Psychoanalysis and Projective Methods in Personality Assessment

Benoît Verdon
Catherine Azoulay
(Editors)

The French School

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication information for the print version of this book is available via the Library of Congress Marc Database under the LC Control Number [2019945788]

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication
Title: Psychoanalysis and projective methods in personality assessment : the French school / Benoît Verdon & Catherine Azoulay (eds.).

Names: Verdon, Benoît, editor. | Azoulay, Catherine, editor.
Description: Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20190156023 | Canadiana (ebook) 20190156031 | ISBN 9780889375574 (softcover) | ISBN 9781616765576 (PDF) | ISBN 9781613345573 (EPUB)
Subjects: LCSH: Projective techniques. | LCSH: Rorschach Test. | LCSH: Thematic Apperception Test.

Classification: LCC BF698.7 .P79 2019 | DDC 155.2/84—dc23

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USA:	Hogrefe Publishing Corporation, 7 Bulfinch Place, Suite 202, Boston, MA 02114 Phone (866) 823-4726, Fax (617) 354-6875; E-mail customerservice@hogrefe.com
EUROPE:	Hogrefe Publishing GmbH, Merkelstr. 3, 37085 Göttingen, Germany Phone +49 551 99950-0, Fax +49 551 99950-111; E-mail publishing@hogrefe.com

SALES & DISTRIBUTION

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UK:	Hogrefe Publishing, c/o Marston Book Services Ltd., 160 Eastern Ave., Milton Park, Abingdon, OX14 4SB, UK Phone +44 1235 465577, Fax +44 1235 465556; E-mail direct.orders@marston.co.uk
EUROPE:	Hogrefe Publishing, Merkelstr. 3, 37085 Göttingen, Germany Phone +49 551 99950-0, Fax +49 551 99950-111; E-mail publishing@hogrefe.com

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Format: PDF

ISBN 978-0-88937-557-4 (print) • ISBN 978-0-61676-557-6 (PDF) • ISBN 978-0-61334-557-3 (EPUB)
http://doi.org/10.1027/00557-000

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Contents

About the Editors VII
About the Authors VII
Preface by Benoît Verdon & Catherine Azoulay IX

Part 1: Theory & Methods

Chapter 1 Projective Methods in Clinical Psychopathology: Developments, Confirmations, and Contradictions – A Tribute to Nina Rausch de Traubenberg and Rosine Debray
Catherine Chabert 3

Chapter 2 Dynamics of the TAT Process: Psychoanalytical and Psychopathological Perspectives
Benoît Verdon, Catherine Chabert, Catherine Azoulay, Michèle Emmanuelli, Françoise Neau, Sarah Vibert, & Estelle Louët 19

Chapter 3 From Self-Representation to Narcissism … and Back Again?
Françoise Neau 39

Chapter 4 The Utility of the Self-Representation Grid in Differential Diagnosis
Claude de Tychey 57

Chapter 5 Nina Rausch de Traubenberg: In a Line of Transmission … The Question of Norms in the Rorschach Test
Catherine Azoulay 63

Part 2: Clinical Applications & Case Studies

Chapter 6 How to Deal With Excessive Reality? Regarding Bodily Sources of Subjectification
Monika Boekholt 75

Chapter 7 From Clinical Work on Learning, to Learning Clinical Work With Rosine Debray
Catherine Weismann-Arcache 89

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Chapter 8 Prepsychoses in the Work of Nina Rausch de Traubenberg: Contributions and Developments in Projective Psychology
Jean-Yves Chagnon 109

Chapter 9 Thought Processes in Adolescence: A Projective Perspective
Michèle Emmanuelli 119

Chapter 10 Traumatic Traces and Projective Figures of Catastrophes of Symbolization
Pascal Roman 131

Chapter 11 From Bipolar Disorder to Melancholia and Mania: The Contribution of Projective Tests in the Study of Manic Depressive Disorder in a 16-Year-Old Girl
Estelle Louët 145

Chapter 12 Psychosomatic Economy: A Notion Cherished by Rosine Debray
Marie-Christine Pheulpin 163

Chapter 13 Mentalization and Projective Methods: Training and Research in Psychoanalysis-Oriented Clinical Psychology, Using the TAT Scoring Grid Developed by Rosine Debray
Marie-Frédérique Bacqué 175

Chapter 14 Changing While Remaining the Same: Self-Representation Confronted With Aging
Benoît Verdon 189

Appendices
Appendix 1: Evaluation of Psychic Functioning Using a Schema of Interpretation of Projective Data 207
Appendix 2: Latent Solicitations of TAT Picture Cards 210
Appendix 3: TAT Scoring Grid 212

Peer Commentaries 214

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Preface

Benoît Verdon & Catherine Azoulay

We have designed this book with the idea of providing our colleagues around the world with access to the work of the projective clinicians and researchers of the *French School* (also called the Paris School), which until now has been published almost exclusively in French. Although several articles have been published in various English-language journals, such as *Rorschachiana*, this is the first time that a book of this scale has been fully published in English.

