DISCOURSE OF MALE EROTOMANIA IN KNUT HAMSUN’S PAN

Abstract: In this article classical and Lacanian psychoanalysis is applied for interpretation of discourse and conduct of lieutenant Glahn, the protagonist of Knut Hamsun’s novel Pan. The analysis is based on the theory and case studies of psychoses from the main works by Sigmund Freud. The scene of Glahn shooting his hunting dog Asop – one of the most complicated episodes in a novel – became the starting point of this research. The application of psychoanalytic conception of paranoia to the narrative helped throw light on the logic of action and clarify the connection between the protagonist’s deed and his discourse. A comparison of Hamsun’s text with Salvador Dali’s autobiographical writing The Secret Life of Salvador Dali and with the Lacan’s interpretation of the crime of Papin sisters helped identify paranoid mental structures in the narrative.

Keywords: male erotomania, delusion, paranoid thinking, psychotic discourse, paranoic ideas, projection, the object of erotomania, phallic stage.

Erotomania is a form of rejection of an unconscious homosexual object choice, used by a subject of paranoia [9, p. 300]. Freud named four kinds of such rejection: persecution, erotomania, paranoic jealousy, and megalomania. We argue that all they are present in the structure of paranoid thinking simultaneously. In his seminar on psychoses Jacques Lacan states that psychotic delusion is distinctly dynamic and it modifies in response to the information drawn from every contact with the world [15, p. 25]. Therefore, it will be fallacious and counterproductive to consider delusion as strictly divided into types. At a certain moment a delusion may develop into one of the four structures named above, and this does not except delusional ideas of other types from being present in a discourse.

If we accept the variability of delusion, it will be similarly invalid to deduce one type of delusion from the other type. In the Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis Freud warned against such “an attempt to derive one symptom from another by means of an intellectual rationalization” [6, p. 424]. As it was demonstrated by Freud in A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psycho-Analytic Theory of the Disease [8], when we approach a well-developed erotomania, we inevitably face a persecutor who is linked with an object of erotomania. And, as Jacques Lacan showed in the case of Aimée [14, p. 215], recognition by the object of erotomania will be connected to megalomaniac ideas in the erotomaniac subject. For a productive approach to paranoid thinking it is substantial to view all possible types of delusion (in his Introductory Lectures, after listing four types mentioned above, Freud writes “and so on”, which means that there may be more types, than he describes [6, p. 424]) as equally characteristic functions of paranoid ideation, as footings of psychotic discourse, as the only possible way to develop an image of the surrounding world. A construct of delusion is built up from the psychiotic’s world where, as Freud notes in The Unconscious, connections with things are lost and only words, denominations, are preserved. Consequently, everything in the surrounding reality gains meaning and becomes a sign [3, p. 302].

The discourse of Lieutenant Thomas Glahn – the protagonist in Knut Hamsun’s novel Pan – is an eloquent illustration of variability of paranoid interpretation [10; 11]. Together with erotomania and regardless of it, his discourse produces various paranoid ideas: an amiable look of the stone near the hut (“It looked as if it had a sort of friendly feeling towards me; as if it noticed me when I came by, and knew me again. I liked to go round that way past the stone, when I went out in the morning; it was like leaving a good friend there, who I knew would be still waiting for me when I came back.” [11; 10, p. 8]); grass that responds to his glance (“Well, then sometimes I look at the grass, and perhaps the grass is looking at me again – who can say? I look at a single blade of grass; it quivers a little, maybe, and thinks me something” [11; 10, p. 40]). After Glahn himself thought out to catch up with Edwarda and then changed his mind and decided not to fulfill his plan, he feels that “A breath of something strange met me as I entered the hut again; it seemed as if
I were no longer alone there.” [11; 10 p. 21] He also presumes, though with a doubt essential for paranoid thinking, that he can “read a little in the souls of those about me – but perhaps it is not so. Oh, when my good days come, I feel as if I could see far into others’ souls, though I am no great or clever head.” [11; 10, p. 25] At the party at Herr Mack’s he downright sees “what is passing within them, and what they think of me”. The appearance of guests is a sign for him: “I find something in every swift little change of light in their eyes.” He reads in the eyes of Herr Mack and others: “at other times they pretend to be looking another way, and yet they watch me covertly from the side.” [11; 10, p. 26]

