Subjective identification in an encounter with 'The Little Prince' by Antoine de Saint Exupéry. Exploration of the conception of subjectivity in reconstructed narratives - Lacanian discourse analysis

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Abstract

In direct contrast to psychological views of the 'self' that claim the very possibility to 'get inside' the subject's head, this project argues that there is no subject in the first place. It proposes that drawing on Lacan's theorising on the imaginary, the symbolic and the real allows for experiencing glimpses of the fleeting subject. The central aim this project seeks to address is to trace the readers' subjectivity through the Lacanian triad of orders. Six respondents aged 18 and above participated. An excerpt from 'The Little Prince' by de Saint Exupéry was identified as a literary example of the text, which can be psychoanalytically read and explored. There were two stages of the data gathering process. Task 1 involved retelling of the story by using their own words. Task 2 involved writing down their own reflections or thoughts related to the read excerpt. The project demonstrates that the inquiry into the human subject was marked by fundamental impossibility. In other words, what a particular reader is, that is not him/her, belongs to the realm of the real, which both escapes the imaginary and the symbolic. Lacan's theorising on subjectivity is very intricate and cryptic, therefore, the findings of this project are open to challenge.

KEY WORDS:	SUBJECTIVITY	SELF	NARRATIVE	LACANIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Introduction

The Organisation of the Project

The dissertation comprises three main sections. The first section, *Introduction*, provides a review of critical approaches to discourse analysis in Psychology. Further, it presents the modern conceptualisation of the self, which prevails in mainstream Psychology and offers a different foundation of subjectivity claim. In order do to so, the Freudian and the Lacanian theoretical background are introduced. This, in turn, allows the providing of legitimacy of the use of textual material for exploring the way the readers construct their subjectivity. This section ends by presenting the objectives of the study. The next section, *Methodology*, provides a detailed description of the design and procedure of this project. The third section, *Analysis and Discussion of Data,* presents a detail account and analysis of the complexities of the Lacanian conception of subjectivity to critical reading of textual material. This section has four subsections, which endeavours to trace the readers' subjectivity with relation to the three orders of being, the imaginary, the symbolic and the real, respectively. The last subsection of this section, namely, *The Subject of the Real, also* provides a concluding discussion and future implications of the project.

Literature Review and Conceptual Background

There are in contemporary critical work, numerous approaches to discourse analysis in Psychology that, as Parker (2005) observes, share a common feature, which is characterised by the turn to language. In this view, people's everyday social interactions, such as conversations, acts of speech or as Freud (1997 [1900]) argues dreams, i.e. visual images after being verbally expressed, become a text. Discourse analysts argue that language constructs social practices or actions and serves to achieve social objectives (Edwards & Potter, 1992). In this non-cognitive view, the person's subjectivity is not to be searched under the person's skull but rather the person's identity is ideologically constructed through language in relation to his/her social environment. In contrast, mainstream Anglo-US Psychology, e.g. cognitive Psychology, which understanding of the human being is largely underpinned by information processing characteristics (Parker, 2003; 2005), or even Smith's (1996) view of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) assumes that language yields an access to participant's mental representations, i.e. cognitions, which reside in the participant's mind. This perspective presupposes a Cartesian conceptualisation of the individual, from which the idea of the conscious core being, the unique centralised self is derived. Thus, according to this view, the subjectivity lies in the significance of the inner processes of self-consciousness and the indivisible nature of a human being. In contrast to this view, Fairclough's (2003) account of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) maintains a view that pays close attention to the relationship between the linguistic features of texts, i.e. the structure of the text, and social identification in discourse, i.e. the agency of the text. Fairclough (2003) argues that identity is a complex concept, which comprises both personal and social identification. In other words, according to Fairclough's (2003) elaboration of the subjectivity, the selfhood cannot be reduced to social identity. However, despite the fact that critical approaches to discursive Psychology offer a challenging view to cognitivism, and propose alternative views with regard to the construction and representation of selfhood, they also attribute to their discourses the very possibility

to form such subjectivity. More importantly, discursive Psychology, IPA, or CDA fails to take into account the unconscious forces in the formation of subjectivity.

This is accounted in Freudian theory of psychoanalysis which advances the view of a person's psyche as being a store of conflicting energies and concealed desires, which although they might not be readily accessible, they are never erased either (Thurschwell, 2009). Freud (1952 [1925]) explains:

> Psychoanalysis regarded everything mental as being in the first instance unconscious; the further quality of 'consciousness' might also be present, or again it might be absent (p.33).

Therefore, by introducing the concept of the unconscious Freudian theory of psychoanalysis challenges the previous conceptions of subjectivity, i.e. the unitary rational subject maintained by mainstream Psychology, the subject as ideologically (socially) constrained, or/and linguistically constructed in critical studies to discourse analysis in Psychology. Freud considers instinctual sexual drive as the most crucial concept in his theory of the unconscious, which leads to a subsequent desire to its release (Thurschwell, 2009). In his famous work, namely 'The Interpretation of Dreams' (1997 [1900]) where the psychoanalytic concept of the mind is introduced, Freud proposes that dreams are the disguised form of unfulfilled, repressed desires which could be read psychoanalytically in a similar way as symptoms are read. The symptom refers to a physiological reaction that arises from repression, i.e. the place where symptoms remain deeply hidden or displaced from the conscious mind into the unconscious mind. Repression can happen as a severe willingness to forget something, which is too unpleasant and associated with feelings of guilt. In addition, it could happen when the situation is too overwhelming and/or not comprehended at the time of occurring. Hence, this allows Freud to broaden his scope of investigations, as it also embraces people who are considered healthy (neurotics) as well as hysterics (Thurschwell, 2009). Freud (1977 [1910]) states:

> You must remember that our nightly dream productions show the greatest outer similarity and inner relationship to the creations of the insane, but on the other hand are compatible with full health during waking life (p.18).

Hence, Freud (1977 [1910]) claims to find a way to gain knowledge about the unconscious from the interpretation of dreams, as Freud himself puts it: 'Interpretation of dreams is in fact the *via regia* to the interpretation of the unconscious' (p.18). In 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Life' (1991a [1901]) and in 'Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious' (1991b [1905]) Freud expands the scope of reading of the repressed desires hidden in the unconscious by what is known as parapraxes or Freudian slips, i.e. mistakes people make when using a language, e.g. mispronunciations, slips of the tongue, moments of pause or forgetting the right word along with the disguised meaning of jokes. Importantly, Freud in his essay of 'Creative Writers and Daydreaming (2007 [1908]) where he examines the affinity between a writer and his/her work, puts forward an argument that a creative art contains disguised unfulfilled desire. Thus, this creative form of expression could also be read and explored for symptoms or wish fulfilment that, as Freud argues, derive from an author's unconscious. However, as Freud (1997

[1900]) states, 'we are not in a position to interpret another person's dream if he is unwilling to furnish us with the unconscious thoughts which lie behind the dream content.' (p.136). Thus, the classical Freudian psychoanalytic criticism has concentrated on the 'content' of a given piece of literature, i.e. mainly analyse the author or the characters.

In his 'Interpretation of Dreams' (1997 [1900]), Freud makes a clear distinction between the manifest dream-content and the latent dream-thoughts. The former, refers to consciously recalling a dream on waking, i.e. the text of the dream itself, whereas the latent dream-thoughts refers to concealed material which underlies the manifest dream-content. As Thom (1981) observes the two crucial mental operations, which explain the affinity of the manifest dream-content with the latent dream-thoughts are those of condensation and displacement. The former refers to the laconic elements that are 'over-determined', i.e. one entity in the manifest dream-content might have endless, multiply associations with the other entities in the latent dream-thoughts (Thom, 1981). Displacement, however, refers to the distorted character of these entities. Freud (1997 [1900]) explains:

> The result of this displacement is that the dream-content no longer has any likeness to the nucleus of the dream-thoughts, and the dream reproduces only a distorted form of the dream-wish in the unconscious (p.193).