The rapid expansion of the French School is closely linked to the creation of the Groupement Français du Rorschach (French Group of Rorschach; https://www.societerorschach.org/historique/) in March 1950, under the patronage of a number of distinguished personalities from the worlds of psychology, medicine, and philosophy, such as Profs. Henri Baruk, Jean Dechaume, Jean Delay, Paul Fraisse, Georges Heuyer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Henri Piéron, and Henri Wallon. This first society was chaired by Daniel Lagache (1903–1972), a highly regarded French psychoanalyst, who particularly stressed the fact that the psychoanalytic interpretation of the Rorschach and projective methods cannot be reduced to a symbolic interpretation of the unconscious through the contents of the responses, and that formal aspects of tests must also be qualitatively analyzed. Since then, the French School has been consistent in this methodological interpretation of the Rorschach that values a system of coding, comparing the collected data with general population norms, and developing clinical hypotheses that are put into practice through a rigorously codified qualitative analysis, articulated together with the analysis of the protocol text. Vica Shentoub and Rosine Debray, clinical psychologists and lecturers in psychology at the Université René Descartes in Paris (now the Université de Paris), applied this approach to the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) by developing the TAT scoring grid, the first version of which dates from 1958. This present work provides insight into the French School analysis approach and for greater clarity, a method for interpreting the Rorschach and the TAT (Appendix 1), as well as the latent solicitations of the TAT Picture Cards (Appendix 2) and the current TAT Scoring Grid (Appendix 3).

In keeping with the views of Daniel Lagache, Didier Anzieu (1923–1999) was interested in regression and projection in projective tests, as well as convergences and divergences between psychoanalytical practice and projective testing, which he called the *projective situation*. Moreover, he initiated the Projective Techniques

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in Education program at French universities. In 1964, he worked with Nina Rausch de Traubenberg (1920–2013), giving her the mission to create the Certificate of Projective Techniques (today: diploma in projective psychology, DUPP) at the Sorbonne, which was a great success, with 800 students enrolling each year in the 1970s and 1980s.

With her rich experience of international exchanges, Rausch de Traubenberg, a clinical psychologist at the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière in Paris, then a professor of psychology at the René Descartes University, gave real momentum to research on projective methods and published widely. For over 30 years, supported by a team of psychologists and researchers who were as passionate as she was, Rausch de Traubenberg was a leading figure in projective psychology in France. Among her innumerable works, her book *La Pratique du Rorschach* (The Practice of the Rorschach Test) is now in its ninth edition with Presses Universitaires de France, and her elaborations on the Rorschach Test, between perception and fantasy and the grids of self-representation and affective dynamics, are still in publication.

Nina Rausch de Traubenberg was always careful to pay tribute to Roy Schafer and his work, most of which was compiled in his book *Psychoanalytic Interpretation in Rorschach Testing,* published in 1954 in New York by Grune and Stratton. She considered him to be her greatest inspiration, although she regularly made reference to other American psychologists, such as David Rapaport, Bruno Klopfer, Ernest Schachtel, and David Shapiro, whom she considered to be the other important pioneers in the field. Rausch de Traubenberg was president of the International Society of the Rorschach and Projective Methods (ISR) from 1987 to 1990 and executive editor of the *Bulletin du Rorschach et des Méthodes Projectives* for many years (which became the journal *Psychologie Clinique et Projective* in 1995). She also organized, with great success, the ISR congress in Paris in July 1990.

Concurrently with Rausch de Traubenberg for the Rorschach, Vica Shentoub and Rosine Debray developed a theory of the TAT process as well as a methodology for its interpretation. Practitioners had progressively abandoned this personality test, which was developed by Henry A. Murray in the US in 1935, because the direct interpretation of the contents of the discourse had not proven to be convincing. Building on various American authors such as Leopold Bellak, Roy Schafer, and Robert Holt, Vica Shentoub and Rosine Debray differentiated and identified manifest contents and latent solicitations in 18 cards (out of the 31 cards initially proposed by Murray) and revealed the primacy of the analysis of the form of discourse, from which they developed a grid for the analysis of discourse processes: *how they spoke about themselves* relativizes *what was said*.

