p. 130).

The ghost of the crypt, spoken about above, is not unlike the phantom that Abraham (1994) developed insofar as it points to a mechanism for explaining the transgenerational transmission of symptoms and, in a linguistic register, the creation of cryptonyms.

The phantom paradoxically guards against introjection, the way that the Oedipus complex is jostled by the subject, for instance, while also 'spooking' the kind of secret the subject harbours, its unfulfilled or repressed desires. Abraham (1994) illustrated this when writing that the phantom 'works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject's own mental topography' (p. 173). This inability to speak, the block experienced by the subject, takes on a meaning of, in a certain gesture, having an alien inside oneself, an introjection that both speaks through the subject and, at the same time, troubles the development of sense by obfuscating it.

This fact Abraham (1994) likens to little, invisible gnomes or hobgoblins that disrupt the passage of sense from the unconscious to conscious awareness calling the precipitates of this passage 'secreted words' (p. 175). Secreted words are the precursors to the discovery of an actual cryptonym since they arise from moments of insight or interpretation in the analytic encounter, namely through transference. The cryptonym, however, is the treasure that the phantom as crypt-keeper guards since it has to do with meaning that has to be reconstructed by the process of analysis. Signification of this kind is how the phantom shows itself, through the staging—or one may even say, performance—of sense. When the secreted words have become established socially or begin to be circulated in epistemology they become *staged words* that may be picked-up and used by a family or social group

and handed-down historically. As a result, the phantom transmits itself by jumping from one body in time to the next causing ungrievable fantasies of incorporation in social bonds to form. In this way,

we must not lose sight of the fact that to stage a word - whether metaphorically, as an alloeme, or as a cryptonym - constitutes an attempt at exorcism, an attempt, that is, to relieve the unconscious by placing the effects of the phantom in the social realm (Abraham, 1994, p. 176).

The exorcism, in other words, tries to punch a hole in the gaps created by the phantom, the way in which it prevents libidinal introjection. Yet, the phantom holds fantasy of incorporation in place precisely through its injection of these kinds of words into the social world. This allows for the transgenerational transmission of symptoms and helps explain group bonding and how social formations can circle around these traumatisms becoming unbound when properly analysed and the lost object exposed and mourned.

4 | A PHANTOM OF THE WORLD: REACTIONARY SOCIAL GROUPS

The resurgence of nationalism and neo-fascism in very recent history are symptoms of a much larger spectre that haunts planet Earth. These kinds of political realities that are occurring go to show a certain historical trauma that pervades polity and is becoming ever more present given globalisation and the proliferation of technological interconnection. While this trauma is not tied to any one historical event, it nevertheless sets into relief the temporal trajectory of the state of affairs of the world. Relying on the phantom, as developed by Abraham and Torok, these reactionary social formations are the *return of a haunt* that has not been grieved collectively, a certain encrypted trauma that lays dormant in secret, away from the eyes of the public and restricted from the commons—political ethnocentrism that have not been expelled from the body politic.

The phantom arises from this secret in the Other. The traumas of the collectivity that are barred from being grieved give rise to gaps in sociality whereby reactionary groups form and disrupt the social fabric. Following post-structuralist thinkers, one may call these *microfascisms* that are situated at the level of the micropolitics of desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). The introduction of this term is important because it helps to demonstrate how group formation is intimately intertwined with power—a topic that was not adequately developed by Freud.

The politics of desire is perhaps most famously invoked by Foucault in his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). In his preface, Foucault (1983) politicised desire by registering it at the group level and warned against how it can become ossified into rigid and subjecting forces. He wrote that an analysis of the micropolitics of desire gets under the global, historical ruptures as evidenced in Nazism, for instance, and discloses the warning of 'the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us' (Foucault, 1983, p. xl). These microfascisms seep into the social world through a non-vigilance, indifference, and apathy; conditions that are no doubt making themselves known in the current political milieu.

Presupposed in this formulation, at the base level of social cohesion there exists a desire for mastery of the other that is always latent and sometimes manifest. This claim, importantly, illustrates that the world, historical fascisms of the past have their origin in this more fundamental fact of sociality. As Genesko (2017) stated:

Fascism is everywhere and to desire is to activate it in some measure at different scales within a microphysics of power relations. Fascism is not merely a historical phenomenon (with German, Italian and Spanish varieties) that has passed away and will never happen again; it is not outside, that is, retrievable and renewable like a complete artifact, in that respect (p. 59).