Thus, some aspects of the elements included in the manifest dream-content could be represented in an entirely different form in the latent content, or those elements which seem to be crucial in latent dream-thoughts are absent in the manifest dream-content. Interestingly, Grosz (1990) notices that rather than examining the dream-text per se, the dream report is the proper object of the psychoanalytic scrutiny. Therefore, for this reason, Easthope (1999) argues that art, whether expressed through visual images or text, works in a similar way to dreams, i.e. the manifest dream-content. However, in contrast to a dream, which is the property of each dreamer, the text must come to be attached by its future reader in order to form identification with it (Easthope, 1999). This, therefore, leads to the theory proposed by Jacques Lacan.

Lacan, arguably one of the most important figures in psychoanalysis since Freud, and whose enormous influence goes far beyond psychoanalytic settings, i.e. literary and film criticism or social theory, proposes that rather than concentrating on the 'content' of literary works, the focus should be on language, i.e. the form and structure of the text. Lacan, in his theory of the unconscious and his formulations on human subjectivity, among many other influences, returns to close scrutiny of Freud's writings and to his elaborations of many concepts related to the unconscious, which were put forward in the time where the new foundation of linguistic concepts was only to be anticipated but not yet fully developed. Therefore, Lacan's radical re-reading of Freud's works, based on the rigorous use of Saussure's conception of language, allows him to put forward the model of the symbolic order and the notion of the unconscious (Homer, 2005; Grosz, 1990).

Lacanian reinterpretation of Saussure's notion of sign provides the foundation to account for the complexities of the Lacanian conception of profound lack of identity within the subject of the symbolic order. According to Saussure's linguistic theory,

the sign comprises a word (i.e. signifier) and its concepts (i.e. signified), and these in turn are inextricably linked together (Fink, 2004). Lacan (1997) in 'The Seminar, Book III' however argues for 'the independence of the signifier and the signified' (p.259/227); that is to say that there is no mutual relationship between the two. More importantly, Lacan not only prioritises signifier over signified but also emphasises their fundamental division by adding a barrier (bar sign) between them. Thus, Lacan (2006 [1966]) introduces the concepts of an incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier (p.419). This emphasises the processes of signification, a continuous lacking character of meaning (Grosz, 1990). However, as Homer (2005) observes, this is not to suggest that there are no fix meaning at all, as sometimes in the process of signification 'points de capiton' ('anchoring points' or 'quilting points') might emerge, which allow for the moment of stable signification. Lacan (1997) in 'The Seminar, Book III' puts it that a quilting point is a 'point at which the signified and the signifier are knotted together' (268). This is to say, as Evans (1996) points out, this incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier is momentarily halted, what in turn retroactively produces, illusionary as it is, a sense of meaning.

Lacan also utilised Roman Jakobson's distinction between metaphor and metonymy (Homer, 2005). The former refers to a word or phrase, which by making implicit analogy, describes a subject that normally does not designate. Metaphor is characterised by the lack of the resemblance between the objects. Metonymy refers to a word or phrase that stands for another, usually closely related object. Lacan identifies Jakobson's terms of metaphor and metonymy with the Freudian processes of condensation and displacement, respectively (Grosz, 1990). In doing so, Lacan (1998) in 'The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Book XI' puts forward an argument that 'the unconscious is structured like a language' (p.20). Thus, in contrast to Freud, Lacan defines the unconscious as a form of discourse.

Following this argumentation, as Bosmajian (2004) notices, the literary text is nothing else than an image of the unconscious structured like a language. Lacan, in a similar manner to Freud, often relies on literary examples to learn more about human subjectivity and desire, for example, as Rabaté (2001) observes, in the works of Joyce, Lacan has gained insight in understanding of symptom, in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' or in Sophocles' 'Antigone', Lacan has found something new in the comprehension of human desire. Nodelman (2003) puts it well that

> ...fiction can be read according to the way it echoes the basic human activity of inventing oneself and then becoming conscious of the limitations of the inventions. All that is usually called reality is in fact fiction, and it is always less complete than the actual 'real, the unknowable world outside individual consciousness (p.227).

Lacan, by reformulating the Freudian Oedipus complex, has arrived at different conceptualisation of the phallus. As Homer (2005) observes, Lacan has moved away from understanding of the phallus as the physical object (the penis), rather associates it with signifier which has different functions in each of Lacan's three registers, i.e. the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. Thus, in contrast to Freud, Lacan argues that a child is born into language, the symbolic order through which its desires are forced to express (Homer, 2005). The complexity of Lacanian subjectivity and its related concepts will be discussed in details in '*The Analysis and Discussion*

of Data' section of this dissertation. In doing so, I will explore, through Lacanian textual analysis, the complexity of subjective identification in an encounter with an excerpt from Antoine de Saint Exupéry's 'The Little Prince'. 'The Little Prince' is only an arbitrary chosen example of literary text. However, as a fantasy novel it is an excellent example of the manifest text-content which in its structure resembles the manifest dream-content, and therefore, as Freud (1997 [1900]) notes, by drawing on psychoanalytic theory this creative form of writing can be read and explored.

According to Lacan (2006 [1966]) there are no existing rules of interpretation and as Lacan puts it: 'It is not that they cannot be formulated, but their formulations presuppose developments that I cannot presume to be known, since I cannot give a condensed account of them here' (p.497). Branney (2008) adds that 'Lacanian psychoanalysis does not offer a comprehensive theory, and it would be difficult to provide the foundation of data analysis' (p.584). In consequence, there is no existing and widely acknowledged methodology to analysing discourse, which could, as Neill (2011a) notes, claim the name of Lacanian discourse analysis. However, it is not to say that the present project design is without precedent and as Pavón-Cuéllar (2010) points out it is unquestionable that Lacanian array of psychoanalytic concepts can be utilised to discourse analysis. Hence, there have already been numerous attempts to develop a working theory for implications of Lacanian conceptual tools in the service of analysis of textual material in Psychology research. Therefore, I have utilised the work of Pavón-Cuéllar (2010), Parker (2005) and Neill (2011a) which offer a workable approach to Lacanian discourse analysis. Following previous research, the present project considers a text or the readers' discourses as a linguistic choice made by the responders that cannot be treated as analysable but only as analysing. 'Lacanian discourse analysis' is therefore particularly useful with its emphasis on function of language and its concept of the unconscious.

The present paper focuses only on those aspects of Lacanian elaboration of the concept of the subject which directly link to its three states of being, i.e. the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. Briefly, the infant starts with the formulation of the ego through identification with its reflected image in the mirror (the imaginary), then through alienated aspects of language he/she is trying to make sense of his/her own 'self' (the symbolic), and the real that which cannot be signified however which sense is experienced. Thus, in order to attempt to account for the human experience, all these three orders must be taken into consideration. All these states of being will be discussed in turn in the '*Analysis and Discussion of Data'* section of this project. To the best of my knowledge, this is a uniquely designed study, which allows, by drawing on Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis, the exploring of unconscious dynamics of readers' formation of subjectivity. Unlike various critical approaches to discursive Psychology that claim to be able to find the subject in their discourses, I am proposing that such inquiry is fundamentally impossible.

The main objective of this study is to demonstrate that when an unconscious aspect of the selfhood formation is considered, the subject might only be accounted as a detectable glimpse in each of the Lacanian triad of orders. Therefore, through analysis of the readers' rewritings of the story, I will examine the manners in which subjectivity is constructed in various readings and how such a construction illustrates dimensions of how subjectivity, as a general concept, is formed by the readers. That

is to say, the primary aim of this dissertation is to trace the Lacanian concept of the subject through the Lacanian triad of orders.

The secondary objective of this project aims to start the process of examining the way readers' subjectivity could be traced and explored through their own experience and attachment to the textual material.

Methodology

Research Design

The project's design has drawn on Lacanian theory of psychoanalysis to discourse analysis of textual material in Psychology.

Data Analysis Procedure

The imaginary conception of subjectivity was explored by paying attention to the formulation of images of the readers' own selves or those aspects in the discourse where readers were trying to make sense of signifiers, i.e. words, which attempted to describe a given concept.