The scoring grid for the processes of elaboration of discourse was thus designed to note the mental mechanisms that are close to defense mechanisms and that are expressed through the discourse within the TAT narratives. By showing the clinical relevance, this methodological tool rapidly became the equivalent of the Rorschach psychogram: the quantitative dimension of the collection of processes on the scoring grid involving a qualitative interpretation according to the defensive weight of the mechanisms that are mobilized. With the theoretical and clinical

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developments over the last 50 years, many modifications have been made to the TAT scoring grid. It is now in its eighth version (presented in Appendix 3).

In the 1980s and 1990s, another generation of psychologists of the French School worked toward testing the projective methods in the context of narcissistic and borderline mental functioning. On the other side of the Atlantic, the works of Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut, and – related to the Rorschach – those of S. Fischer and S. E. Cleveland, and Paul and Howard Lerner have joined those of French authors such as André Green, Jean Bergeret, and Didier Anzieu to generate a wave of fruitful advances that have mainly been conducted by Catherine Chabert, Françoise Brelet-Foulard, Monika Boekholt, and Marianne Baudin in Paris, and by Claude de Tychey in Nancy.

In line with the work of Profs. Rausch de Traubenberg and Anzieu, Catherine Chabert has firmly supported the continuation and improvement of the projective methodology based on the psychoanalytic theory. By emphasizing that projective methods per se are atheoretical and that the theory which the psychologist decides to use provides depth to their interpretation, she has accurately demonstrated how projective psychology can be put to the service of psychoanalysis and vice versa. Chabert has made it possible for the combined interpretation of the Rorschach and TAT to take on its full meaning in light of their complementarity, to the point where we cannot now consider studying mental functioning without using both tools together.

The following is a reminder of the foundational principles of the analysis and interpretation of projective methods according to the psychoanalytic viewpoint of the French School:

- The Rorschach Test, because of its nonfigurative nature, which is structured around an axis, gives indications of the participants' body image and the quality of their identity and narcissistic construction. The TAT, with figurative cards which depict human scenes (animal scenes in the Children's Apperception Test; CAT-A), tests the representations of relationships as well as the various conflicts that are related to interiorized objects.
- According to the perception–reality/projection–fantasy dialectics, the TAT cards contain manifest contents and latent solicitations, the latter calling the subject to his/her own mental scene, thereby mobilizing psychic problematics.
- The mental scene comprises agencies (id–ego–superego) and systems (unconscious–preconscious–conscious) that allow the person to express their conflicts, anxieties, and defenses. Projective tests represent a projection surface and a container for the mental movements that are projected.
- Mental conflict is inherent in the mental life of humans. It shapes all mental activities from birth to death, and it may be destructuring. Projective tests reveal those internal conflicts and the level of their structuration, but they also reveal the forces that are present to cope with them.
- Interpretation is founded on the psychoanalytic theoretical corpus and psychopathology, based on the Freudian conception of the continuity between normal and pathological.

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Finally, it should be noted that the French School extends well beyond the Parisian universities (i.e., the universities Paris 13, Paris Nanterre, and Université de Paris [for example Paris Descartes and Paris Diderot]), since it covers numerous teams of teachers, researchers, and practitioners, including, not to mention many others, Claude de Tychey, Joëlle Lighezzolo-Alnot, and Nadine Demogeot in Nancy; Magali Ravit, Anne Brun, and François-David Camps in Lyon; Catherine Weismann-Arcache and Teresa Rebelo in Rouen; Marie-Frédérique Bacqué, Mélanie Jacquot, and Céline Racin in Strasbourg; Geneviève Bréchon and Olivier Rouvre in Tours; Dimitra Laimou in Amiens; Delphine Bonnichon in Angers; and Almudena Sanahuja and Rose-Angélique Belot in Besançon. Indeed, it should also be noted that the French School also extends well beyond the French universities, since it covers numerous teams of teachers and researchers, including, to mention only a few, Alex Lefebvre and Simon Flemal in Belgium; Pascal Roman, Olivier Revaz, Vincent Quartier, and Christine Frederick-Libon in Switzerland; Tevfika Ikiz, Irem Erdem Atak, Bengi Düsgör, Neslihan Zabçi, and Elîf Yavuz Sever in Turkey; Maria Abigail de Souza, Deise de Amparo, Alvaro José Lélé, Valeria Barberi, Latife Yazigi, Anna Elisa Villemor-Amaral, Sonia Regina Pasian, Leila Tardivo, and Erika Okino in Brazil; Makhmoud Benkhelifa, Sadjia Makhlouf-Bentounes, Nadia Cheradi, Nacir Benhalla, Fatima Zohra Boualagua, Fatiha Ayad, and Zahra Djadouni in Algeria; Tiziana Sola, Salvatore Settineri, Carmela Mento, and Luca Bruno in Italy; Silvia Fregonese, Hilda Alonso, and Helena Ana Lunazzi in Argentina; and many others in Portugal, Greece, Lebanon, Canada, Togo, Cameroon, Japan, etc.