The structure of Glahn’s personality prevents him from holding certain mental condition for a considerable time. Episodes of erotomania easily develop and easily dismantle, and are replaced by feelings of disgust and contempt: “I felt a vague displeasure at Edwarda’s laugh. I looked at her, and found that her face had become insignificant, hardly even pretty.” [11; 10, p. 28]

The lines cited above belong to the episode of the party at Whist. Edwarda had upset his glass and felt ashamed: “There – I have upset my glass.” Edwarda laughed in response and answered: “Well, I feel ashamed: “There – I have upset my glass.”

Freud asserts that not only the conclusive idea of “I love her” can be conscious, but the projection “I see that she loves me” may also become available in consciousness. The discourse of Thomas Glahn works with this judgement of projection a lot. We find impressive parallels in constructing of erotomaniac discourse in the narrative if we compare Knut Hamsun’s text to The Secret Life of Salvador Dali by Salvador Dali. Dali describes the beginning of his relationship with Gala as her initiative: “Gala’s hand took hold of mine. This was the time to laugh, and I laughed with a nervousness heightened by the remorse which I knew beforehand the vexing inopportune of my reaction would cause me. But instead of being wounded by my laughter, Gala felt elated by it. For, with an effort which must have been superhuman, she succeed in again pressing my hand, even harder than before, instead of dropping it with disdain as anyone else would have done. […] She said to me, ‘My little boy! We shall never leave each other.’” [1, p. 232–233]

Glahn began to act oddly and offensively and breached the etiquette if Edwarda changed her attitude towards him from care to disregard. He flung her shoe into the water “for pure joy that she was near, or from some impulse to make myself remarked, to remind her of my existence” [11]; he called another girl to his place when Edwarda could hear him; he spat in the Baron’s ear. The hysterical laughter of Dali had probably been an offense in advance – a reaction to expected loss of Gala’s attention. Edwarda gained the value of an erotic object when she made steps towards Glahn. In her first visit to his hut she invited him for a dinner. And her next glance was immediately filled with mean: “Edwarda looked at me and I at her. I felt at the moment something touching my heart like a little fleeting welcome.” [11]

As a narrator Glahn claims: “I will write of it just to amuse myself.” [11] It is important to distinguish the source of his amusement. Freud in Beyond the Pleasure Principle [7] examines that repetition of frustrating events in games becomes the source of pleasure in children. In the Glahn’s discourse, as well as in Dali’s autobiographical writing and in
The Seducer’s Diary by Kirkegaard [12], we deal with repetition of frustrating events in sublimation. Literary production becomes a way to stabilization of the psychical apparatus; serves as a reaction of the apparatus against new excitations. Thus the pleasure of narrating consists in fact that Glahn, like Schreber and Lacan’s Aimée, could put his delusion on paper and could construct the image of his persecutor or persecutors in his writing. The protagonist’s discourse in Pan points to Edwarda’s father Herr Mack as the main persecutor. According to the story, he leaves Glahn without means of life; he sets lieutenant’s hut on fire; he spies on Glahn’s arrangements to blow up the rock; finally, it is Herr Mack, who sends Edwarda to Thomas. The last idea is expressed through a negation: “I thank you, Edwarda, for offering me shelter when my house was burned. It was the kinder of you, since your father was hardly willing.” [11]

The understanding of reason for which the subject of erotomania senses “I see that she loves me” in one certain woman is an important point in an analysis of erotomaniac delusion. A woman who becomes an object of erotomania is necessarily connected with a homosexual persecuting object. In his Introductory Lectures Freud describes an episode from the case of a psychotic patient: “his illness broke out just at the moment when he had succeeded for the first time in satisfying a woman completely. When this woman embraced him in gratitude and devotion, he suddenly had a mysterious pain that went round the top of his head like a sharp cut. Later on he interpreted this sensation as though an incision were being made at an autopsy for exposing the brain. And as his friend has become a pathological anatomist, it slowly dawned on him that he alone could have sent this last woman to him to seduce him.” [6, p. 425]