The point is that fascism is situated as immanent with group transference. It follows then that an analysis of the micropolitics of desire or of microfascisms should never become outmoded and relegated to the dustbin of history. They return, over and over again, announcing the presence of a social symptom.

To see how this symptom plays out, it is helpful to return to Freud's (1921) essay 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' where he outlined a morphology of groups with leaders and groups without leaders. He invoked the examples of churches and armies to illustrate how these artificial groups, in the sense of being based upon a certain ideal, represent a form of fascistic identification. In communities of believers, the collective is homogenised toward a transcendent ideal, such as a Christ figure or messiah, and this phantasmatic identification brings cohesion and belongingness to the group. This is different than the army where the ideal that the ego accedes to is actually embodied in a higher ranking officer or general.

Both of these cases, Freud (1921) called artificial because they require 'an external force to keep them together' (p. 100), which is 'the illusion that the leader loves all of the individuals equally and justly' (p. 137). The reasons that these kinds of social formations can be called reactionary or fascistic in nature have to do with the power ascribed to the ideal of the leader. This kind of great hero, in other words, is afforded mythical status, and the individuals that constitute the group substitute their own ego ideal for 'the group ideal as embodied in the leader' (Freud, 1921, p. 143). Such a special kind of embodied being possesses 'the typical qualities of the individuals concerned in a particularly clearly marked and pure form, and need only give an impression of greater force and of more freedom of libido' (Freud, 1921, p. 143). The power of the libido, in this case, demonstrates the prowess and potency, all interestingly phallic metaphors, that the leader wields.

It is no wonder, then, that the kind of fascisms that Freud (1921) attributed to groups of these kind fall under a typology that stems from a need for mastery, an attempt to try and capture an elusiveness intrinsic to the phallus itself. Of course, it always results in a systemic failure in sociality since the conservative nature of ego development that this leads to, the fact that the subject metonymically substitutes its own imago with that of the greater other, halts its own developmental trajectory. Subjectivity, in other words, reactionarily becomes subjected to the greater force and power that the group ascribes to the leader. To put this into terms that Abraham and Torok use, the desire to cut corners when it comes to the growth and flourishing of the public represents precisely the object of ungrievability that then becomes projected onto the leader in order to hasten and mobilise, without the proper amount of cultivation, a form of sociality resulting in the kinds of fascism and nationalism we are witnessing currently.

The phantom of the world visibly shows itself in such instances. The social unrest and protesting that is ongoing in the United States and elsewhere illustrate, in a very real material sense, the gaps in the social fabric—that spaces in which the phantom has prevented a kind of inter-subjective introjection from occurring, which would bring about a restabilisation of sociality. In other words, to return to Freud's analysis on group psychology, there appears to be a longing in the collective for a return of a leader that would help fill in these gaps of non-introjection.

5 | TWO CASE STUDIES: THE TRANSGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA

The sometimes paradoxical and always Janus-Head nature of phantoms—the fact that they try and perpetuate certain idyllic or narcissistic fantasies while, at the same time, thwarting introjection in order to block mourning and releasement—can be illustrated by two examples or case studies in recent American history: the figure of Donald Trump and the Black Lives Matter movement. Both, we could say to be symptoms of a darker and more insidious force that perpetuates the return of social and political flash points: the phantom possessing passing generations by drawing its power from a historical trauma that was buried in the crypt.

The rise and fall of Donald Trump helps demonstrate concretely what Freud so astutely articulated in his essay on group psychology; namely, the strong transferential bond required by a leader in order to assume power. This is evident in the followers of Trump who seem to turn a blind eye to his inability to tell the truth, his insults and name

calling, and his misogyny and sexism (the arrogance of the phallus to acknowledge its own lack, put differently). This kind of transference is the fantasy constructed through incorporation, the words, symbols, and ideas that persist through time and give rise to social cohesion and political action and, along with both of these, the unresolved traumas that may lie dormant. Conversely, the failure of introjection, in this case, is the ever-widening divide in American politics and almost absent, an absence that announces itself through forms of violence like white supremacy, see the gathering of white nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia (Spencer & Stolberg, 2017), as a tangible case in point, of bipartisanship, civil disagreement and diplomatic discourse.

This divisiveness, whether examined through contentious topics such as women's rights, queer equality, or racial justice, is symptomatic of an inability for these parties to grieve a loss. The loss, of course, differs depending on the subject but, nonetheless, represents how the phantom torments those involved through establishing aggressive transference relationships via a kind of fantasy that safeguards and defends the ego. The ego identifies itself with this fantasy as if to say 'I am conservative' or 'I am progressive' when, in fact, this very identification, if scrutinised more closely through hermetics vis-à-vis the production of cryptonyms, would reveal precisely how such as transgenerational transmission spooks the procession of trauma and other symptoms.