The publication of this book in English also provides an opportunity to valorize and support the numerous works of teachers and researchers of the French School, while also paying tribute to our American and French masters, as well as to those who have sometimes traveled long distances to train or update their knowledge at our universities.

The book is organized in two main sections: Section 1 focuses on theory and methods, with two contributions outlining the theoretical concerns that govern the clinical use of projective tools, and three other chapters that reflect on the dynamism of the methods from the perspective of continuity between past and present. Section 2 explores clinical applications and case studies from all stages of life, from early childhood, childhood, adolescence, to adulthood and aging, as well as at times of psychopathology or somatic decompensation.

All of the authors in this book are involved in the teaching and transmission of the projective methodology from a psychoanalytic perspective, and actively participate or have participated in scientific progress and in the production of knowledge in this field. Each in their own manner, whether young or old, has maintained the dynamism of the French School and ensured its continuity.

Ten out of the 14 contributions to the book are from the journal *Psychologie clinique et projective*, Issue 20 in 2014, which focused on the theme *Aux fondements psychanalytiques des méthodes projectives* (psychoanalytic foundations of projective methods), paying tribute to Nina Rausch de Traubenberg and Rosine

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Debray who both died in 2013. They are reproduced with the kind permission of Erès Editions. The chapter "Dynamics of the TAT Process: Psychoanalytical and Psychopathological Perspectives" is an article that was collectively written by the team of the University Paris Descartes (today: Université de Paris) and published in Volume 35 (2014) of *Rorschachiana*. It is reproduced with the kind permission of Hogrefe Publishing, as is the article "Changing While Remaining the Same: Self-Representation Confronted With Aging," which was published in Volume 33 of *Rorschachiana* in 2011. The chapter by Estelle Louët, "From Bipolar Disorder to Melancholia and Mania: The Contribution of Projective Tests in the Study of Manic Depressive Disorder in a 16-Year-Old Girl," was initially published in a book edited by Catherine Chabert and Catherine Azoulay titled *12 Études en Clinique Projective: Approche Psychanalytique* (Twelve Case Studies in Projective Psychology: A Psychoanalytical Approach) published by Dunod in 2011, and reprinted here with the kind permission of Dunod Editions. The chapter "Traumatic Traces and Projective Figures of Catastrophes of Symbolization" by Pascal Roman is published with the kind permission of the journal *Bulletin de psychologie*.

We hope this book will touch English readers from all backgrounds and initiate new and fruitful exchanges.

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Part 1
Theory & Methods

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1

Projective Methods in Clinical Psychopathology

Developments, Confirmations, and Contradictions – A Tribute to Nina Rausch de Traubenberg and Rosine Debray

Catherine Chabert

The community of clinical psychologists – and not just that of clinicians who use projective techniques – recognizes the fundamental contributions of the work of Nina Rausch de Traubenberg. When I say "work," not only do I evoke her research works and publications, but I also refer to her clinical activities within a renowned child psychiatry department at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris and to her essential role in initial and continuing university education for students at the Institut de Psychologie of the University Paris 5 (now the Université de Paris). Her reputation, which extends well beyond the borders of the Francophone parts of Europe, is also based on her work with the same zeal, courage, and dedication, within the Société du Rorschach et des Méthodes Projectives de Langue Française and the International Society of the Rorschach and Projective Methods. Her Rorschach-focused work helped firmly establish psychoanalytic references in projective methodology, at an early stage. Yet, less known, perhaps, is the essential role she played in taking thematic projective tests into account, and in thematic projective test training.

Furthermore, it is to Nina Rausch de Traubenberg that we owe the openness of projective clinical practice to thematic tests, particularly to the TAT. Her acute clinical skills and her qualities as a researcher quickly led her to solicit the assistance of Vica Shentoub in the development of the Certificate of Projective Techniques, almost from its inception. Her well-known stature and generosity were needed to anticipate the challenges to, and lay the foundations of, clinical practice

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and projective psychopathology from dynamic perspectives, in every sense of the word: meaning *dynamic,* because she was moving forward; dynamic because she supported movement, change, and mobility; dynamic because she promoted the psychoanalytic interpretation of projective methods in France; and finally, dynamic because from very early on, Rausch de Traubenberg understood the extent to which the Rorschach Test, far from being challenged in its validity and relevance by other projective methods, could rather be enhanced, enriched, and refined by a co-mingling.