Let us build an analogy and suppose that the true object of Dali’s affection (to be more precise: the actual substitute of an initial object unknown to us) was not Gala, but her husband and a friend of Salvador Dali: Paul Éluard. It was really the poet who brought Gala into Dali’s life. In the Secret Life of Salvador Dalí we find a recollection of the impression left by first meeting with the poet: “Éluard struck me as a legendary being. He drank calmly, and appeared completely absorbed in looking at the beautiful women.” [1, p. 217] Before the arranged meeting with Éluards, Salvador Dalí is busy smartening himself up: “I tried on my sister’s ear-rings several times. I liked them on myself, but decided they would be a nuisance for the swim. Nevertheless I put on my pearl necklace. I made up my mind to get myself up very elaborately for the Éluards.” [1, p. 227] Dali continues to work on his look very diligently: “I took my finest shirt and cut it irregularly at the bottom, making it so short that it did not quite reach my navel” [1, p. 228]; “Then I had the idea of turning the trunks inside out.” [1, p. 229] Dali was making himself into a “composite of beggary painter and exotic Arab”. His craving for exotics may be interpreted as a desire to look feminine for Éluards, because exotics and femininity are associatively linked in the western culture. To strengthen the image Dali shaves his armpits, but “failing to achieve the ideal blush effect I had observed for the first time on the elegant ladies of Madrid, I went and got some laundry bluing, mixed it with some powder, and dyed my armpits with this.” [1, p. 228] As we can see, Dali’s aspiration for femininity is not limited to changing clothes, as it was in the case of Schreber. The surrealist painter provides his armpits with the meaning of a feminine characteristic in the symbolic of phallic stage: “… dried and coagulated blood on this part of the body ought to make an extraordinary impression. There was already a small bloodstain where I had cut myself in shaving, which gave me the proof and sample of what I contemplated. So without more ado I took my Gillette and began to shave again, pressing harder so as to make myself bleed. In a few seconds my armpits were all bloody. I now had only to let the blood coagulate, and I daintily began putting some everywhere, especially on the knees.” [1, p. 128] Dali finishes his appearance with a fiery-red red geranium behind his ear and uses goat manure as a perfume. Immediately after the artist had made himself up he notices Gala in the window. In next sentences Dali falls into rationalization: “It was for her that I had just smeared myself with goat dung and aspic, for her that I had torn my best silk shirt to shreds, and for her that I had bloodied my armpits!” [1, p. 229] The next moment he found his costume lamentable and got rid of it. This last act breaks the logic of making his odd preparations “for her.”

Imaginary women appear in the psychical reality of a paranoid subject (Glahn and Dali) before real women appear in his/her life. In the narration we approach it is not always possible to distinguish a dream or a delusion from a veritable meeting. Real women easily mix with phantasmatic ones, because in every case the subject interacts with particularly with his narcissistic phantasies. For instance, in the eighth chapter in complaint on his loneliness Glahn calls Diderik and Iselin: “What if Diderik and Iselin were to appear!” [11] These two characters are not introduced to the reader; the protagonist treats them...
in the same fashion as all other actors, so this couple may seem to belong to the outside world. Glahn is sleepless for three nights – he thinks about Diderik and Iselin; he waits for them to appear. He dreams about romance with Iselin, but she must necessarily come with her companion. She must unite with Glahn, the hunter, in front of Diderik, and then she must come back to her brother and contradict everything he had seen. Thus in his private erotic myth (later Glahn tells that Diderik and Iselin lived a long time ago) the subject represents all key elements of erotomania: 1) a woman chooses him openly; 2) she appears accompanied by a man; 3) her companion has a privilege to watch her interaction with the subject, namely, he occupies a position of an authority who permits her interaction. It is the presence of Diderik – to be more precise, it is the ability to deceive Diderik – that gives meaning to the action. In the discourse of erotomaniac the woman is always sent by a man. The analysis of male erotomania reveals a male object or an image of a male object behind the heterosexual fixation. This concealed male object embodies the Law in the Lacanian sense.

