

Expatriates' primary narcissism as a compensation for the disruption of symbolic relationships: a Lacanian perspective

Paolo Dal Bo

ESCP-Europe

paolo.dal_bo@edu.escpeurope.eu

Abstract

The issue of health among global workers has not been explored yet and this work aims to investigate it more deeply through a psychoanalytic perspective. In particular this paper introduces the relationship between language and libido. The French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan suggested that meaning is inversely correlated with libido or that sexual drive is absorbed by language. When the linguistic medium fails or when it has the tendency to become slippery as in the case of James Joyce libido becomes excessive and threatens the subject. Nevertheless Lacan hypothesize through the analysis of Joyce's biography and works that the excess can be curbed by a primary narcissism intertwined with a symbolic component. Grounding on his theory and on the findings of the research on expatriation I hypothesize that global workers share a mechanism similar to the one of James Joyce. Through 23 semi-structured interviews I show how expatriates often invest their libidinal excess into imaginary objects with a symbolic component (and hence recognizable by the other) such as career. This particular typology of primary narcissism called *Sinthome* by Jacques Lacan becomes stronger when affectivity is destroyed or in other words when libido is not linguistically absorbed by the other. Primary narcissism can be a source of resilience when libido can not flow linguistically and it is symbolically sustained by the organizational dimension.

Keywords: Lacan, expatriation

Health and expatriation

The issue of health in global assignments seems to be still neglected in the industry (IPIECA; 2013) as well as in the literature (Shaffer et al, 2012), and it has been approached in a quite fragmented way: from the concept of dual-careers to the one of adjustment and repatriates turnover (Brewster et al, 2014). It has been remarked that the issues affecting the global workforce health (here in the terms of adjustment) have not been fully clarified so Brewster et

al. (2014) suggest to look at the relationships among the outcomes of expatriation. In addition the negative sides of global assignments should be considered (Baruch et al, 2016) "career uncertainty may be related to increased intentions to engage in forms of misbehaviour that involve abusive conduct". Moreover, according to Kraimer (2016), theoretical frameworks to explain repatriation strains and in general the expatriation phenomenon are still lacking.

The high libidinal needs of expatriates

Expatriates have been shown to abuse alcohol during their assignments (Kets De Vries, 1995), drugs (Cerdin & Dubouloy, 2004) and "they reported help sought for frequency of media use, alcohol, stimulant drinks, substance use" (Valantin, 2015). Moreover in addition to substance abuse Jones (2000) and Meunier (2007) report highly risky sexual behaviours which can be even found in the novels; as Hemingway (1926) writes "You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed with sex...". Even if these problems have not been discussed in the management literature, they should not be overlooked due to the seriousness of their outcomes.

According to Pascoe (2009) "The frequent entertaining of clients, colleagues and other expatriates in the absence of stabilizing influences, which at home exert a restraining influence, will play a part,". The relationship between the social dimension and unhealthy behaviours has so been spotted but has not been deeply investigated, moreover no solutions have been proposed. Following a psychoanalytic approach (Fotaki et al, 2012) this work tries then to explain through a theoretical model (Kraimer, 2016) behaviours that appear irrational (Kets de Vries, 2004). In particular how investments over symbolic objects may compensate for the reduced symbolic component of the expatriates' lives.

I don't want to say expatriates normally use drugs or drink or pursue excessive sexual behaviours. I want to rather say that it is possible to spot some symptoms which suggest there is something behind such behaviours.

Libido, language and affectivity according to Lacan

The interplay between the social dimension and the above mentioned behaviours becomes clearer through the lens of the theory of the French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan who tried to

explain the relations between autistic behaviours (since they are reflective and can be experienced only by the subject itself) such as sexual intercourses, substance abuse, the work itself (burnout) and language. He suggested that autistic behaviours are inversely proportional to the ability of the subject to enter in a linguistic and meaningful relationship with the other.