Although initially, due to the characteristics of clinical practice at the time, Rorschach and TAT protocols were seldom proposed to the same individuals – because of the almost exclusive use of TAT in research – Rausch de Traubenberg supported and encouraged my proposals to combine both tests, not only in the training of clinicians, but also in clinical practice itself. Her intelligence and sensitivity thus allowed her to support new studies focusing on both tests, even though – and this was admirable – she herself always considered the enhancement of the Rorschach to be her personal research priority and, with her exemplary modesty, she often stated that she "did not really understand TAT"!

Much greater and even more remarkable was her merit in giving exceptional freedom to her younger colleagues. Without this openness and enthusiasm, the French School would never have become what it is. It is with pride and gratitude that I follow in her footsteps. As luck would have it, in the same year, Rausch de Traubenberg introduced me to Rorschach and Rosine Debray to TAT! I therefore went from the one to the other in my training in projective methodology, and this experience has remained very vivid in my mind.

Rosine Debray was already an experienced psychoanalyst when she joined Vica Shentoub for further research into the TAT. From this fruitful collaboration, a meticulous analysis of the TAT material was developed in terms of manifest and latent content; and it was Dr. Debray who rigorously and convincingly developed the structural reference of the TAT cards to the Oedipus complex. With the same enthusiasm, she supported the initial modifications of the TAT protocol scoring grid developed by Vica Shentoub, by involving all projective psychology teachers at the Institut de Psychologie. We were fortunate to be invited so early, so quickly to engage in clinical research with such an innovative and entrepreneurial spirit; especially since, in these working meetings, both clinical practice experience and knowledge of theory were needed to make progress.

In an attempt to show the impact of this double legacy, I have chosen to focus on some contributions of projective methods to the establishment of diagnoses, in the dynamic sense of the term. Those contributions are essential in terms of the psychiatric approach, and I am purposely mentioning them first, because I have not forgotten that Prof. Rausch de Traubenberg and Prof. Debray, each working in her own field, fought for and defended the major role of clinical and projective psychology in establishing diagnoses and thus in the therapeutic project. They both showed how the tools of clinical psychologists were essential, not only because of the depth and richness of their contributions to clinical

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3

From Self-Representation to Narcissism ... and Back Again?

Françoise Neau

This chapter focuses on the relationship between the notion of self-representation, adopted by French projective psychologists in the approach of Nina Rausch de Traubenberg (Rausch de Traubenberg & Sanglade, 1984; Rausch de Traubenberg, 1990), and the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism. By *narcissism,* I refer to the essential component of psychic functioning officially introduced by Freud (1914/2001) in psychoanalysis and widely studied in post-Freudian metapsychology, rather than to the pathologies of narcissism. While the concept of *self-representation* is part of the common heritage of projective psychologists, French and French-speaking psychoanalysts hardly use it today. However, at the time when Rausch de Traubenberg proposed her "self-representation grid," this notion was widely referred to in American psychoanalytical theorizations: The latter undoubtedly influenced the importation and adaptation of this concept, which is still used in projective psychology and teaching today.

I will therefore begin with a brief presentation of the history of the concept of self-representation, as Rausch de Traubenberg developed it in Rorschach analysis from a both theoretical and a methodological perspective, and primarily on the basis of content analysis. Today, if we look at the research conducted or directed by Catherine Chabert, Michèle Emmanuelli, and Catherine Azoulay (not to mention many others), or at their pedagogical tools, we cannot but observe that the methodological and theoretical landscape has changed: Thus, in the schema of interpretation of projective data (see Appendix 1), self-representation, with its two aspects of identity and identification, is presented under the aegis of narcissism. What, then, has remained of the concept of *self-representation* other than its name? In other words, and here I am also concerned with epistemological issues, what do we mean when we speak of *self-representation* in projective tests today?

During the annual conference of the French Language Society of Rorschach and Projective Methods held in Brussels in 1988, Alex Lefebvre described

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self-representation as a "portable concept": For a concept, this can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. During his presentation with Françoise Hermalsteen on women who had sought cosmetic surgery, the term *self-representation* was used to refer to "unconscious, preconscious and conscious endopsychic representations of the bodily and mental self in the Ego system" (Lefebvre & Hermalsteen, 1990, p. 56). Edith Jacobson (1897–1978) is central to the authors' article. (This important figure of American psychoanalysis, a figure of great moral and ethical standing, was appointed as a training analyst at the Berlin Institute in 1934, and imprisoned by the Nazis the following year for refusing to give information on a patient. For the historical details, see A. de Mijolla (Ed.), *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 2005). Jacobson had a great interest in the clinical analysis of depression and psychosis, and perceived self-representation as the mental organization that represents an individual as they consciously and unconsciously perceive themselves; this mental organization is part of what Jacobson referred to as the "representational world" – that is, a represented world – capable of representation – created by the child through the use of the symbolic function, based on their perceptual–cognitive world. Thus conceived, *self-representation* becomes a concept at the center of a psychoanalytic system.