An analogous structure unfolds in, perhaps, the most famous erotomaniac narrative in European literature, The Seducer’s Diary by Søren Kierkegaard. Johannes develops a rational method of seduction. He models a situation in which the girl will herself choose a seducer and will openly give preference to him in public. Thus, the Seducer aims not to seduce per se, but he desires to become the object of affection, to feel loved. Kierkegaard’s protagonist is focused on the intermediate judgment of Freud’s formula for erotomania: “I see that she loves me.” When Glahn interacts with Iselin, he deceives Diderik; with Eva he deceives Herr Mack who is depicted nearly as a slaveholder. Whom, then, Johannes is deceiving? The Seducer’s treachery is directed against the Law too, though it is not embodied in a specific character. Johannes deceives the Superego; he threatens the morals of his society. Kierkegaard’s Seducer loses his interest in a girl after he takes her virginity – deprives her of her main social and ethical value.

Psychoanalysis considers all symptoms of the psychosis, including hallucinations, delusions and paranoid thinking, as a defense from a frustrating unconscious homosexual drive. Homosexual tendency arises as a side effect of psychotic’s attempt to cure himself through reestablishment of his relations with the outer world. The decrease of object cathexis in psychosis is accompanied by the regression of the libido to the infantile forms of organization. At the point of establishing of the paranoid mental structures the psychical apparatus of the subject becomes dominated by the phallic stage of libido organization. This is the reason why psychotic ideation is focused on production of phallic symbols. And this also throws light on the infantile character of psychotic homosexual tendency which prevents it from transforming into a perversion. Phallic objects attract Glahn’s attention during the whole novel. From the first meeting with Herr Mack, the Doctor, and Edwarda he remembered Herr Mack’s diamond clasp the best. The Doctor’s stick caused the first episode of jealousy to Edwarda. Even in Edwarda he was attracted by her thumb: “the girlish contour of her thumb affected me tenderly, and the little wrinkles above the knuckle were full of kindliness.” [11] A little dry almost rotten twig triggers a castration phantasm: “its poor bark touches me, pity feels my heart. And when I get up again, I do not throw the twig far away, but lay it down, and stand liking it; at last I look at it once more with wet eyes before I go away and leave it there.” [11]

Glahn’s prank with Edwarda’s shoe was induced by phallic associations too. Its symbolism becomes understandable in the light of a case from The Unconscious by Sigmund Freud: “[The patient] suffered from having to take a long time over putting on his stockings; this man, after overcoming his resistances, found as the explanation that his foot symbolized a penis, that putting on the stocking stood for a masturbatory act.” [3, p. 299] Iselin addresses Glahn exclusively in figures of phallic symbolism: “tie my shoe-string”; “no, you do not tie... you do not tie...” [11; 10, p. 34] In another episode Glahn decided to salute a steamship on the departure of the Baron, Edwarda’s lucky admirer. For this purpose he undermined a rock above a quay, so that “a great boulder shall roll down the hillside and dash mightily into the sea just as his ship is passing by.” [11] The meaning of this act may be interpreted with phallic symbolism. A piece of rock fits to carry the signification of a phallic symbol, and the blow up of the rock into the sea carrying the Baron is a suitable representation of a sexual act aiming at the Baron. Although psychoanalysis discovered a row of steady symbols of sexual material we suggest this last interpretation as a hypothetical one, because the choice of symbol and its meaning in every case depends on an individual context, that is, on a discourse of a certain subject.

In The Interpretation of Dreams Freud asserts that the symbolism for representing sexual material “is characteristic of unconscious ideation, in particular among the people, and it is to be found in folklore,
and in popular myths, legends, linguistic idioms, proverbial wisdom and current jokes, to a more complete extent than in dreams.” [4, p. 356] Besides symbolic phallic domineering and an amusing thought that his competitor was put into a passive position, by blowing up a rock Glahn obtained narcissistic pleasure from realization of the destructive drive. In Civilization and Its Discontents, analyzing sadism, Freud argues: “in the blindest fury of destructiveness, we cannot fail to recognize that the satisfaction of the instinct is accompanied by an extraordinary high degree of narcissistic enjoyment, owing to its presenting the ego with a fulfillment of the latter’s old wishes for omnipotence.” [2, p. 101]

Once more we find a fitting episode in The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí. The author describes an episode of destructiveness and clearly shows the pleasurable aspect of it. He and Gala were walking in the rocks when he decided to throw large pieces of granite down into the gulf. They rolled into the sea with thunder. Dali writes that he would have never got tired from such a game, but suddenly he felt an urge to push down Gala instead of a rock, and he got scared. His horror made him leave the place where he felt an intense danger and excitement [1, p. 233].