In particular (Lacan, 1975-76) "Since the No-of the- father is something, in the end, light. But it is sure that it can be useful, in the place of the forclusion of the sense by the orientation of the Real"¹

"It is an example then - psychoanalysis - nothing more, of a short circuit passing through the sense, the sense as I have just defined it in the moment of the copulation, that is the language... since it is already this that sustain the unconscious... of the copulation of language with our body."²

The first of these two paragraphs of his later theory says that rules (Nom-du-Père to be read phonetically as Non-du-Père) are something light and cannot contain and organize libido (the Real) that is always geared towards the exclusion of the sense, but they can be useful. While the second states that the meaning (sense) that flows through linguistic interactions (for instance the psychoanalytic relationship) is like a sexual intercourse (language sustain the copulation of language with our body). In other words meaning erodes libido but expatriates may be not able to exploit the linguistic medium:

He [An expatriate] is anyway a laowai [foreigner]. We need to work on the networking and building up emotional relationships with our clients. Having the foreigners present at the social events helps, but there is still something barrier and segregation. If he can speak good Chinese one day, we would be pleased. But if he can't, we don't care that much either. In China we mostly use Chinese. He doesn't understand when you try to explain to him. But he can drink, so he is also helping [with the networking].' (H17b). (Zhang, Peltokorpi).

¹ Puisque le Nom-du-Père c'est quelque chose, en fin de compte, de léger. Mais il est certain que c'est là que ça peut servir, au lieu de la forclusion du sens par l'orientation du Réel.

Forclusion=exclusion

² C'est un exemple en somme - la psychanalyse - rien de plus, de court-circuit passant par le sens, le sens comme tel que j'ai défini tout à l'heure de la copulation, en somme, du langage... puisque c'est de ça que je supporte l'Inconscient ...de la copulation du langage avec notre propre corps.

"I don't understand the jokes and cannot join in". It may be even difficult to share meaning at a pure work level in which skills are not recognized: "His English is so bad, he takes so much time in the meetings to explain himself, nobody understands what he tries to explain." For me he's very good technically. But for other people it takes more time to believe in his abilities, because of this communication problem". (Tenzer & AL, 2013).

Lacan introduces some theoretical innovations to the Freudian psychoanalysis, in particular he introduces the discourse of the subject which becomes a stand-alone dimension in the analytic perspective. Briefly the French psychiatrist showed how the ES may not only be repressed under the form of dreams or metaphors but may also lose control when the subject is not in the conditions to articulate a discourse. This latter has received a particular attention by Lacan who tried to study all the variables of the discourse with regard to the cure. For this purpose he introduced a methodological innovation which is the use of the structuralism in the psychoanalytic research; for instance he discovered that the repetition of a same word throughout the patient speech works as a metonymia of the desire for the other. In general he tried to untangle the symbolic ties that knots the ID to the discourse through the use of Venn diagrams, formulas and drawings (more than 80 drawings can be counted on the book *Le Sinthome*). This attempt was done in order to make psychoanalysis more precise even if the clarity of his works have been contested and they clearly present many paradoxes. Obviously psychoanalysis draws on clinical cases so its concepts born to explain extreme cases where a libidinal symptom, an affective dysfunction is present, nevertheless the Lacanian concepts are sufficiently defined to be applied to other fields; the concern of Lacan was not only to make psychoanalysis scientific but also to link it to a social dimension; in that sense his concepts require to be studied within a social context that has not been investigated because of the psychoanalysis' propensity to postulate from individual case studies.

Freud goes even further with his solution: where he did not find a suitable myth, he invented one himself, and that is of course the story of *Totem und Tabu*, the myth of the primal father. This Freudian approach resulted in a major breakthrough, a new paradigm. Nevertheless, there are a couple of serious disadvantages to it. This method is useful only as long as one keeps the story sufficiently vague (Verhaeghe).