Other authors who were present at the same conference defined *self-representation* differently. For instance, for Anne Andronikoff-Sanglade, who understood it as "a psychological version of the psychoanalytic concept of skin-ego, which embodies the psychic apparatus" (Andronikoff-Sanglade, 1990, p. 12), self-representation was "the subject's fundamental fantasy container, an expression of his unity and coherence, reflecting his level of development and narcissistic investments, the primary agent of all relationships" (Andronikoff-Sanglade, 1990, p. 15).

With regard to this "portable concept," another question arises: What do we mean when we speak of the "self"? Logically, Lefebvre and Hermalsteen refer to the conception of the self developed by Jacobson. For Jacobson, the self is "the whole individual, including the body and body parts as well as the psychic organization and its parts" (quoted by Lécuyer, 1978). Thus defined, the term *self* means a person, an individual, or a subject, in the psychological sense of the word.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, after the "return to Freud" advocated by Jacques Lacan, the notion of self became the topic of heated debate in French psychoanalysis: During the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) conference held in Rome in 1969, Jean Laplanche challenged the idea of introducing the self as a separate agency, because, he said, for Freud, the ego and the self were one and the same. In contrast, Pontalis intervened at the Symposium of the French language of Psychological Science Association held in Paris in 1973 to celebrate the "emergence and recognition of the self" (Pontalis, 1977).

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Part 2

Clinical Applications & Case Studies

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11

From Bipolar Disorder to Melancholia and Mania

The Contribution of Projective Tests in the Study of Manic Depressive Disorder in a 16-Year-Old Girl

Estelle Louët

Marielle was 16 years old, the youngest of three siblings. Her elder sister was protective and pampered her, but her relationship with her brother was more conflict-ridden. The family history revealed a period of maternal depression requiring hospitalization roughly 20 years earlier; in addition, a maternal aunt was treated repeatedly with electroconvulsive therapy. This was the second time that Marielle had been admitted to the hospital unit. Her first hospitalization, a year earlier, was due to the sudden onset of major depression symptoms accompanied by malnutrition, weight loss (7 kg), catatonia (major psychomotor slowing down that rendered her virtually stuporous, waxy flexibility, cataleptic attitudes), and delusions that took the form of Cotard's syndrome: She claimed to have neither hair nor teeth and proclaimed herself "dead"; feelings of guilt emerged in parallel – "I am a criminal". The second hospitalization, during which the psychological assessment was carried out, happened in the aftermath of a manic episode the symptoms of which were as striking as they were worrying, rapidly catching her family's attention. There were psychomotor agitation symptoms including fugues, hypersyntonia (heightened emotional reactivity), and irritability, accompanied by tachypsychia and logorrhea. Marielle also presented with almost total insomnia and anorexia. A complete psychological assessment, including an intellectual efficiency scale (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale; WAIS-R) and two projective tests (the

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Rorschach and TAT), was proposed to better understand this adolescent's psychic organization.[1]

While taking the tests, Marielle was constantly changing, from one session to another and even from one moment to another. While she could be active and assertive, she could also take on an astonishingly different and regressive stance involving some silliness. In any case, Marielle found it difficult to invest in the test situation, which she essentially accepted in submission to the adult rather than as an opportunity to express her difficulties in a more personal manner. She was unable to pull herself together when she took the tests because she remained preoccupied with personal and relational concerns which encroached upon the test period. Without hesitation and in a rather disorderly manner, she revealed her hatred of her mother, and how strict she was. She perceived this as a restriction on her freedom, and her numerous sexual activities were evoked without embarrassment.

Her overall level could be described as below average, with a better performance on the verbal intelligence quotient, on average (VIQ: 83) than on the performance intelligence quotient (PIQ: 82). However, there were widely dispersed scores within the scales and even within subtests themselves. Even though Marielle was able to function at a minimal level of adaptation and satisfactorily adhere to conformist thought (understanding: 10), the lack of cultural interest and a concentration deficit disorder led to the failure observed in some subtests (information: 5, memory for numbers: 6). With regard to performance, Marielle was penalized by her slowness (Code 4) and her difficulty in adapting to new situations and instructions. She seemed to experience difficulty in organizing, making sense of, and uniting the material.