Take the Black Lives Matters movement as an instance of this deafening absence. The social and cultural field of incorporation in the United States has been predicated for almost two centuries on the 'end' of slavery and the phantasmatic residuum leftover. At the level of group bondedness and signification, we continually see the return of overt racism, such as white supremacy; and covert racism, microaggressions and institutionalised discrimination, through the ushering of allosemes by the phantom from the sociocultural crypt into language and intersubjectivity. These words and, more importantly, the meanings that they carry help to neatly draw division around racial lines through identity politics; for example, claiming and defending ethnic purity or preserving a cultural heritage. The way in which microaggressions pass stealthily by the ego, undetected as such, stages the scene of interlocution as foregrounded by a past with a violent and undetectable, ungrivable trauma of racial inequality and brutality. The possibility of the commons to not only discourse on this historical horror but to affectively process and mourn the very material struggles, those encrypted in a past forgotten, that the phantom returns to us in the form of a haunt demonstrates, in just one way, the transgenerational transmission of trauma.

6 | DISCUSSION: EXHUMING THE 'HERE LIES'

Returning to Derrida (1986) who helped to open this essay, he noted that the 'here lies' inscribed as an epitaph on gravestones signifies a temporal erasure of proper names and their sense. The way in which the name becomes rubbed off—an *apropos* metaphor given Wolfman's cryptonym—exposes the secret that the deceased leaves marked as absent within the subject and present within the dead. The weathering that has gone into the removal of meaning that is masked by the proper name is not unlike how the crypt becomes built, forgotten and buried. The phantom heralds this amnesia as a haunt of a secret that was originally in the other.

To begin the exhumation process means at once to shine a light on the unpleasant and more horrific spaces of the psyche, the beings which populate it that typically elude easy interpretation and skirt meaning and conscious awareness, while also exorcising the symptoms that parasitically feed the phantom and continue its historical progression. The kind of broad narratological intervention made by Abraham and Torok into psychoanalysis has shifted its strategies and techniques into more literary territory and cast its genre as either Gothic or horror. Consequently, it may be helpful to expand on what are some of the broader implications that this entails both for the discipline of psychoanalysis proper and with regard to political ethnocentrism and how it finds its way into social formations.

As noted previously, dispatching with the traditional psychoanalytic ties to science, perhaps most explicitly and contemporarily expressed in neuro-psychoanalysis (Northoff, 2011), helps further the aim of exorcising an empiricism that already neatly demarcates the parameters that it brings to bear on an object, let alone on a living

being with an existential world and sense of relationality and empathy. The argument in this essay does not conclude in a rejection of an analytic empiricism, how it is used in scientific practice; rather, suggests that the *topos* outlined above unlocks greater access to life worlds and, as Derrida (1986) maintained, even *physis* itself. This new kind of hermetics derives its power from being able to be shared communally as an initiatory structure that does not maintain a static and hierarchical organisation therein allowing for those esoteric knowledge that hide behind cryptonyms to see the light of day, their past encasement to be grieved, and the historical spectre that haunts the world to be exorcised.

What is more, one may extrapolate the theory of cryptology even further and develop a certain lexicon that arises from this larger sociocultural phantom. That is, the kind of staged words that are often used in fascistic rhetoric, those like blood, soil, nation, people, and so on, help to demonstrate how this haunt is able to galvanise and keep itself encrypted in the proliferation of global discourse. To develop an even deeper analysis, the disclosure of cryptonyms could pave the way for an exorcism on a planetary scale. Cryptonym, in this much broader sense, designates the presence of a certain crypt around which global discourses and semiologies eddy. As has been previously noted, this crypt is announced through the symptom of political ethnocentrism as evidenced by nationalism and neo-fascism.

Yet, it may be prescient to ask the question of what exactly are these secret codes hiding from the public? Asked differently, why is it that power functions so easily and freely around the esoteric knowledge that cryptonyms keep guarded? And, perhaps more importantly, who shrouds these meanings in secrecy, who keeps them away from the eye of the public, and why has this sown the conditions of emergence that have given rise to the quasi-apocalyptic nature of the current state of affairs of the world? These are all questions that when considered could help bring about a collective process of grievability therein leading to an expulsion of the kind of reactionary group formations that symptomatically signal just such an inability to grieve.