Language and libido: objects-relationship

At the beginning of its seminars Lacan discuss the theory of the lost object “théorie du manqué d’objet” and addresses the forms of loss. They are articulated around the registers of symbolic, imaginary and real (symbolic castration, imaginary frustration and real deprivation). Subsequently he analyses the phobia of little Hans (a kid who was afraid of imaginary horses) through these concepts.

There is no harmony between the subject and the object, a predetermined and positive relationship does not exist; in fact the object can never fully satisfy the subject. Lacan starts from this point and introduces the concept of the lack: how this latter can satisfy what the objects can not? What is missing to psychoanalysis, according to him, is the the notion of lack as something able in taking into account the symbolic dimension of desire.

Freud helped the little Hans to view himself as subject and not only as a persecuted object, but this Oedipal issue is reduced and flattened to an imaginary axis. In other words, through the Freudian theory and its developments, the subject is reduced either to something attracted by imaginary objects or to the consciousness of being the object of someone else’s desire.

In the seminar VII Lacan reads the myth Totem and Taboo and highlights how the Law replace object relationships. The myths is about a libertine and violent man who is killed by his sons who were determined to establish a law. The homicide is not triggered by the need of usurping the role of the killed man but by the need of establish an order. In other words the need for a symbolic law creates a desire that is not anymore object-related. Antigone as well buried her brother against the despotic orders of Creon; it is the law in terms of limitations that creates a desire which is not body related: the condition for bypassing imaginary relationships (a power asymmetry subject-object) is the dialectic.

The concept of a symbolic law has been also studied and applied to work dynamics. For example Verhaeghe and Vanheule explain burnout as the result of imaginary relationships. No limits exist between the burnt subject and the others, but also no limits exist between the burnt subject the demands of the organization: "*You are continuously occupied with their lives or with the group in general, and you don't have a second of rest anymore. You have to take into account a lot of things simultaneously. There are so many things that need to be done, so many questions that need to be answered, so many stories you have to listen to*". (Verhaeghe & Vanheule 2005).

"The problems we are confronted with are all very complex. One can't just say do this or that. Then it stays on my mind and I keep on brooding. The emotional things, you take them home. You try to find a solution but you can't find one" (Verhagehe & Vanheule, 2004).

"Actually, I should draw my lines better, because my own work is not done and before you are aware of it, you are always dealing with the most complicated problems... I do not stand up enough for what I find important myself... I always feel pity for other people."(Vanheule & Verhagehe, 2003).

Burnout decreases when the individuals are able to create boundaries: *"No one is going to ask you what's on your mind. You must say it yourself"*(Verhagehe & Vanheule, 2004) and also to share meaning: *" If the co-operation gives rise to conflict, I am someone who raises this matter immediately, who provides feedback. I say what I think, what is wrong with me"*.(Vanheule & Verhagehe, 2003).

The ability of sharing a meaning does not only help to prevent burnout but also to reduce object-relationships to a greater extent: "alcoholic inpatients with an impaired attachment system are clearly shut down from others. This is in line with psychoanalytic theories highlighting the exclusion of the other as an important function of alcohol consumption". "While in the case of a deficient symbolic representational system, the treatment should primarily focus on the installation or restoration of this system by creating a secure environment in which secondary-order representations can be constructed and meaning can come into being" (De Rick & Al, 2009).

Language and object relationships in expatriates.

The more sexual drive is not absorbed by the linguistic medium (shared meaning with the community), the more it pours on things, people and acts: sexual drive is linked to a symbolic dimension. Organizations have been spanning cultural boundaries but its members are still not able to easily switch their symbolic grounds. Expatriates, especially in exogenous cultures, are unlikely to share interests, education, language and cultures with the host nationals: "I don't understand the jokes and cannot join in". It may be even difficult to share meaning at a pure work level in which skills are not recognized: *"His English is so bad, he takes so much time in the meetings to explain himself, nobody understands what he tries to explain."* For me he's very good technically. But for other people it takes more time to believe in his abilities, because of this communication problem". (Tenzer & AL, 2013)