The Rorschach Test

Overall Clinical Impressions

The restricted production – Marielle's protocol had only 18 replies – contrasts with the numerous remarks uttered during the test period (see the complete protocol in Table 11.1). These remarks showed the resonance to both the perceptive and manifest characteristics of the images and their latent evocations. The multiple comments and precisions thus highlighted great sensitivity that borrowed the affective coloration from the material's more or less sustained colors. While the color black referred to "darkness" and "sorrow," as well as to "horror," pastel colors offered relief associated with liveliness and "niceness," in a contrast that was particularly visible in the choices made at the end of the test, and which strongly questioned the role of splitting mechanisms.

The repeated turning of the cards and the interrupted discourse also revealed Marielle's anxiety, actively counterinvested by the mechanisms of inhibition and

1 Many thanks to Caroline Thompson for proofreading my English text, and for her precious longtime friendship, and to Zoé Andreyev and Sandra Misdrahi.

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Marielle, Rorschach

Table 11.1 Complete Protocol for the Rorschach Test of 16-Year-Old Patient Marielle

Rorschach Card, Duration of Response, and Protocol		**Scoring**
Card I 3” 1. It’s a dark carnival mask . . . (smiles at the same time); that’s all I see (encouragement) < v > This image doesn’t inspire me ... the colors ... They’re dark. It’s black, it’s sad, always horrific stuff.	There are no strings to attach it and there are holes for the eyes and holes for the teeth, for the mouth... Maybe a wolf head with holes to put the strings (DdS under D lat.) These are the beast’s ears. (?) If I meet this in the street it must be scary at night ... and even during the day. [*Testing the limits:* Maybe a bat ... this aspect (she traces the contours with her fingers) (?) with a bat’s eyes].	Gbl FC‘ Obj → Clob Criticism C‘ Comment Clob Comment
Card II 10” 2. It’s two men stuck to each other. The heads are missing but one can imagine them. It’s two weird guys but it’s original I find the form a bit like the first one. < v > v It’s symmetrical [if you fold] the lines in the middle, it’s the same.	Two little guys facing each other. With a hat (red top D) the head (DdS between red and black) the hands joined together, bodies and feet and that I don’t know (red bottom D). Perhaps a red heart or the shape of a butterfly. [Additional response: D F+ A] It can be many things, a heart that one draws without paying too much attention except that here it’s original. Not the heart of the body it’s not like that. [Additional response: D FC Symb.]	G K H Comment Symmetry comment
Card III 8” 3. Looks like two guys again, two guys working out across each other, around a table, and it’s always symmetrical.	Two guys around a table, it looks like they want to move the table that they’re lowering themselves to get the strength to lift the table. I don’t know what this red stuff is maybe... Something, a knot placed on the table (DS table included) [D F+ Obj] (Characters) an arm, also the chest, a bit of the arm maybe folded like this ... I don’t know (stretches herself)	G K H Ban Symmetry comment
Card IV 2” 4. That‘s a giant! (Laughs) a giant seen from below ...	The head, its limbs (lat. top. D), its feet and one therefore sees from below so it’s bigger there, and the head is very small. It’s a thing from a fantasy world. I wouldn’t want to meet this in the street (fear?). No it’s funny, they’re all tiny (yawns) it’s not mobile, it’s not true.	G FE (H)

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14

Changing While Remaining the Same

Self-Representation Confronted With Aging

Benoît Verdon

Freud (1905a/2001) very early on expressed clear pessimism regarding the appropriateness of starting psychoanalysis for people over 50 years of age, because of the lack of plasticity of their mental processes, among other reasons. In 1928, his resistance became even more blatant. Then aged 72 himself, he wrote to Jones: "The young and the old now appear to me as most opposed as regards what the human mental life is capable of. Any understanding between these two age groups is to be dismissed" (Schur, 1975, p. 482). When reading that one could easily be led to conclude that nothing in old age echoes one's former mental life, and that nothing in one's childhood experience is likely to provide any significant remobilization for the experiences inherent to this so-called period of involution. Moreover, when comparing aging and psychosis, Ferenczi stressed that

> when aging, man has a tendency to withdraw the emanations of the libido from the object of his love and to concentrate on his own self the decreasing libidinal interest he still has. Elderly people become narcissistic – in the same way as children – and lose much interest in family and in social events. ... The symptoms of aging may be compared to a rock that emerges when a gulf, cut out from the sea and no longer watered by any river, dries out. (Ferenczi, 1921/1974, pp. 150–151)