The symbolic conception of subjectivity was examined by paying attention to names, omission, inclusion and re-conceptualisation of elements in the text. The symbolic was traced at a surface level of the text and related to mapping the text without meaning. The symbolic was concerned with the knowledge as it was, without understanding it.

Finally, the real conception of subjectivity was explored in those instances in the text when the words or meanings fail. The subject in the real was traced in those moments, which could not be signified and in those utterances which disturbed the imaginary and the symbolic.

As a starting point, I read the stories without any attempt of analysing them as to experience the stories from a reader's perspective. For instance, I looked holistically over the text, and explored the overall character of the stories. At all times during the process of reading and rereading the stories I strived to remain as open to the data as possible. This allowed me to reveal a central theme, which the readers brought about across all of the stories, i.e. a sense of loss. This was considered to be right for further exploration, especially with relation to the Lacanian conception of lack. The notion of lack, to put it simply, implies absence or deprivation of something. Even at this simple level of its understanding, the subjective experience of lack is detectable, as it could be inferred that lack is divided between its positive (absence of something negative) and negative (deprivation of something positive) meanings. However, the Lacanian lack, as Ruti (2008) observes, relates to the subject's ontological lack, i.e. the very lack of being which is the foundation of human existence. The complexity of Lacanian conception of lack will be discussed in detail in the *Analysis and Discussion of Data* section of this dissertation.

There is not an objective position for analysing the stories; on the contrary, the revealed meaning of these stories is always the meaning of the analyst. Hence, this attempt at reading the stories does not feign to exhaust their meanings, as this will be anathema to what 'Lacanian discourse analysis' is considered to be. That is to say, the presented analysis is open to challenge.

Participants Selection

In total, there were 6 participants who agreed to take part in the study. The age of the participants was 18 and above. Each of the respondents was approached directly and asked whether they would be interested in participating in the study. None of the respondents was a close acquaintance with the researcher. All respondents had a good standard of English.

Materials

One excerpt from 'The Little Prince' by de Saint Exupéry was identified and given to each participant. A working title was given to the chosen passage, i.e. 'The encounter with the fox' (Appendix_7).

Procedure of Data Collection

Those who agreed to take part in the project were given verbal and written information about the character of the study and form of data collection (Appendix_9). All participants signed a consent form that featured contact details of the researcher, guaranteed anonymity and advised that they could withdraw from the study at any stage and without giving a reason (Appendix_9).

The respondents were made aware that their stories would be used for my Honours Project and might be published in a journal or presented at a conference. The respondents had the opportunity to ask questions at any point of the study.

At the first stage of the study each participant was given a copy of 'The encounter with the fox' and asked to read it carefully within one day. The first stage was not supervised; the respondents were allowed to read given excerpt in their own time. However, those who agreed to participate in the study were asked to come back two days later to take part in the second part of the study. The arrangement of a time and place for the second meeting was agreed.

The second part of the research was in the presence of the researcher and required the participants to follow two written tasks as specified by the researcher involving the read excerpt from two days earlier. Each respondent was given a sheet of paper and a pen and asked to write their responses down. The written procedures were not revealed until the second part of the study. Each participant was informed that these tasks did not test their memory or writing skills. Both tasks were designed for the purpose of this project. Task 1 involved retelling of the story of the encounter with the fox by using their own words in the written form in as much detail as possible (Appendix_8). In order to encourage participants to retell the story rather than report it, clear instructions along with the first few words were given. Task 2 involved writing

down their own reflections, meanings or thoughts related to the read excerpt (Appendix_8).

All stories are referred to by the reader of stories (1-6), the stories' task number (1-2) and line number from the transcript (Appendices 1-6). Thus, for example (1/2/12-14) refers to reader 1, task 2, and lines 12-14. When appropriate, the stories lines are quoted as written by the readers.

After completing the study's tasks, the participants were thanked for taking part in the study and given a debriefing form (Appendix_10).

Rationales

The rationale behind this design was first to ensure that all participants would have enough time to become acquainted with the given text. Thus, this was a goal assigned to the first stage of the study, where participants could read the given excerpt at their own pace. Procedure 1 of task 2 was designed to explore the extent to which readers would re-conceptualise, include or exclude the elements of the story. The second procedure of task 2 was designed to explore the extent to which readers would become attached to the text and how they would form identification with it. The written form was chosen as to ensure the flow of thoughts of the participants. Thus, in this form of data gathering, the researcher ensured the minimal disturbance or influence of the participants' thoughts and ensured the participants had opportunity to write about anything they wanted, thus open character of task 2 was preserved, which could be at risk among other techniques of data gathering, such as interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Health, Life and Social Sciences Research Committee at Edinburgh Napier University.

Analysis and Discussion of Data

As previously mentioned, the following conceptions of the subject are set in direct opposition to the idea of psychological studies and are marked by the employment of different foundations of subjectivity claims. What I am proposing here is that although the inquiry into human subject is marked by a fundamental 'impossibility' or to put it differently there is not any explicit way in which the subject could be found, hence what can be done is searching for traces of the subject through Lacanian conceptions of subjectivity. Therefore, this section aims to illustrate that consideration of Lacanian theorising on the imaginary, the symbolic and the real to critical reading of textual material allows for experiencing glimpses of the fleeting subject. That is to say, the primary aim of this section is to trace the subject through each of the Lacanian triad of realms along with unfolding the theoretical dimensions of each of them.

This will be achieved not without difficulties as all three orders are intertwined. As Neill (2011) points out, this complex relation between the three orders is usually represented by the Borromean Knot of mutual dependency, wherein each order depends on the other and is characterised by a contingent status. Therefore, this present discourse also firmly affirms that there is no escape from the imaginary and the symbolic as it is impossible to explore one without the other and furthermore the real is also always there. However, this discourse will endeavour to untie or break them apart as to illustrate how different traces of the same subject could be explored using each of Lacanian three orders. This has its precedence in Lacan's clinical settings. That is to say, although the characters of the three orders are inextricable, it is necessary, as Jameson (1997) notes, to attempt to distinguish one from the other as to be able to form assessment of their level in patients, e.g. to reveal their level of degradation or imbalance in, for example, neurotic patients.

Additionally, I will also explore the relation between the sense of loss, as manifested across the readers' stories, and the notion of Lacanian lack, which is a necessary condition for the construction of subjectivity. Finally, the possible reasons as to why the readers revolve around the concept of lack in their stories will be discussed. To begin with, the subject of the imaginary is brought forward.

The Subject of the Imaginary

This part of the analysis section concentrates on those aspects of the Lacanian conception of subjectivity that directly link to the imaginary realm of being. I will now turn to the readers' stories and explore the imaginary subjective constitution of the subject within the retold stories of the original passage. I will also examine the role of lack and its relation to the manifested sense of loss across the different readings within the Lacanian conception of the imaginary. However, to begin with the theoretical background will be presented.

The imaginary might be inferred to relate to the way the ego is formulated by the process of identification with any reflexive images, and hence is also related to the order of being of fundamental narcissism. Lacan's primary example of the emergence of the ego in the imaginary is closely associated with the concept of the mirror stage (Lacan, 2006 [1966]), which itself is strongly influenced from the ancient myth of Narcissus. However, unlike in the myth of Narcissus whose mistake of taking his own reflection by someone else's, i.e. the other, led to a tragedy, the child's misrecognition from the mirror stage is somewhat the salvation for the child as allowing him/her to enter into the order of the symbolic.

Therefore, the mirror stage refers to the child of between six to eighteen months old who, unlike the mythical Narcissus, mistakenly recognises or identifies itself with the imaginary other, i.e. with its own image of the body through the reflexive surface of a mirror. That is to say, the child is this reflected image. It is important to emphasise that a reflexive surface does not necessarily insinuate a mirror. It is rather any reflexive surface, which allows the child to identify with the unconscious assumption of an external image, e.g. the mother of the child, the 'images' of other children or linguistically structured 'images' (Fink, 1995; Chiesa, 2007). Therefore, in direct opposition to the child's motor control over its own body, which is characterised by the experience of being fragmented and not unified, the internalisation of the 'imago',

i.e. idealistic image, allows the child to experience a sense of plenitude and wholeness (Homer, 2005). Lacan (2006, [1966]) in his essay 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function' states:

> ...the mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation – and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body...to the finally donned armour of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure (p.4).