Expatriates in MNE may speak more than one foreign language (Harzing, 2010), the host country language and a lingua franca which is usually English; in this case the exclusion of meaning becomes more evident than in the case of monolingual environments. For instance (Marcos, 1976) found that patients undertaking a therapy in a foreign language are more emotionally withdrawn since the cognitive effort involved in speaking a second language prevents an emotional release which is subsequently displaced. Moreover a foreign language is imbued with culturally distant signifieds which may strengthen the exclusion of meaning. This cognitive effort may be even stronger since the lack of semantic fit arising from culturally distant languages (Brannen). Moreover some culturally specific meaning cannot be translated from one language to another and so the subject is once again prevented from sharing meaning with the other (Chidlow et al).

According to Lacan the language has not only the function of reducing the need for autistic gratifications (sex, substance use, workaholism). Language operates at two levels: the first is the sharing of meanings through the language and the second is the alienation to the big Other (linguistic network of rules) (Lacan, 1959), in other terms the alienation in a network of signifiers: learning a language provides then an enjoyment that forcludes (excludes) the needs for other forms autistic gratifications. This has been also said with different words by Stengal (in Schumann, 1976): "*the narcissistic gratification to which the learner is accustomed in the use of his native language*".

Finally expatriates often live in small and isolated communities which push their members to a fusion; meaning leaves space to conformism and then to objectal-relationships (Lauring & Selmer):

The Saudi subsidiary employed around 400 individuals of 14 different nationalities – mainly from India, Egypt and the Philippines. In addition 16 Danish expatriates and one British employee were stationed in the subsidiary. In Saudi-Arabia women cannot work together with men, which means that all spouses are women. Except for one British employee, only Danes occupied positions as managers.

All 16 Danish families lived in the same compound sharing their spare time as well as working hours. The English manager stayed in another compound. The compound was located in the middle of the desert half an hour's drive outside Riyadh.

As a consequence of the convenience of staying together with the other Danes, most informants told the researcher, that though they had expected to get to know different people from different cultures, it did not happen. As one of the wives remarked:

People here know each other all too well. And if you have one of those periods where you just need to be alone they will not allow you. People start saying – how come we never see you any more, – why haven't you been by the pool lately. Then if you do not go there they will think you are annoyed with them (manager).

There are people who cannot stand that people are different. If you start to be a little different, don't think you're special, because people will start talking. They started to forget that I existed, Down here you can't afford to be too critical but I think it is because we all know that there are no other options (wife).

here are some so called friendships that are forced on you down here. It is always a balance between expressing what you mean and being diplomatic because most people are intelligent enough to know that it has to work again tomorrow. So there are limits to what you can do and say. There is such an artificial politeness (manager).

I am relieved that there isn't so much talking going on behind people's backs and rumors and stuff, and especially when you know, what it could be like that in a place with a lot of women. Also, I heard that it was like that before among the Danes, where the Danish girls were almost split into two groups. They didn't socialize, and their children were not allowed to play together and things like that. I guess it has to do with jealousy. I could imagine some of them being jealous that someone's husband held a higher position, and perhaps was able to afford more stuff (wife).

Objects, narcissism and organization studies. Primary narcissism and secondary narcissism.³

In organization studies narcissism has been already described as useful if it limits to the its objectal part; similarly to Freud Kets de Vries clearly distinguish a constructive objectal narcissism from a dangerous ego narcissism. “*Constructive Narcissism - Miller (1981), in*