This belief in the uniform degeneration of mental functions with increasing age was also fostered by the first conclusions of the research work in projective psychology. Rorschach himself hardly ever proposed to apply his test to elderly adults. Of the four elderly cases presented in *Psychodiagnostic,* only one deals with an 80-year-old woman "mentally well preserved," and the other three are

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examples of the use of the test in elderly people suffering from brain disorders. Therefore, from this unique protocol, which Rorschach himself admits to having analyzed without prior knowledge of the patient's age, since it had been collected by someone else, his diagnosis proposal was that of "latent or stable schizophrenia." Faced with this contrast between clinical practice and projective assessment, he states simply "that similar cases have reinforced [his] opinion that almost quite identical results are obtained in normal elderly subjects" (Rorschach, 1920/1967, p. 154). Thus, he retained a few signs that supposedly characterize elderly subjects: prevalence of formal responses, and among those, of vague or inappropriate ones, a poor integration of colors and movements, and a prevalence of "animal" responses over more original contents.

In the decades that followed, several studies were carried out to collect information on the effect of age on the Rorschach factors, and they almost uniformly determined a deficiency in cognitive functions, an inability to make full use of one's inner resources, an inconsistency in affective reactivity, a difficulty in establishing relationships with others, and the importance of anxiety and depression. These results, which are in accordance with Rorschach's conclusions, relied on highlighting similar changes in the quantitative data of the summary scores, all of which enhanced the idea of a general degeneration of the mental life in "normal" elderly adults. However, Poitrenaud and Moreaux (1975) and Panek, Wagner, and Kennedy-Zwergel (1983) as well as Hayslip and Lowman (1986) insist that most of these works do not provide truly pertinent information on normal aging. Rather, very often they were carried out among elderly people living in geriatric institutions, and no cognitive assessment was conducted, the sociocultural environment was not taken into consideration, and sometimes the color discrimination ability of these elderly was not checked. Yet, Eisdorfer (1963) showed that the richness of the protocols (as assessed by the number of responses and M responses) collected from 242 adults, aged between 60 and 94 and living at home, seemed to depend more on intellectual level than on age. Several contemporary studies (see also Ames, Metraux, Learned Rodell, & Walker, 1995; Baudin, 2005; Reichlin, 1984; Shimonaka & Nakazato, 1991; Valente-Torre, 1993; Verdon, 2012) have made it possible to moderate the idea of a general degeneration of mental functioning: Using the Exner method, Ferreira Novo and Silva (2002), Mattlar, Carlsson, Forsander, Karppi, and Helenius (1992), Mattlar, Knuts, and Virtanen (1985), and Vázquez and Osuna (2002) demonstrated that the quantitative differences between the protocols of young or elderly adults were in the end not significant.

There were also changes in psychoanalytic practice and theory. Abraham (1920/1973), Bergler (1947), Fenichel (1945), Gitelson (1948/1973), and Jones (1948/1969) soon adopted more moderate viewpoints than Freud's and Ferenczi's. Since the end of the 1970s, mostly in France, Canada, and the US, communications and written analytical papers have written on this matter (Abraham, Kocher, & Goda, 1980; Andreoli & Quartier, 1976; Assoun, 1983; Balbo, 1980, 1982; Balier, 1976, 1979, 1982; Bergeret, 1982; Bianchi, 1978, 1980a, 1980b,

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Peer Commentaries

This compendium is a remarkable synthesis by leading figures of the French School of psychoanalytic projective methods in personality assessment. This skillfully edited and magnificently translated book provides the English-speaking world with access to the rich and vibrant tradition of the French School. It pays fitting tribute to the legacy, mentorship, and contributions of Nina Rausch de Traubenberg, Rosine Debray, and Vica Shentoub, and contains scholarly and creative contributions on theory, methods, and clinical applications with rich case studies, as well as topics such as mentalization, representation, somatic disorders, trauma, and bipolar disorders. This volume is essential reading for advanced students, clinicians, and researchers who want to expand their knowledge on the French School of projective techniques and methods. I literally could not put this book down!

Howard D. Lerner, PhD, Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan Faculty, Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

This precious book shines a bright and searching light on the power of the French School's approach in psychoanalytical theory! As a professor, psychoanalyst, and projective tests expert, I highly recommend this must-have book to mental health professionals, clinicians, and test specialists. It highlights key concepts of personality, such as narcissism and self-representation, and also includes valuable psychoanalytic interpretations of projective tests such as the Rorschach and TAT and their use both in a diagnostic setting and as metacognitive tools in clinical psychology and psychopathology research.

Tevfika İkiz, Psychoanalyst, Professor of Psychology at Istanbul University, Turkey, and President of the Turkish Society of the Rorschach and Projective Methods

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