One of the most complicated episodes in a novel is the scene of Glahn shooting his hunting dog Asop: “I put or heads together once more; I laid the muzzle of the gun against Asop’s neck and fired…” [11; 10, p. 189]. The narrator shot the dog in response to Edwarda’s request to leave Asop for her. Shooting a hunting dog is not necessarily a symbolic and tragic act: hunters use to kill their old dogs, when they are of no use any more. But the cultural interpretation of Glahn’s act does not exhaust its meaning in the novel. Hamsun creates a context and inscribes this deed into the discourse of the protagonist instead of justifying it with independent circumstances. Asop was neither old, nor sick: there was no practical need to get rid of him. Asop had still been a meaningful object for Glahn. That is why general cultural propriety of the murder may explain the choice of this act, but it does not diminish its being charged by meaning for the subject of action. In his Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis Freud considers the meaning of a loss of objects without diminution of their value: “losing may also serve the purpose of defiance or self-punishment.” [6, p. 77] Glahn picked up and accommodated the cultural practice of shooting down old hunting dogs to his discourse; incorporated it into his psychotic view of the world.

The question of communication with an object of erotomania is analyzed in the Third Seminar of Jacques Lacan. The author describes it in terms of diverted alienation of the message which is accompanied by “depersonalization of the other”, and leads an erotomaniac to “heroic perseverance through every trial.” [15, p. 46–47] When Edwarda asked to give her the dog, Glahn projected his role in the relationship on Asop. He immediately imagined that Edwarda will maltreat it: “Asop, Asop, she will torture you! For my sake she will whip you, caress you too, perhaps, but certainly whip you, with and without reason; ruin you altogether…” [11; 10, p. 188] On the level of rationalization Glahn pities the dog and considers sending its body to Edwarda as an allusion of her cruelty towards himself. Lacan states that the erotomaniacal delusion is addressed to a distant other. The subject has no need to attain any concrete relations with the object; he “is happy to communicate in writing, without even knowing whether what’s written will get to his destination.” [15, p. 47] Glahn used the dog’s body as a message to Edwarda, and since we know that he hired a man to deliver it to Edwarda, he was sure that his addressee received the message.

The episode of killing the dog contains an important detail: Glahn presses Asop’s head together with his own, and shoots him in the neck. In a short note A Connection between a Symbol and a Symptom Freud states that in phantasies and in numerous symptoms a head appears as a symbol, or as a substitute of male genitalia. Patients who suffer from obsessions express much more disdain and repulsion against execution by beheading than against any other form of death. In obsessive neurotics beheading substitutes castration [5, p. 394]. In Schereber’s case head obtained the meaning of a reproductive organ: “If the ‘little men’ whom Schreber himself finds so puzzling were children, then we should have no difficulty in understanding why they were collected in such great numbers on his head.” [9, p. 294] Consequently, shooting the dog Glahn, on the one hand, acts upon his castration phantasm through a projection, and, on the other hand, stages a paranoid gesture of suicide, because gunning the dog he attacks his own ideal ego.

In connection with the discussed episode it is worth while paying attention to the details of the Papin sisters’ crime analyzed by Jacques Lacan as a paranoic crime [13]. The substitution of castration and the confusion of ego and ideal ego are present there too. The maiden sisters started their massacre by tearing their victim’s eyes from their sockets and smashing their heads. After the act of unheard-of
sadism the sisters carefully cleaned the tools of the murder and themselves, and went back to bed where they waited for the police. (Lacan’s Aimée, another paranoid criminal, attacked her victim at the entrance to the theatre without trying to do it secretly too.) They did not undertake anything to diminish the punishment or to conceal their deed. Under the trial their only interest was in carrying responsibility for their crime. Christine, the elder of the Papin sister, kneeled on the ground when she heard that she will be beheaded in the square of Le Mans – one more exaggerated reaction to the idea of beheading. Under the trial the couple of criminals had not name a single motive of their actions; they did not express loathing of or complaints about their victims. If we return to Lieutenant Glahn, we will not find in him loathing for the dog in him either.