That is to say, the mirror stage brings about the emergence of fantasy, i.e. fantasy of unification in the lacking subject. Furthermore, the ego, which is constructed as a result of the internalisation of the 'imago', becomes an indissoluble part of the subject. However, as Lacan (1988) in 'The Seminar, Book I' points out: 'If the ego is an imaginary function, it is not to be confused with the subject' (p.193). In other words, the subject cannot be reduced to its imaginary function. Also, as further elaborated by Chiesa (2007), the ego is not to be equated with the individual either. The ego is an internalised 'other', and the plenitude of being self is only acquired by becoming this 'other'. It is like a mask or exterior persona, which cannot be removed. From now on, the fantasy of himself/herself or the ego becomes an integral part of the subject. Thus, it could be said that the mirror stage creates a fundamental gap between the 'imago' or the self and the subject. In this sense, this is the moment in which the external image of 'an other' alienates the subject. That is to say, as Homer (2005) further elaborates, the alienation refers to this 'lack of being' through which the image or 'an other' which is outside the child becomes its real self or the ego.

As Hook (2006) points out the imaginary relationship between the child and its imaginary other through which the child is making sense about itself, e.g. the mother, must eventually be broken in order for the child to fully separate its imaginary counterparts from the 'I', i.e. itself. Importantly, the child who is able to distinguish itself from 'an other' can be introduced to cultural norms and existing rules of society, i.e. the symbolic. The gap created by breaking apart the imaginary relationship between the child and its mother brings about the concept of the 'phallus' and the 'Name-of-the-father' which is also called the paternal metaphor or paternal function (Lacan, 2006 [1966]). Fink (1995) observes that the 'Name-of-the-father' is not to be necessarily equated with a literal father but only to its corresponding signification. The child starts to realise, by the act of separation, that he/she is not completely equal to his/her mother's desire. Therefore, the child strives to become the object of his/her mother' desire, in what Lacanian terms is called the imaginary phallus (Evans, 1996). It is the 'Name-of-the-father' which intrudes the illusionary relationship of the child and his/her mother and castrates the child, i.e. imposes first law to the child, which prohibits the child from becoming his/her mother object of desire, i.e. the imaginary phallus. In this Lacanian version of Freud's Oedipus complex, the successful resolution requires the child to abandon the identification with the imaginary phallus and importantly to recognise it as a signifier without object (Homer, 2005). The child envisages that mother's desire is directed to his/her father or what stands for him, i.e. paternal metaphor, therefore he must possess the phallus that, as assumed by the child, satisfies the mother desire (Fink, 1995). This is why Lacan (2006 [1966], p.465) elaborates that the mother's desire is substituted by another signifier, i.e. the Name-of-the-father. As Fink (1995) explains, this is through

this substitution that the process of signification starts and the subject enters the symbolic order as a desiring subject. In this sense, the phallus comes to be the primary loss object, which never exists. Therefore, in addition to the process of identification, which takes place in the imaginary, the subject is undergoing the secondary identification in the process of the Oedipus complex (Neill, 2011b). The subject in the symbolic realm of being will be discussed in detail in the next section. Both processes of identification, which inevitably alienate the subject, lead to the conception of Lacanian lack. In this section, the imaginary identification along with its process of the subject's alienation will be considered. Therefore, I will now illustrate how a profound sense of loss is conveyed in the readers' stories and demonstrate how this could be linked with Lacanian conception of lack.

For example, reader 3 in his/her story uses a vast number of signifiers, i.e. words in relation to the concept of time, such as 'unique moments', 'very often', 'only once', or 'stop for a minute'. Thus, by revolving around the concept of time, or the passing character of human life, it could be inferred that this reader centres upon the concept of loss, here the possible loss of time, and desire to make the best of it as 'we live only once' (3/2/7-8). This is illustrated in this reader's own words:

> Very often we all are very busy with our lives, running around, constantly looking for something, wanting more, achieving more, succeeding and possessing goods (3/2/2-3)...however we should also stop for a minute sometimes and think. Think and reflect on our lives, on how we can be better, how we can improve our relationships with others, our attitude towards others and life (3/2/5-7).

Thus, reader 3 is confronted with choices of his/her desire between a busy life or constant running around and moments of pause and reflection, the very paradox of this story. Whatever is chosen, the subject is never fully satisfied, as Neill (2011b) observes the sense of completeness cannot be maintained for long. This is the imaginary function of motivational drive, i.e. *objet petit a*, which serves to mask the subject's own division and, or in other words to sustain the fantasy of plenitude. However, *objet petit a,* as Neill (2011b) argues, can only momentarily fulfil a given desire and as soon as this is achieved, illusionary as it is, there is something else which is desired, and the search is continued ad infinitum. This could be observed in this reader's story, precisely in those moments when the reader realises that he/she needs to stop and reflect however cannot help but to start rushing again in search of his/her *objet petit a*. This profound feeling of lack and the constant experience that something is missing, i.e. *objet petit a*, might be explained as deriving from the process of metaphorical castration, where the subject had to give up the phallus, i.e. the primary lost object. Lacan (1998) in 'The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Book XI' states 'The object...serves as a symbol of the lack, that is to say, of the phallus, not as such, but in so far as it is lacking' (p.103).

Reader's 4 accounts that 'the little prince appears to be searching for something he will find when he finds men he is looking for' (4/2/1-2), is an example of a very curious and very different reading of the story. More importantly, reader 4 seems to capture the essence of the Lacanian concept of *objet petit a*. The little prince, as explained by this reader, is searching for something (here this something can be understood as *objet petit a*) that he will find (the emphasis is on the certainty of what

the little prince is searching for will be found) however only when he finds men, he is looking for. Thus, according to this reader's recalled words, men appear to have something (the phallus) which fulfils the little prince' desire. Therefore, the fantasy of fulfilment is constructed.

Readers 5 and 6 in their stories conveyed such a desire, i.e. the concealed desire to return to the experience of wholeness, to the time before alienating effects of internalisation of the external images. This is exemplified by the similar manner in which both readers identified with the text:

> The fox's secret that 'what is most important is invisible to the eye' is quite tough for me. It gives me lots of ideas. One is that about the appearance of someone in general. I think we could understand this as the message that we shouldn't judge someone just on the basis of their appearance as we could be wrong and do not give a chance to know someone better just because our first impression of that person was bad (6/2/20-25).

and

> I certainly believe that this sentence [the fox's secret] is true but am also convinced that I do not always remember it when it comes to judging people & using my first impressions and how hard it is to resist them and, more importantly, to change them (5/2/9-11).

The return to this primary plenitude is however impossible or irreversible, as by the subversion to the Name-of-the-father, i.e. the symbolic order and the effects of castration, the subject remains forever alienated and desirable. That is to say, it is impossible to return to the moment when the subject can face itself without judgemental effects of itself or others. Therefore, the subject cannot any longer return to the stage when it would be possible to take off the mask and see itself without being influenced by others or its own unconscious knowledge about itself. In this sense, it could be said that both readers 5 and 6 express a desire to take a look what is behind the other people's 'masks' what constitutes also an element of fantasy here. This is also the case in the previous story of reader 4, in which the reader expresses a desire to look 'inside the little prince head'. This is demonstrated when reader 4 appears to see through or understand the true nature of the fox's character. Reader 4 in his/her accounts of the story is convinced that the fox speaks about men negatively, and what is more the purpose of this negative talk is given, as expressed:

> He (the fox) speaks of men negatively to encourage the prince to become his friend. The prince seems not to pick up on this (4/2/3-4).