As an ending remark, it is perhaps salient to invoke the consequence of developing this new analysis of hermetics and cryptology. It is not merely the dressing up of psychoanalytic practice and theory in the costume of ghouls, ghosts, and goblins. Hermetics openly admits these types of beings into its understanding of the world and, stronger still, relies on them to do important analytic work. As the theory of anasemia has gone to show, the slips between fantasy and reality are the traces that these occult beings inhabit, allowing the analyst access to the secrets of the crypt. The epitaph 'Here Lies...' predicts a kind of warning as it functions to initiate a decryption process that defers itself until the buried is exhumed.

ORCID

Jacob Glazier  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1036-4022>

REFERENCES

- Abraham, N. (1994). Notes on the phantom: A complement to Freud's metapsychology. In N. T. Rand (Ed.), *The shell and the kernel: Renewals of psychoanalysis* (Vol. 1, pp. 171–186). The University of Chicago Press.
- Abraham, N., Torok, M. (1986). *The wolf man's magic word: A cryptonymy* (N. Rand, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Abraham, N., & Torok, M. (1994). Mourning or melancholia: Introjection versus incorporation. In N. T. Rand (Ed.), *The shell and the kernel: Renewals of psychoanalysis* (Vol. 1, pp. 125–138). The University of Chicago Press.
- Davis, C. (2007). *Haunted subjects: Deconstruction, psychoanalysis and the return of the dead*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (R. Hurley, M. Seem, & H. R. Lane Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. (1986). Foreword: Fors: The english words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. In N. Abraham & M. Torok (Eds.) and (B. Johnson, Trans.), *The wolf man's magic word: A cryptonymy* (pp. xi–iii). The University of Minnesota Press.
- Dragon, Z. (2005). Derrida's specter, Abraham's phantom: Psychoanalysis as the uncanny kernel of deconstruction. *The AnaChronisT*, 11, 253–269.
- Foucault, M. (1983). Preface. In G. Deleuze & F. Guattari (Eds.) and (R. Hurley, M. Seem, & H. R. Lane Trans.), *Anti-oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (pp. xi–xiv). University of Minnesota Press.
- Freud, S. (2010). *The interpretation of dreams* (J. Strachey, Trans.). Basic Books.

- Freud, S. (1921). Group psychology and the analysis of the ego. In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. XVIII (1920–1922), pp. 65–144). Beyond the pleasure principle, group psychology and other works. Retrieved from <http://www.pep-web.org>
- Freud, S. (1923). The ego and the id. In: *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. XIX (1923–1925), pp. 1–66). The ego and the id and other works. Retrieved from <http://www.pep-web.org>
- Frosh, S. (2013). *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and ghostly transmissions*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Genosko, G. (2017). Black holes of politics: Resonances of microfascism. *La Deleuziana*, 5, 59–67.
- Goodwin, T. (2016). The haunted delimitation of subjectivity in the work of Nicolas Abraham: Translator's preface. *Diacritics*, 44(4), 4–13. <https://doi.org/10.1353/dia.2016.0017>
- Northoff, G. (2011). *Neuropsychanalysis in practice: Brain, self, and objects*. Oxford University Press.
- Rand, N. (1986). Translator's introduction: Toward a cryptonymy of literature. In N. Abraham, & M. Torok (Eds.), *The wolf man's magic word: A cryptonymy* (pp. li–lxix). The University of Minnesota Press.
- Spencer, H. & Stolberg, S. G. (2017). White nationalists march on University of Virginia. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/11/us/white-nationalists-rally-charlottesville-virginia.html>
- Yassa, M. (2002). Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok - the inner crypt. *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*, 25, 82–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01062301.2002.10592734>

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Jacob Glazier is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Positive Human Development and Social Change at Life University and an online Adjunct Professor in the Department of Applied Psychology at New York University-Steinhardt. Dr. Glazier's research tends towards a transdisciplinary approach via theoretical and philosophical models and includes subjects like critical theory, embodiment and desire, as well as their relation to praxis and clinical practice. His most recent book with Bloomsbury Publishing is entitled: *Arts of Subjectivity: A new Animism for the Post-media era*.

How to cite this article: Glazier J. Here lies ... Hermetics, psychoanalysis and ethnocentrism: Using Abraham and Torok to help explain the rise of reactionary social groups. *Psychother Politics Int*. 2021;19:e1575. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ppi.1575>