³ Primary narcissism is a libidinal investment over an object (people, things). Secondary narcissism is a libidinal investment over the ego (ego should be considered as a continuum: from being self-centered up to grandiosity)

describing the childhood object relations of healthy or constructive narcissists, stated: Because the child was able to display ambivalent feelings, he could learn to regard both himself and the object [the other] as "both good and bad," and did not need to split off the "good" from the "bad" object...(pp.33-34)". On the other side the ego part of narcissism is described as threatening (Morf, Weir, Davidov) "Alternatively, in their characteristic ego focus, initial mild negative feedback (if perceived as from a reliable source) might actually increase the importance of doing well and thus, narcissists' engagement in the task. We base this supposition primarily on clinical accounts indicating that narcissists' hypersensitivity to feedback appears not to make them disengage from self-promotion, but rather to intensify their need to defend more aggressively against threats to the self. With repeated negative feedback, however, narcissists will likely become very threatened because an ego focus puts one's self-esteem on the line. They may try to alleviate this threat by discounting the feedback or devaluing the task and disengaging from it"

The symbolic dimension of narcissism has also been discussed as well, Duchon and Drake distinguish again two typologies of narcissism the extreme one and the symbolic/rule oriented one "For example, a virtuous organization develops a balanced power structure that ensures that the desires of particular constituencies are not privileged over others, thus dampening tendencies toward displays of entitlement. Decision making processes will enable rational, reality-based, critical dialogue to counter bias, rationalizations and denial. The organization will be characterized by displays of courage, justice, trust, and truthfulness (Moore and Beadle, 2006), and so counter self-aggrandizing displays".

Again, "Excellence means accepting the authority of standards and the inadequacy of one's own performance (MacIntyre, 2007), something the extreme narcissist is fundamentally incapable of doing".

According to Grijalva and Harms " narcissists appear to behave less destructively when they work in ethical climates/ cultures, under enforced ethical codes of conduct, and in IGC cultures that value communal goals such as loyalty and caring for group members (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; O'Boyle et al., 2012)"

If the symbolic of rules is useful to reduce the ego component of narcissism the symbolic is also something the narcissist wants to identify with. Similarly to Lacan Brown theorises the link between narcissism and the symbolic dimension of the organization:

“..the degree of individual identification with a social category usually has not been linked to the concept of legitimacy..

..part of the reason why the connection with legitimacy usually has not been made is that whereas identification is a psychological concept, legitimacy principally is a concern of sociologists..

processes of denial, rationalization, attributional egotism, self-aggrandizement, and sense of entitlement are not just identity maintaining but legitimacy enhancing. In acknowledging the legitimacy of the groups and organizations with which they identify, individuals are tacitly reaffirming their sense of self.

...In this article I have argued that organizations regulate the self- esteem of their participants through collective ego-defensive behaviors, with implications for identification and legitimation processes”

So far Narcissism has either been studied as primary-objectal (Kest de Vries) either as secondary-egoic. These egoic views of Narcissism have then linked to a symbolic dimension but the gap in these the organizational view of Narcissism is the lack of a link between the object narcissism and the symbolic structure.

Lacan suggested the existence of another typology of narcissism: the symbolic one. This form of narcissism it's a hybrid between the primary and the secondary; in other words it combines the objectal component of the primary and the symbolic component of the secondary: there is a form of narcissism for which the subject wants to be recognized (the ego component) but through objects. The French psychiatrist named this symbolic narcissism as Sinthome and was created from the case study of James Joyce.

In the following part I illustrate the case of James Joyce through the similar and more recent example of Salvador Dali who met Lacan personally and may have influenced him in the discovery of the Sinthome.

Symbolic narcissism: objects and recognition. The case study of Dali and Joyce.

“Secret number 3

The most peculiar way of sleeping, the most propitious sleep for practicing the art of painting is.. what i call napping with a key.. In order to sleep with a key you will have to sit with your

head leaned back on the leather headrest of a rigid chair endowed with armrests and preferably in Spanish style.

Sitting in this position you will be gently holding a key between the thumb and the forefinger of your left hand.

At the very moment when the key falls from your fingers you can be sure that the noise of the fallen key will wake you up and you can be likewise sure that fleeting moment will be totally enough.. to invigorate one's physical and psychic being..”

In his book “50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship” Salvador Dali share with his readers 50 painting techniques, some of them are meaningless and some of them are meaningful and useful such as the explanation on how to utilize the golden section in perspective.