We suppose that in response to sending a dead dog Glahn expected to be punished by Edwarda: his knees were trembling when she came to say goodbye to him at the quay. But he had not been punished at that time; his self-aggression had not found its satisfaction. Glahn changed his milieu, and his life was quiet until the moment he received a letter from Edwarda. From that point he started to instigate his fellow to shoot him. Glahn initiated an affair with his friend’s girl, started debates to excite his jealousy, and expressed straightforward wishes to be killed while hunting: “I only wish you’d make a slip one day and put a bullet in my throat.” [11] Glahn continued to drop hints at his companion during the hunting: “About noon, Glahn began walking a bit ahead of me, as if to give me a better chance of doing what I liked with him. He walked right across the muzzle of my gun.” [11] Glahn aimed at getting the punishment which he expected from Edwarda, or from a male figure, who would revenge for her. That is why he used his friend as an executor, and gave him a motive by seducing his girl.

Lieutenant Glahn’s story ends with a fantasy about his death, staged as a planned suicide. A completely conscious aggressive impulse against the self is not characteristic of paranoid thinking; it rather opens the melancholic perspective. Nevertheless, in Glahn’s Death the narrator turns into the object of narration, and his discourse is not available to the reader. Hence, the reader makes conclusions about self-destructive tendency only from the hints left by a new narrator. The notion of Glahn’s family searching for him points to the narcissistic function of Glahn’s Death. The subject obtains pleasure from dreaming about great attention to his person in the situation “when I’m gone”: his woebegone family would search for him, and his murderer would not stand to conceal his crime. Thus, the ending of Glahn’s story does not give ground not to consider him paranoid. Rather the choice of the ending displays author’s attitude to the psychical phenomena described in the novel.

References

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**ДИСКУРС ЧОЛОВІЧОЇ ЕРОТОМАНІЇ У РОМАНІ КНУТА ГАМСУНА «ПАН»**

У статті засобами класичного та лаканівського психоаналізу інтерпретовано дискурс та поведінку головного героя роману Кнута Гамсуна «Пан» лейтенанта Глана. Аналіз ґрунтується на теорії та клінічних прикладах психозів з ключових праць Зигмунда Фройда. Вихідною точкою дослідження став один із найважливіших для інтерпретації епізодів роману – убивство Глана свого мисливського пса Езопа. Застосування понятійного апарату психоаналітичної теорії параної дало змогу вивітрити логіку дії та проаналізувати зв’язок вчинку із дискурсом героя. Задля аргументації виявлення параноїдальних структур мислення текст Кнута Гамсуна зіставляється із автобіографічним твором Сальвадора Далі «Таємне життя Сальвадора Далі, розказане ним самим», «Щоденником звабника» Сьорена К’єркеґора та злочином сестер Папен у інтерпретації Жака Лакана.

Дискурс головного героя роману Кнута Гамсуна «Пан» є яскравою ілюстрацією мінливості параноїдальної інтерпретації. У статті продемонстровано, що поряд з еротоманією та незалежно від неї у ньому наявні різноманітні параноїдальні ідеї, що спростовує необхідність розділяти психотичне марення за типами. На прикладі структури особистості Глана продемонстровано, як епізоди еротоманії легко виникають і так само легко змінюються на знецінення об’єкта еротоманії.

У статті проведено послідовне розрізнення еротоманії та перебільшеної гетеросексуальної фіксації, продемонстровано, як структура еротоманії розгортається із проективного сприйняття суб’єктом себе як об’єкта любові. Також у статті описано механізм проекції ідеї мегаломанії на ситуацію еротоманії, присутність переслідувачів у маренні еротомана та зв’язок об’єкта еротоманії із гомосексуальним переслідувачем. Через зіставлення з оповіддями Далі та К’єркеґора у статті здійснено аналіз стосунків суб’єкта еротоманії із гомосексуальним переслідувачем.

Виявлення дискурсу параноїчної еротоманії дало змогу проаналізувати та розтлумачити антисоціальні агресивні та деструктивні вчинки головного героя роману «Пан».

**Ключові слова:** чоловіча еротоманія, марення, параноїдальні ідеї, проекція, об’єкт еротоманії, фалічна стадія.

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