Therefore, this time the story is read through the knowledge (about the inferred fox's true 'self'), illusionary as it might be, to which the reader attached negative characteristics. It could be thus inferred that readers 4, 5, and 6 are unconsciously driven by the motivational movement produced by lack to get to know the real identities behind all those created false identifications. This is also precisely what modern psychological studies from different disciplines, e.g. cognitive Psychology or IPA, are striving to achieve. In other words, they seek to uncover the subject, i.e. the

totality of the individual, either by the means of measuring their internal mental processes or by interpretations of people's mental and emotional states based on their naturally occurring talk and text (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). However, as Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis explains there is nothing behind the mask. That is to say, there is no self, behind the mistaken image taken by its own, or behind the ego there is nothing at all.

It is also important to note here that the mirror stage is not a stage, which is only happening once in infancy, but rather the process that starts in infancy and then reoccurs throughout one's lifespan. In this sense the short passage from 'The Little Prince' works here in an analogous way to a mirror in which the readers find their reflections or more precisely points of identification with what the readers think their selves are. Thus, this narcissistic reflection in the text correlates with subjective constitution and a mistake of identification (méconnaissance). The text in a way enacts fantasies, which in turn, as evident in the readers' stories, produce unconscious pleasure. Easthope (1999) explains this well: 'If I actively make sense of the text I come to care about what the text cares about. Its lack becomes my lack, its desires my desire.' (p.130). In addition, there is also no question of appropriateness of expression of these fantasies or pleasures in the readers' stories as each is marked in a special and a unique way. That is to say, it is not the given passage itself, which allows producing the subject unique fantasies, desires and pleasures in the unconscious, but rather the readers' encounter with a number of text's signifiers, which allows for various and unique points of identification and formulation of the imaginary meaning to be made.

Indeed, the readers in their stories made such points of identification by either identifying with the whole original story (Appendix_7) or at least with some particular instances from it. That is to say, by making the necessary connections between the words in the text, the readers create meanings for themselves, i.e. an imaginary as it is, in otherwise discrete character of words, i.e. signifiers.

This can be illustrated in readers 2's story who seems to make a profound point of identification or an illusionary mirror reflection with 'The concept of tameness' (2/1/1-2). Here the reader attempts to elaborate on what he/she thinks its meaning is. This is shown by listing signifiers through which the reader hopes its meaning is conveyed:

> The fox explained it as conferring 'specialness' on something (such as the fox) would separate from all the other foxes. In particular if tamed by the Prince the fox would come to have a special value to the prince. A bond of sorts between the two (2/1/3-5).

This chain of signification takes further form where the signifiers such as 'animal rights philosophy' (2/2/1), 'keeping animals as pets' (2/2/6), or 'modern society' (2/2/7) are listed. Intriguingly, this opens up the imaginary dimension in which the reader identifies himself/herself as a 'good pet owner'. Furthermore, the fantasy in which the reader has a 'strong bond' and a mutually beneficial relationship with his/her cat is constructed. This is depicted in the words:

> The cat and I certainly have a strong bond and generally our relationship is a mutually beneficial one (2/2/8-9).

The words: 'The moral implications of helping pets' (2/2/2-3) are an excellent example of how this reader deludes himself/herself that such help is needed in the first place. There is also something that disturbs this experience of plenitude, and leads him/her to question all these assumptions. This is demonstrated in the lines:

> Am I a good pet owner? … Is the keeping of animals as pets in general (taming them as such), good or desirable in modern society? (2/2/5-7).

Here, the reader questions whether he/she is a good pet owner as a direct consequence of his/her actions, i.e. recent neglect of his/her cat's 'grooming routine' (2/2/10), what in consequence was the reason for taking the cat to 'the vets to have her knots cut out' (2/2/3-4). Furthermore, as showed in the above (2/2/5-7) lines, the general ideas of keeping animals as pets, i.e. 'taming them as such' is questioned along with showing subversion to the Other, here 'modern society'. This is thus an excellent example that illustrates the way in which reader 2's selfhood is reflected or can be recognised according to social norms. The very notion of being a pet owner does not exist without first being established and accepted by social norms, the Other, which regulates it.

Furthermore, the very fact that reader 2 asks the question, i.e. 'Am I a good pet owner?' (2/2/5) is indicative of searching for an answer to the question 'Che Vuoi? or What do *you* want?' (Neill, 2011b) that lies at the very heart of the Lacanian notion of subjectivity and dialectical recognition, which will be discussed in detail at the end of this section (p.42). Neill further explains that this 'Che Vuoi?' question is not only addressed by the Other to the subject ('what do *you* want') but also the subject itself directs it to the Other ('what does it want from me?') (p.42). It seems that reader 2 tries to answer a question 'What am I, if I'm what you've just been saying I am?' which Lacan (1997) himself formulated in 'The Seminar, Book III' (p.315). Therefore, the reader here is confronted with an unanswerable question what it is to be a good pet owner. The only attainable answer, as Neill (2011b) observes is produced in the form of fantasy, here the fantasy what it means for this reader to be a good pet owner, e.g. 'sticking to her [the cat] grooming routine (which should avoid further vet trips for knot removal)' (2/2/10). It could be thus said that this constructed fantasy serves to allow experiencing the feeling of wholeness and, as Neill (2011b) puts it, which also serves to sustain 'the subject against the Che vuoi? - against the radical unknowingness inherent in the symbolic order', which will be discussed in detail in the next section (p.43).

The story of reader 2 is also an excellent example of the encounter with failure of his/her constructed fantasies. The reader here is split between the desire of being 'a good pet owner' and morality doubts, which leads him/her to question the idea of 'keeping pets' or the idea of human supremacy over animals. This encountered failure of the reader's fantasies and desires open up possibility to experience the sense of loss, or powerful creativity of lack, which, as elaborated previously, is an essential component for the emergence of the subject.

In the next story of reader 5 also the imaginary points of identification, the fantasies in which the reader paints himself/herself as a caring person who gives love to others, are constructed. This is demonstrated in lines:

> I do believe that love, care we give to others makes them special to us. But what we give isn't always reciprocated. I thought about all those people for whom I cared and they gave nothing in return – clearly I wasn't as special to them as they were to me. And that made me feel disappointed (5/2/11-14).

In this extract of reader 5's story, the fantasy of relationship is further constructed which here means mutual reciprocity, what someone gives, i.e. care, love should be returned, or otherwise, as the reader states, the feeling of disappointment comes. This is also an example of the encounter with profound lack, experience of loss and thus with failures of fantasy. In this story there is a sense that the reader requires other people to experience the feeling of completeness, i.e. the fantasy of other who would mask his/her experience of lack. Importantly, disappointment, which the reader talks about, suggests the failure of expectations or desire. In this sense, it could be said, *objet petit a* always fails.

Similarly, reader 6 in his/her story also creatively articulates the fantasies of his/her self, i.e. the reader constructs himself/herself as a partner in a relationship who is a caring, responsible, giving love and feeling intimacy person:

> The whole story made me think about my relationship… I was thinking about my partner and myself… now I think is better to give love and feel intimacy with other person even if then you can be easily hurt and suffer till the end of your life (6/2/1), (6/2/8), (6/2/19-20).

In addition, the relationship here is elaborated as making the reader vulnerable and easy to hurt. It is this elaboration of the imaginary constructed relationship, which is also the moment of profound contradiction. For example, the reader expresses doubt whether it is better:

> ...to know someone, invest our time give ourselves in the relationship and then maybe be left or not to know anyone close and never suffer because we were not tamed. It is not easy to say (6/2/14-17).

Therefore, here the relationship is depicted as something special, unique which can allow to feel intimacy and love with the other person but also as something that could 'hurt' and make a person suffer and be vulnerable 'till the end of your life' (6/2/20-21). This reader is convinced that now as contrary to the past it is better to take these risks. As in the previous case, this is an excellent example of the splitting subject, split between the very paradox of the constructed concept of a relationship, i.e. a relationship as something positive and a relationship as something negative. Interestingly, as it turns out, both reader 5 and reader 6 construct similar dilemmas for themselves. The similarity in meanings is however only allowed in the imaginary. In line with the Lacanian conception of the symbolic, the words within the text only refer to other words, i.e. signifiers, and themselves do not convey any meaning, rather the meaning is creatively produced as a response to them in a process of an active engagement during reading. Therefore, the meaning itself, the imaginary

aspect of discourse cannot be communicated and thus remains the property of the particular reader, as Pavón- Cuéllar (2010) puts it 'there is not a shared social imaginary representation' (p. 2).