Dali share among his secretes the one of eating sea urchins before starting painting and constellate his written and figurative works with an “edible delirium” (Neret, 2000): *persistence fo Memory, 1931; Eggs on a Plate without the Plate, 1932; Antropomorphic bread, 1932; Lobster telephone, 1936. “The same evening I ordered a taxi which would fetch me the next day and take me to the frontier where I would board a train straight for Paris. I had breakfast composed of sea-urchins, toast and a little very bitter red wine. While waiting for the taxi, which was late in coming, I observed the shadow of my profile that fell on a white-washed wall. I took a sea-urchin, placed it on my head and stood at attention before my shadow – William Tell.”* (Dali, 1993) He clarifies: *“I know what I eat; I don’t know what I do”* (Neret, 2000) and insists *“Christ it’s cheese, even better, mountains of cheese (1)”* .

It is difficult to find a meaning in Dali’s interviews, writing or paintings; he defines himself as a paranoid and often says that he his mad but at the same time he says that he is just too clever for being mad. What is the relationship between paranoia and meaning? What is the relationship between madness and meaning?

In Dali’s mind the discourse of the food is always present and it is a discourse that does not make sense in himself. Nevertheless the burgeoning food metonymies structure around metaphors that can be understood and hence shared and transmitted among different human beings.

The central inference is not provided by any of these models separately but by the relevant correspondence in the mapping (one between a “behavioural” feature of machines and a behavioural feature of a certain judge)

Why do you paint melting monsters1?

I painted melting monster1 since I was a mystic2

What is the relationship between mysticism2 and melting monsters1?

Dead monsters1 are like “say cheese3” especially like melting Camembert3

What is the relationship between cheese3 and mysticism2?

Because God4 is cheese3

You can notice in this discourse that 1 is the metonymia (whole for a part) for 2 and 2 is a metonymia for 3 (whole for a part) and then 4 is associated to 3.

Mysticism1 is represented by melting monsters2 who are represented by cheese3 who represents God4

I have perceived a certain malaise... but since I am very Gesuitic I have cited Saint Agustin who describes God as a fermentated Mountain

So after three days I received by the Gesuit the exact citation of Saint Agustin.. so if it is not Dali but him who said it everyone is obliged to say that (this idea) is not that mad..

Fermentated mountain is metaphore of God but it is a metaphore which is shared in a symbolic system since the milky mountain is a symbol of fertility and since the milky mountain is a concept already written in text read and shared by a community. The metonymic thinking of Dali coagulates in a metaphor and become understandable and sharable.

The interactions between metaphors and metonymies has been described in Lacan as a way the unconscious forms. In particular Lacan links these to linguistic concepts to show how sexual drive is translated into a linguistic mechanisms. In the seminar La Relation d’Objet he reads the clinical case of the little Hans, a young phobic boy who was anxious to cross the threshold of his parents’ house because he feared horses who wanted to bite him outside the house. Lacan outlines the linguistic and passages the little Hans made during the therapy with Freud. The anxiety of the boy rose when he started to discover masturbation and in parallel he started to add the metonymic word penis in all his discourses. Furthermore he started to link sexuality to the images of animals: mother was the small giraffe and the father was the big giraffe. Freud used to give instructions to the boy and also his parents and each time after the “orders” of the therapist the little boy started to see less threatening horses and to call the therapist as someone

related to God. The boy tried to make sense of his sexuality by attaching metonymically the penis to images of animals who were signified by Freud (he suggested Hans father to tell the boy: I am going out with the giraffe now and told the boy that he knew he would have loved his mother one day and hence had troubles with his father). Lacan noticed that boy endowed with the metonymia of the penis all the imaginary animals used to describe the family relationships and his fears. These animals were explained, justified, signified by Freud who created the basis for a symbolic understanding of the images. Since then the phobias of Hans started to disappear.

