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978-0-521-38669-2 - Psychoanalysis and Fiction: An Exploration of Literary and  
Psychoanalytic Borders

Daniel Gunn

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## Psychoanalysis and Fiction

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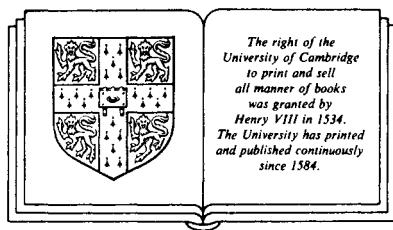
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**PSYCHOANALYSIS  
AND FICTION**  
AN EXPLORATION OF LITERARY AND  
PSYCHOANALYTIC BORDERS

DANIEL GUNN



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TO MY MOTHER

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## *Preface*

TALK of borders, such as those invoked in my title between psychoanalysis and literature, may tend to suggest something hard-and-fast, firmly demarcated – fences or enclosures. I hope it may also suggest something rather more uncertain, such as the limits or frontiers tentatively drawn at the end of an exploratory journey. For what the present work is largely about is the way in which two areas interact and overlap, and therefore just how fragile and mutable are the borders drawn between them. In the course of this book I shall, like an explorer, be visiting and revisiting the borderland between two terrains, with, I hope, some of the sense of uncertainty and adventure which goes with exploring. By this I do not wish to imply that there is any shortage of books on psychoanalysis and fiction. From Freud's time onwards, the two have of course often been yoked, sometimes forcibly, together. Rather I'd suggest here (and the suggestion is implicit in the rest of the work) that many of these yokings, in seeking boldly to demarcate areas, have covertly – where not explicitly – privileged one area over the other. Psychoanalysis has been revealed as the key to unlock literary secrets; or as having its insights already contained by literature. Behind the attempt to draw borders there has often lurked a rivalry, or indeed a colonising urge.

Quite how I have tried to avoid falling prey to such an urge – my own strategy as an explorer – will only become truly apparent in the detailed workings of my arguments (for such urges cannot be simply wished away). Nevertheless, it may be appropriate here to declare a commitment: to the belief that both areas, both practices, both discourses, literary and psychoanalytic, open possibilities of creativity; open vital, valid, mutually unexclusive ways of finding form for powerful, often troubling need or desire.

If the commitment does not make the task of arguing any easier, it can nonetheless give a lead as to the way my arguments will characteristically be developed and pursued. I shall, I have suggested, be involved more in exploration than in exposition or explanation. Explorers do not always move in straight lines. I shall

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sometimes, in pursuing a certain writer or text or preoccupation, step off my main track, loop and double back. Each chapter comprises several sub-sections (denoted by the sign §), which are intended to give time to pause. These pauses may also on occasion offer the chance of striking out down a new path. There will be no strict linearity of movement, yet there will be a decided tendency: to move in the direction of example-to-theory, concrete-to-abstract, text-to-idea. While moving in this way, I shall require recognition of many unfamiliar points of similarity and contrast between my two chosen areas. Words and discourses, speakers and writers from different eras, cultures and languages will be juxtaposed and interwoven. Poetry, drama and prose (narrative, descriptive and analytic) will be configured. Writings of great sophistication and beauty will be placed alongside the impetuous utterances of disturbed children and adolescents. The method of procedure will be that which is sometimes called 'eclectic'. By this I want to imply, again, that the boundaries used to divide areas, eras, authors and genres, and hive them off from one other, are not so firm as they are often assumed to be.

One consequence of this eclecticism will be, I suspect, that the reader will sometimes be prompted to ask: if 'X', then why not 'Y'? If Beckett, for example, then why not Joyce? Why Sophocles and not Aeschylus? Why Proust and not Flaubert? Or, in the psychoanalytic domain, if Maud Mannoni then why not her husband Octave? If Winnicott, why not Klein? More generally, if so much French, why not more English, or German – or Japanese for that matter? I have no short answer to these questions. I have an answer which may appear to surrender hostages to fortune, but which at least has the merit of frankness (and may be as true for most works as for this): it is that 'X' seemed interesting, engaging and relevant enough for me not to have a chance to consider 'Y' (if indeed I was aware of his or her or its existence or importance). The present book, to be clear, does not pretend towards inclusiveness or exhaustiveness. It is not a survey. It is a personal attempt to bring together certain writers in such a way as to allow them fruitfully to mingle and interact. Of course it would be disingenuous to claim that these writers do not form or adhere to some sort of a canon. And it is hoped that this canon will include enough familiar figures for most readers to be able to follow the broader arguments without getting lost due to unfamiliarity with the examples. (Where lesser-known writers are discussed, I have

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tried to provide some background information and summaries of plots, etc.)

This is in fact one of the two other ways in which I could give some indications as to the orientation and procedure of this book – as it were from the (intended) reader's side. If what I say here grows out of overlapping areas, it is, equally, directed at those who presently occupy these areas. I hope this book will be accessible and of use to readers and students of literature, as well as to those working with or in psychoanalysis. Those interested in French will most obviously find work with which they are acquainted (Marcel Proust is a major topic of discussion). But with French as with German (in the cases of Freud or Kafka), Spanish (with J. L. Borges), Italian (with Dante), and Greek (with Homer), I have chosen to use English translations in quotations, and to refer wherever possible to English editions. Where the original seems particularly dense or crucial (most often in the case of poetry) I have included it within square brackets; and where a translation is not readily available, as is often the case with psychoanalytic writings, I have provided my own.

I mentioned *two* other ways in which I could begin to account for the drift of this book. If one was from the possible reader's side, the other would be from the writer's – this writer's, my own. It would be the account of the surges, lurches and sways of my own interests and passions over the last ten years, out of which my work has emerged. Naturally, I do not intend to weigh this book down or burden the reader with such an account. Nonetheless, I do want to request space and patience to thank some of those who have guided my movements over the years, and kept them on some sort of course. I am grateful to friends and teachers at the University of Sussex, to colleagues in the English department at the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud, and indeed to all those who have befriended and supported me over the years. Among them, for guidance on the present work I particularly wish to thank Malcolm Bowie, Gianni Celati, Bruce Fink, Patrick Guyomard, Merrilyn Julian, Maud Mannoni, Lino Pertile, Jean-Michel Rabaté, Martin Roth and Kevin Taylor. I owe a great deal to Gabriel Josipovici, for his constant encouragement and example. And my greatest debt is to George Craig, for his unfailing ability to turn every movement – even lurching and swaying – into something meaningful and worthwhile.