Interestingly, it could be inferred that the dyadic relationship between the fox and the little prince as depicted by de Saint Exupéry, or dyadic relationship the readers referred to in their stories, and foremost Lacan's articulation of the mirror metaphor, reveal the inexorable struggle of desire and recognition, as accounted in Kojève's (1980) reading of Hegel. Hegel (1980) in 'The Phenomenology of Mind', specifically in his tale of 'Lord and Bondsman', commonly known as the 'Master-Slave' dialectic, gives an account of the intersubjective structure of human being. The 'Master' and the 'Slave' are two subjects whose existences depend on their reciprocal recognition. That is to say, the existence of one's subjectivity is depended on recognition of an other subject, i.e. the 'Master' remains a subject as long as is recognised by the 'Slave' (an other) as such, on the contrary the 'Slave' remains a slave when there is the 'Master' (an other) he recognises. However, this mutual recognition, as Hegel (1980) remarks is one sided and unequal. Paradoxically, it is the 'Slave', not the 'Master', who can establish his identity and become truly realised, as in contrast to the 'Master' who is fully depended on the existence of the 'Slave', the 'Slave' has his work as another source of self-affirmation (Hegel,1980). Kojève (1980) argues that the 'subject-other' dialectic, i.e. the 'Master' and the 'Slave' struggle for recognition is marked by its historical origins. As Kojève (1980) puts it 'the historical 'dialectic' is the 'dialectic' of Master and Slave' (p.9). In other words, according to Kojève (1980), in every human interaction or relationship form by people, the 'Master-Slave' dialectic is detectable. More importantly, the roles of this 'subject-object' relationship are not stable, but rather prone to alteration over the course of time as a result of this constant struggle for recognition.

Therefore, as Vasseleu (1991) observes the Lacanian mirror stage serves a similar function to the Hegelian 'Master-Slave' dialectic as elaborated by Kojève (1980). It could be thus inferred that Lacanian imaginary operates according to this dialectic with particular attention being paid not only to the function of an internalised gestalt, which derives not from an interior of an individual but from an exterior source, i.e. a reflected imago, but also to the function of desire and its complex role in the process of formulation of the subject. Lacan (1988) himself in 'The Seminar, Book I' puts it:

> The subject's desire can only be confirmed in this relation through a competition, through an absolute rivalry with the other, in view of the object towards which it is directed. And each time we get close, in a given subject, to this primitive alienation, the most radical aggression arises-the desire for the disappearance of the other in so far as he supports the subject's desire (p.170).

Therefore, as Neill (2011b) points out differentiation between the subject and the other brings about the emergence of aggression. This leads to the question of desire, i.e. 'Che Vuoi?' and thus the Lacanian notion of subjectivity. This dialectical recognition along with its conveyed aggressiveness and the question of desire are best illustrated by the contradictory moments of the readers' stories when the readers' interaction with others is elaborated. For example, the profound paradox in reader 5 and reader 6s' stories relates to the concept of love/partnership the readers elaborate on. The notion of love or partnership, as the imaginary

construction in the symbolic world, is constructed by these readers as being positive, i.e. related to caring about an other or making them special, but also as something which brings about the feeling of disappointment or being upset when it is not returned. This contradictory or inexplicable aspect of love/partnership creates the subject who is split between these two positive and negative (aggressive) aspects of love/partnership. This in turn demonstrates a struggle for recognition of one's identity, e.g. lover-beloved, which is based on the attempt at answering 'Che Vuoi'? question. It also shows its unstable character and the movement of formulation and failure of fantasy, i.e. fantasy is created as a result of desire of the Other; whereas failure of which is encountered due to the unattainable character of *objet petit a*, which allows the subject to encounter its creative lack. It could be thus concluded that imaginary identification as Žižek (1989) observes 'is always identification on behalf of a certain gaze in the Other' (p. 117). That is to say, the process of identifying with an external image, as it is the case for example in reader 2's story (being a pet owner), or taking certain roles, as it is the case in reader 5 and reader 6s' stories (being a partner or lover) is always enacted with respect to the Other. The notion of 'the gaze' will be examined in more detail in the next section. Following Žižek (1989), it is thus of a great value to grasp here that the imaginary identification is what an individual would like to be, but he/she is not.

The Subject of the Symbolic

This part of the analysis section focuses on those aspects of the Lacanian conception of subjectivity that directly link to the symbolic realm of being. Here, I will also make use of reader 1's story and explore the subject of unconscious or the Other. This time, the role of lack and its relation to the manifested sense of loss across the different readings will be examined with reference to the Lacanian conception of the symbolic. To begin with, the theoretical background will be presented.

The symbolic brings about the concept of the unconscious, which according to Lacan is 'structured like a language'. The entry or rather subversion to the symbolic by identification with the Name-of-the-father alienates the child who in this way becomes the subject of language. From now on, the child is represented by a means of difference or substitutions, i.e. words or signifiers, which can only be replaced by other signifiers in an ad infinitum process or a chain of signification. Lacan (1997) in 'The Seminar, Book III' further explains that signifier is the word which 'signifies nothing and is therefore always capable of yielding various meaning.' (p.190). In this sense, the subject is considered to be split or 'barred' as the result of the castrating effect of language, i.e. split between the effect of imaginary wholeness and the unconscious which always fails to express the subject. Žižek (1989) puts it well:

> Lacanian subject is divided, crossed-out, identical to a lack in a signifying chain...the symbolic order itself, is also *barré*, crossed-out, by a fundamental impossibility, structured around an impossible/traumatic kernel, around a central lack (p.137).

That is to say, the realm of the Other and the subject itself are marked by fundamental lack. Fink (1995) adds that it is possible for the child to refuse

19

subjectivity and not to be represented by language and presents psychosis as an example of such a situation. Although the subject is now trapped within the symbolic, the ego cannot escape the imaginary. Therefore, both the imaginary and the symbolic alienate the Lacanian subject, i.e. the former by taking an image for itself which is never itself whereas the latter by being represented by words which never fully accounts for who one is. In this sense, the subject is deprived of possibility to acquire its own identity. Lacan (1998) in 'Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Book XI' explains: 'A signifier is that which represents a subject…not for another subject, but for another signifier. (p.198). The interpretation of Pharaoh's dream about seven 'fat cows' (signifier) and seven 'lean cows' (signifier) by biblical Joseph, which Freud (1997 [1900]) mentioned in his work 'The Interpretation of Dreams' (p.11), is an excellent illustration of aforementioned quotation. In the symbolic order these two values of the signifiers are different, i.e. 'fat cows' ≠ 'lean cows', and the meaning might only emerge on the very difference between them.

Apart from (mis-)representing the subject, the Other also generates desire. That is to say, an individual in the symbolic is endowed with a wide array of possibilities in search for its *objet petit a*, which although is never to be found, it mediates between language and the subject's fantasy (Minsky, 1996). More importantly, the symbolic offers the subject a place in the social environment or social existence. In other words, it equips the subject with tools for communication, i.e. language, as a means to interact within the network of social meanings, rules and relationship, thus it introduces the subject with the knowledge of ideological norms, and social law. Unlike the imaginary, the symbolic operates in relation to the symbolic law, e.g. grammatical rules of language, or ideas which as Fink (1997) observes could have been implanted through different sorts of influences, such as parents, education, media or social environment. That is to say, as it will be illustrated by some fragments of the readers' stories, people adopt a certain way of thinking about themselves which is mediated through ideological frames from the Other, e.g. familial rules, educational or social rules. Therefore, unlike the imaginary, the symbolic order does not deal with constructing fantasy of oneself; rather its concerns are directed towards understanding the world in relation to particular discourse, e.g. prevails norms in society, thus in knowing the world as it is (Fink, 1997).

