

Joyce Carol Oates: *Beasts*

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Literature
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Freud: *Totem & Taboo* (*Beasts* 13)

- ❑ Collection of four essays, published in journal *Imago* 1913.
- ❑ Freud employs psychoanalysis to the fields of archaeology, anthropology, and the study of religion.
- ❑ Uses his concepts 'projection' and 'ambivalence' to discuss relationship between taboo and totemism. (*Beasts* 1)
 - ❑ **Projection:** When a person has uncomfortable thoughts or feelings, they may assign the thoughts or feelings that they need to repress to a convenient alternative target.
 - ❑ **Ambivalence:** describes the simultaneous existence of contradictory feelings towards a single object. (*Beasts* 7)
- ❑ Argues animistic mode of thinking is governed by an "omnipotence of thoughts," a projection of inner mental life onto the external world. (*Beasts* 14-15)

Totem & Taboo cont.

- ❑ Freud then combines one of Darwin's more speculative theories about the arrangements of early human societies--a single alpha-male surrounded by a harem of females (*Beasts* 14)--with the theory of the sacrifice ritual.
- ❑ Locates the origins of totemism in a singular event, whereby a band of prehistoric brothers expelled from the alpha-male group returned to kill their father, whom they both feared and respected (ambivalence).
 - ❑ All religion, then, is simply an extended and collective form of guilt and ambivalence created to cope with this killing of the father figure. (*Beasts* 2)

Oates: "Reflections on the Grotesque" (1994)

- "What is the 'grotesque'--and what is 'horror' in art? And why do these seemingly repellent states of mind possess, for some, an abiding attraction? (*Beasts* 24, 71)
- "I take as the most profound mystery of our human experience the fact that, though we each exist subjectively, and know the world only through the prism of self, this "subjectivity" is inaccessible, thus unreal, and mysterious, to others. And the converse—all others are, in the deepest sense, strangers."
- "My (Secret) Journal": offers access to Gillian's inaccessible subjectivity.
- "...the grotesque always possesses a blunt physicality..."
- The Grotesque Body, according to Bakhtin, unashamedly "fecundates and is fecundated, ... gives birth and is born, devours and is devoured, drinks, defecates, is sick and dying." (*Beasts* 16, 19-20, 40, 71)
- "This predilection for art that promises we will be frightened by it, shaken by it, at times repulsed by it seems to be ... deeply imprinted in the human psyche..."
- "... it is both 'real' and 'unreal' simultaneously, as states of mind are real enough... though immeasurable."

Freud

- Fetish: A fetishized sexual object resembles the usual object or bears some kind of relation to it, but is entirely unsuited to serve the normal sexual aim.
 - Pathological when 1) the longing for the fetish if it takes the place of the aim itself, and 2) when the fetish become detached from a particular individual and becomes the sole sexual object.
 - Pornography as fetish. (*Beasts* 65-66, 114, 115-116)
 - Hair as fetish. (*Beasts* 20, 122, 126, 135)
 - Fire-starting (21-22, 88, 130-31)
- Lecture XX: "The Sexual Life of Human Beings": "Next come the sadists, puzzling people whose tender endeavours have no other aim than to cause pain to their object, ranging from humiliation to severe physical injuries; ..."
 - "...sadism is an instinctual fusion of purely libidinal and purely destructive urges."
 - "...and, as though to counter-balance them, their counterparts, the masochists, whose only pleasure it is to suffer humiliations and torments of every kind from their loved object either symbolically or in reality." (*Beasts* 10)

Gilles Deleuze: Coldness & Cruelty

- In Masoch, "we are no longer in the presence of a torturer seizing upon a victim and enjoying her all the more because she is unconsenting and unpersuaded. We are dealing instead with a victim in search of a torturer, [one] who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strangest of schemes...."
- "...the masochist draws up contracts while the sadist abominates and destroys them. The sadist is in need of institutions [religion, education], the masochist of contractual relations [marriage]."
- "The sadist thinks in terms of institutionalized possession, the masochist in terms of contracted alliance."
 - Possession: *Reservoir Dogs, A Clockwork Orange*
 - Contract: *12 Monkeys, Reservoir Dogs, A Clockwork Orange*

Institution and Contract

- Ovid's version of the Rape of Philomela:

□ Philomela: *Now that I have no shame, I will proclaim it. / Given the chance, I will go where the people are, / Tell everybody; if you shut me here, / I will move the very woods and rocks to pity. / The air of Heaven will hear, and any god, / If there is any god in Heaven, will hear me.*"

- Tereus cuts out her tongue. (*Beasts* 37-38)

- Procne feeds Tereus his own son.

- Rape and Marriage (*Beasts* 33, 46, 62, 85, 97-98)



Procne & Philomela:
escaping institution
(*Beasts* 138)

Deleuze cont.

- "But even more significant is the difference between the contract and the institution with respect to what is known as a law: the contract actually generates a law, even if this law oversteps and contravenes the conditions which made it possible;..."
 - Masochism & Contract (*Beasts* 119)
- "the institution is of a very different order in that it tends to render laws unnecessary, to replace the system of rights and duties by a dynamic model of action, authority and power."
 - Sadism & Institution (*Beasts* 68, 91, 95)
 - Sadist ignores the "tyranny of the 'normal'" (36-37, 41, 74)
 - Knowledge and Institution (78-79, 116-7)