Metonymies and metaphors are linked both in the discourse of Hans and of Salvador Dali but the curious difference is that the discourse of the painter is very dense in metonymies and the discourse of Hans is full of metaphors. Nonetheless the painter shares with the boy the same “obsession” and interest for the sexual side of life: *“I caught a taxi and I asked the driver: do you know any good brothels? I haven’t tried them all but I have visited an impressive number and I loved some of them beyond measure”* ... (Neret, 2000).

What happens when libido can not be socialised? It may turn into a metonymic discourse that can not be understood such as the one of the president Schreber but it may also be arrested into metaphors. This brings the problem back to Hans and Dali; the thinking mechanism of Hans was constantly bent over metaphors as images which were then made signified by Freud (“the mother is the big giraffe”, “you will fall in love with your mother and have problems with your father”) but the Dalinian mechanism is more metonymical. What happens in this case?

Conversely what happens in the discourse of Dali is a process of conceptual blend (Coulson and Oakley, 2003) *“Holyoak & Thagard argue that metonymy’s intrusion into metaphoric language places metaphor outside the explanatory bounds of a theory of analogy”*. If in the neurotic Hans metonymia is used to connect together the “family animals” in the psychotic master of surrealism it is used to create milky monsters which are the representation of the fertility of God according to St Augustin. If God is a mountain of milk then a melting camembert becomes a metonymia of a metaphor (again, an image charge with symbolic meaning). Dali is able to communicate (share meaningful concepts behind the “bizarre”) thanks to this conceptual blend but his discourse always stops on himself and he finally remarks “in parenthesis, St Augustin was a great paranoid!”

If Hans metonymia blurs into a metaphorical representation of the animal family in Dali it leads to two outcomes: creation and talking about himself. Narcissism has something in common with a metaphor in the sense that both expose the subject to a reading from the other.

In the Sinthome Lacan shows the link between metonymia and narcissism or between metonymia and the metaphore of the Hero:

“Il faut bien que vous réalisiez que ce que je vous ai dit des rapports de l’homme à son corps, qui tient tout entier à ce que je vous ai dit : dans le fait que l’homme dit que le corps, son corps, il l’a. Déjà à dire son, c’est dire que il le possède, qu’il le possède comme un meuble, bien entendu... Parce que ce qu’il nous explique dans quelque chose qui concerne précisément l’ego, à savoir le Lust-Ich, c’est qu’il y a une étape de narcissisme primaire. Et que ce narcissisme primaire se caractérise de ceci, non pas qu’il n’y ait pas de sujet, mais qu’il n’y a pas de rapport de l’intérieur à l’extérieur...”

D’abord, je voudrais le signaler à propos de l’Épiphanie : ce que l’on appelle l’Épiphanie, ça signifie bien des tas de choses, au fond assez diverses. Il y a un endroit seulement où JOYCE l’a défini, c’est dans le Portrait de l’Artiste, dans le — ça y est ! — [lapsus] dans Stephen Hero, Stephen le Héros. Mais comment ça vient tout ça ? Ça vient à la suite, ça vient dans un texte, qui en deux pages, nous fait passer d’un dialogue avec la mère, dans lequel la mère fait reproche à Stephen de son incroyance, en invoquant - qui donc ? - les prêtres. En disant : les prêtres... les prêtres... les prêtres... Et Stephen, à la fois rompt avec elle sur ce plan-là, et d’un autre côté contourne le problème, se met à évoquer justement, glisse au rapport femme-prêtre, glisse ensuite vers la bien-aimée, et tout d’un coup, se met à dire... j’ai pas le texte ici malheureusement, parce que j’avais pas pensé l’invoquer, mais enfin vous le retrouverez assez facilement dans Stephen Hero, si ça vous intéresse ...il dit tout de suite après... un spectacle de Dublin... Ah oui, c’est ça : « Il se met à errer dans les rues, et un spectacle de Dublin émeut suffisamment sa sensibilité pour lui faire composer un poème. » C’est tout à fait lisible dans JOYCE que l’épiphanie, c’est là ce qui fait que grâce à la faute, inconscient et Réel se nouent. Il est facile en effet, d’imaginer que l’imaginaire foutra le camp, foutra le camp par ici, si l’inconscient, comme c’est le cas, le permet. Et il le permet incontestablement.”