The very fact that the readers were writing means that they were operating within the symbolic. Importantly, each of the readers uniquely engages with the text by including, excluding and re-conceptualisation of some of the original story elements. As a result, the readers' retold stories are full of gaps and absences. For example, in general, the readers' responses to task 1 are quite short in comparison to the original passage. It is noticeable that reader 1 includes the text's signifiers, i.e. 'tame' and 'rite', however their meanings here are missing, i.e. they are not explained by this reader in his/her version of the story. Among other instances of absence in the retold story, reader 1 also pays attention to the fact that 'the fox passes on a secret' to the boy (1/1/6-7). However, again here the content of the secret is missed out. Interestingly, reader 2, reader 3, and also reader 4 do not mention a secret in his/her tasks at all, thus it could be said that there the secret is lost. In the stories of reader 4 the concept of tameness and the fact that the fox is asking the little prince to tame him are brought forward numerous times, however the response of the little prince is somehow lost. These are however signs of loss which are exposed at a level of

conscious reading of the text. I will now turn to the story of reader 1, and in particular to his/her recalled 'truth', i.e.:

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye' (1/2/2-3).

and explore its unconscious dimension.

In the symbolic order, these words must not be read through the sense attached to them, as this always belongs to the imaginary. On the contrary, in the symbolic order of becoming the being, the attention needs to be paid to the expressed signifiers, i.e. words, and relations between them. The only possibility for the subject to emerge in the symbolic order is from the constant movement of signifiers and the very difference they form between each other. Therefore, interestingly, when an attempt at further signification of the expressed 'truth' is made, the reader uses various signifiers to account for it.

However, in order to account for the complexities of these, presented by reader 1's visual metaphors, especially the words: 'it is only with the heart that one can see rightly' (1/2/2) vs. 'what is essential is invisible to the eye' (1/2/2-3), the Lacanian conception of 'seeing' and 'gaze' will be brought forward. This in turn might allow to reveal some implicit aspects from this reader's story which might have been raised and thus contribute to gain better insight in the way his/her identity is formed. This however must be underpinned by some theoretical background. The eye and the process of 'seeing' have long been considered among scientific and philosophical literature (Jay, 1993). For example, Plato (2000) in his work 'The Republic' states that 'the things…can only be seen with the eye of the mind' (p.175). In other words, an interior rather than corporeal aspect of 'seeing' is stressed. This resonates with Athanasius thought from 'the Treatise Contra Gentes' (2007), who also considers intellect as a primary tool of 'seeing', this is illustrated in the words:

the sole function of the eye is to see…but what ought to see…is a question beyond the senses, and belonging to the soul and to the intelligence which resides in it (p.20).

This view of vision is also maintained in the modern era by Cartesian philosophy. The significance of mind, as an inner capacity of vision, is depicted in Descartes' (1901 [1641]) 'Meditations of First Philosphy, Meditation II'. In his example of 'the piece of wax', which changes its attributes due to the affects of temperature, and in the act of seeing men in the street, Descartes argues that senses cannot be trusted. Descartes (1901 [1641]) states:

When looking from a window and saying I see men who pass in the street, I really do not see them, but infer that I see is men, just as I say that I see wax. And yet what do I see from the window but hats and coats which may cover automatic machines? Yet I judge these to be men. And similarly solely by the faculty of judgement which rests in my mind, I comprehend that which I believed I saw with my eyes (p.12-13).

Jay (1993) presents an argument of Ong (1967 in Jay, 1993), in which he argues that Descartes' view of vision and its role of the mind leads to 'modern individualism

(the eye = I)' and 'a campaign for visually conceived cognitive enterprise', what could be said are mostly underpinning the central thought of mainstream Psychology (p.67). It could be thus inferred that according to these presented views, it is the mind, and not the corporeal eye, which serves a function of seeing. It is a contribution of Merleau-Ponty, which as one of the first thinkers, links perception with language, and its conveyed truth – 'the invisible' (Jay, 1993). That is to say, as Jay (1993) further explains, the power of language, e.g. literary language, and its signification transform the invisible (meaning) into the visible (understanding). Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis further strengthens the position of language in the process of perception. Lacan (1998) in 'The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Book XI' critically re-conceptualises Merleau-Ponty's terms of the visible and the invisible, and instead introduces the concepts of 'the eye' and 'the gaze', which according to Lacan, play a significant function in constitution of the self. 'The eye', in Lacanian terms, refers to a physical organ, which is capable of 'looking at', whereas 'the gaze' refers to a gaze which cannot be seen, is rather 'a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other' (p.84). Žižek (1992) further explains:

> The eye viewing the object is on the side of the subject, while the gaze is on the side of the object. When I look at an object, the object is always already gazing at me, and from a point at which I cannot see it' (p.68).

This recollects the Lacanian dialectic from 'the Mirror Stage', and its failure of seeing (méconnaissance) between the self and the other. Here, however, the Lacanian subject is caught up between the dialectic of 'the eye' and 'the gaze', and as Evans (1996) points out 'this split between the eye and the gaze is nothing other than subjective division itself expressed in the field of vision' (p.73). Therefore, in contrast to Cartesian subject whose function of seeing is identified with the mastery of mind (being), the Lacanian subject is decentred, or as de Bolla (1996) puts it 'the viewing subject becomes merely a function of the visual field' (p.68). As a result of this very split between function of 'the eye' and 'the gaze', the desiring subject of the visual field emerges that strives to return to the feeling of completeness. In doing so, the subject can be understood as striving to become this gaze of the Other, that is to say to attain *objet petit a*.

Having given account of the complexities of the visual metaphor in Lacanian theory, I will now return to reader 1's recalled quotation of the fox's 'truth':

> It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye (1/2/2-3).

It is important here to raise the question whether reader 1 also along with Cartesian philosophy, at the unconscious level, considers the corporeal eye as incapable of seeing the essential things, i.e. incapable of creating meaning, and assigns the role of seeing to being (understanding). Following this way of thinking for a moment, it could be inferred that here 'the heart' is the place which is capable of creating meaning, which is absent during the process of perception through the physical eyes. Therefore, here 'seeing' is something more than could be perceived by the eye, it needs 'the heart' or 'the meaning' to be considered more complete. If this is the case, it shows reader 1's subversion to the Other, here the Other as a body of knowledge and prevailing conception of the modern individualised subject, who is

the master of its own thoughts. Therefore, when reader 1 further signifies the fox's 'truth', e.g. 'people seem to have lost sight of this' (1/2/4), the obvious paradox emerges. That is to say, how one can lose sight of something that one cannot see.

On the other hand, when Lacanian conception of 'the eye' and 'the gaze' are taken into account, it could be considered that reader 1 is striving to, through 'signification of language' become this being of the Other gaze, however this must fail. There is no being, which could be achieved or understanding of the gaze of the Other, as this is the function of *objet petit a,* which is always beyond the subject's grasp. Here, the reader's words: 'people…have lost sight of this' appears to grasp the concept of Lacanian insight of 'the gaze', which is always 'lost' and inaccessible to the subject. This is why the subject here is also caught up with constant movement between signifiers. This is illustrated with further attempts of signification of 'the truth', which although the reader assumes to be understood, she/he fails to express. For example, the 'truth' also appears to signify another heterogeneous thing, i.e. 'a message of slowing down' (1/2/9-10), and also pushes the reader to revolve around the concept of being 'in a relationship' (1/2/11). Interestingly, the way relationship is further elaborated brings about the literal, materialistic sense of this discourse. For example, when this reader elaborates on the concept of a relationship, he/she uses the words such as 'compromise' (1/2/12), 'control issues' (1/2/18), 'concept of bringing up children' (1/2/25), or 'breakdown of family units' (1/2/31), and also 'separation and divorce of parents' (1/2/32-33). All these substitutions lead to another symbolic value of words: 'You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.' (113-114, Appendix_7), which itself is the fox's further signification of its conveyed 'truth'.

Thus, it is really fascinating to observe in how many different directions the fox's 'truth' could be taken by this reader and still profoundly fails to communicate its meaning. What is however successfully marked is the difference between corresponding signifiers of the concept of tameness. It could be said that these contradictory moments unconsciously elaborated by this reader break apart his/her imaginary constructions or false identifications which as demonstrated cannot be so easily banished. More importantly, this created the possibility for the encounter with or experience of an acute sense of the Lacanian conception of lack.

The Conjuncture between the Imaginary and the Symbolic

In this subsection, I will return to the concept of Lacanian imaginary order as to demonstrate that the subject is not what appears in the language, i.e. symbolic order, or as clear cut as often depicted in a traditional psychological perspective. Based on the readers' stories, and considering Lacanian theory of subjectivity, the subject is what emerges beneath the surface of the text, i.e. underneath the signifier, which represents a subject for another signifier (Lacan, 1998; 'The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Book XI'). Therefore, this leads to the imaginary dimension, in which the subject in a sense could be found only as a pure imaginary identification. The extract from the story of reader 2 is an excellent example of how the reader who is in a sense trapped in the symbolic process of writing, fails to communicate his/her desired meaning. More importantly, the written words, i.e. the symbolic itself, give the opportunity to explore moments or glimpses of the imaginary. This could be illustrated in lines:

The 'tameness' concept appealed greatly and is likely to inform my thoughts of the motto for some time to come (2/2/13-14).

At the surface, the meaning of this sentence does not produce a clear sense. What the reader wanted to convey, or what he/she meant by the word 'motto' is not shared. The attempt at communicating the reader's identification with his/her own fantasy is alienated. The symbolic value of the signifier 'motto' does not convey any meaning; it is rather a discrete value. Thus, in the symbolic order it could only be related to other discrete values and differences between them (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010). That is to say, the only available understanding is possible through analysing gaps between them. For example, the difference between 'motto', and 'the tameness', as by definition 'motto' ≠ 'tameness'. However, by active engagement with this sentence, some possible, imaginary meanings emerge, e.g. 'motto' might refer to the truth the fox passed to the prince, this is however undetermined. Therefore, the imaginary is always trying to fill the gaps between the symbolic significations. In this sense, this shows a fleeting character of the subject, which is nothing more than an imaginary pulsation (Fink, 1995). More importantly, any time the text is read, the readers bring their own 'imagining' to that text (Neill, 2011a). Even here as these words are read, there are already three layers of 'imagining'. That is to say, it is me the author of this project who imagines what the study's participants' imagined when they read the extract from 'The Little Prince'. In addition, it is you, the reader of this project, who imagines what I imagined the study's participants imagined. All these layers are active and work together at this very moment this project is read. Therefore, as Neill (2011a) observes that this 'imagining' becomes more complex any time a new layer of interpretation is added. This brings the notion of desire of each reader to fill or close the gaps between all of three Lacanian orders. Therefore, the next subsection will discuss the subject in the real in more detail.

The Subject of the Real

In order to fully account for the complexity in the understanding of Lacanian subject the concept of the real must be brought forward. Thus, this part of the analysis section centres on those aspects of the Lacanian conception of subjectivity that directly link to the real realm of being. Here, also the concluding remarks and future implications of this project will be presented.

The real, as Homer (2005) explains, is not to be confused with reality, the human body or any other object in the world. Lacan (1988) in 'The Seminar, Book I' puts it: 'the real, or what is perceived as such, is what resists symbolisation absolutely.' (p.66). Therefore, it could be envisioned as a pre-symbolic place where the other orders, i.e. the imaginary and the symbolic are enacted.

The readers' stories refer to an illusion or misrecognition of constructed fantasies about the readers' selves, and the world around them. Also, the same stories read through the symbolic refer to the impossibility of expression caught up with constant movement of significations by signifiers. It could be said that the subject is unconsciously searching for unity between itself and the signifiers. In other words, there is a creative attempt made by the subject to reveal itself. As the Lacanian

reading of the stories is exemplified, the readers responded in many different ways to the same signifiers, that is the same signifier refers to different and heterogeneous entities. In other words, by the unconscious formulation of fantasy of the selves, the readers acquire an imaginary, as it is, a sense of stable identities and a sense of being in charge of their desires. However, the same stories convey the very failures of such constructions. That is to say, there is a fundamental impossibility at both the imaginary and the symbolic level in describing one's self, as this, using Lacanian terms, does not exist. Further, through making their own association with this text the readers reveal their own fantasies of selves and at the same time also reveal how this, an illusionary image of selves, is never the whole picture of what constitutes their selves and also never contains the readers' desires. In this sense, it could be said that 'the real subject is not exhausted by his symbolic identity' (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2010; p.215). In other words, the subject of the real might be understood in terms of what escapes both the imaginary and the symbolic. Therefore, the real could be explained as that supposed sense of possibility of expressing, which however when mediated through the symbolic always fails.

Additionally, 'the gaze' of the Other, the image of the subject's face or body from the point the subject is looked at, or what a particular reader is, that is not him/her, belongs to the realm of the real. The eruptions of the real in the readers' stories could be sensed in those numerous contradictions or paradoxes in the stories when the dynamism between the imaginary identifications with the text and signification of meaning momentarily failed. Also, as the real resists signification, it is related to those aspects of the readers' story which resisted both the fantasy and symbolisation of the readers' desires, i.e. the desires of the Other. This is the function of *objet petit a.* In this sense *objet petit a* in the real could be described as the kernel of the real, which cannot be represented by signification (Neill, 2011b) or 'the gaze' of the Other from which the subject is looked at. According to Lacan's theorising about the concept of subjectivity, both the subject and the Other (here could be the text itself or language) are marked by a profound experience of lack. Freud (1997 [1900]) described this as an unfathomable core or 'navel' of the dream which is beyond representation, i.e. cannot be exemplified by images or signifiers. Thus, it could be that the passage from 'the Little Prince' has lack itself, and therefore by identification with it, lack was passed on the readers. Also, it could be that the readers bring about the lack as this is the very constitution of their being. In any case, lack is always present, or more importantly always fails to be fulfilled.

Taken together, quotations, i.e. signifiers or words exemplify the concept of Lacanian symbolic order, and then from the creative process of reading and retelling the stories the different imaginary points of identifications emerged. Consequently, the possible, imaginary meanings of the readers' significations are produced which however are only available to the readers themselves and only relevant to their own stories. As what is meaningful for these readers, is not shared with anyone else as the meaning here could only be imaginary. Everyone except the readers themselves is therefore deprived from the access to their meaning. Furthermore, at the symbolic level, it could be said that the readers themselves are also devoid of their meanings, as by definition the signifier can only be expressed by another signifier ad infinitum. Finally, the real cannot be ignored, as this is the place, which disturbs the mutual dynamic between the imaginary and the symbolic. The findings of this project emphasise the impossibility of the inquiry into human subject, which as Parker

(2005) argues, lies in the very core of the understanding of human being. Therefore, although it was impossible to find any fixed, stable identity, it was however possible, and this was the main aim of this project, to find traces of the subject within each of Lacanian three registers, which when considered together provided a bigger picture of how readers constituted their subjectivity within textual discourses. Lacan's theory of subjectivity is very complex and his works notoriously enigmatic, however I am hoping that this project has contributed in starting the process of understanding of the way in which readers' identities can be traced within textual material, which was the secondary objective of this project. Future research in this area could focus on developing a workable methodology for Lacanian analysis of subjectivity to textual materials based on readers' attachment to them. Although the present project presents an initial framework in considering the plausibility of such endeavour, this was not a primary concern of it, which would have been beyond the scope of this dissertation. This project also touched upon the significance of visual metaphors as recalled and further elaborated by readers in the process of subjectivity formation. It would be very interesting to explore this aspect in more detail, especially its relation to the Lacanian notion of 'the gaze'. To the best of my knowledge, no single study investigated these aspects with relation to readers' response to a literary text. Therefore, findings of such plausible venture might not only benefit critical Psychology studies but also those beyond Psychology settings, e.g. cultural studies or literary criticism, as these could shed some more light on the way readers construct their unconscious identities in textual material in response to a literary text, which, as for now, is the area yet to be discovered.

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