Three important things come up so far metonymic thinking or primary processes have a relationship with libido (it is the very libido at the level of the discourse), libido can be then translated into metaphorical thinking when the subject has access to a prior meaning which can structure reality, if the subject can not translate metonymia into metaphors it can compensate through other typologies of images invested with a symbolic meaning such as the narcissistic ones.

The Lacanian reading of Narcissism is an advancement of the Freudian concept in the sense that it links the imaginary component to the symbolic one.

To put it simply Lacan links the objectal side of narcissism to the a symbolic one: Joyce and Dali stop with their metonymical nonsense (a very blurred sense if I have to be precise) because they want to be recognized. They show their face in the match of life, their narcissism is objectal and their image is the very narcissistic object: “I am the best painter of my generation”, “Diary of a genius”, “Portrait of THE artist”, “Stephen Hero”.

In order to put his face, to describe himself Dali use a series of metonymical analogies: I am paranoid because my family wants to food poison me! I paint melting monsters! I paint cheese monsters. I a mystic! St Augustin is a mystic and according to him God is milk! See I am not that paranoid then! By the way St Augustin was a great paranoid because he systematize the idea of God.

We are finally able to understand Dali and Joyce because they use a metonymic thinking to create things for which they get recognized. Narcissism as an imaginary object (the best painter, the writer) links the metonymic and discourse of the subject with the society.

The ego of Dali an Joyce is not the a grandiose ego detached from the reality principle but it's an ego that tries to conform to society thanks through the use of imaginary objects. The two artist are indeed bizarre and not easy to be understood (here is where their ego lies, where the secondary narcissism lies; not in the form of grandiosity but rather in the nonsensical form) but their whole life effort is dedicated to be recognized, to attach their secondary narcissism to objects for which they can be recognized such as their masterpieces.

As pointed out at the beginning of this article expatriates may suffer for the disruption of their ego (due to cultural distance, language distance or to other organizational factors) and hence try to compensate through efforts aiming to an objectal recognition.

Symbolic primary narcissism and expatriation

The interviews were semi-structured and the interviewees were asked very generally to talk about their experience and were approached with a request for an interview for a research in psychology or psychoanalysis. The interviews range from 30 minutes to 1 hour and the expatriate population is very diverse and include young professionals, professionals in career

transition, executives and a ceo, self-initiated expatriates, corporate expatriates, repatriates and immigrants (expatriates who left their country for economical reasons).

The link between the disruption of the secondary narcissism (ego) and the investment on objects is quite easy to spot among many of the people whom I have talked to. The objects are often imaginary and revolves around the concept of career but they are also real and tangible such as a baby.

The young manager links associates her experience as an intern who does not count to the fact that she is now an ambitious manager recognized by the size of her budget.

-What about the beginning of your career?

-Yes this is a good question, when you are an intern you do not count, you do not scare anyone. I like to advance, I am quite ambitious. In France the size of the team and the budget, that's how you position yourself in the organization, I am a relatively young manager

A self-initiated young professional cannot consider himself as successful but quickly tries to restore his ego by saying that his job is well respected

-It's an experience (expatriation) that changes you mentally and professionally

-Mentally?

-As long as you work in Italy you think you are a successful man but when you live abroad you realise it is all relative. But I have to say that that my job is a very well respected one even if I know some colleagues here who would have collected tomatoes in Italy.

A self-initiated expatriate who moved to from France to an emerging country as an intern linked her impossibility to fit within the culture with her ambition. It seems that her job was not enough to compensate for the disruption of her ego:

-It was a culturally poor environment, I was surrounded by people who did not ask themselves any questions

-And now?

-Culturally I can't say it is an experience I regret but professionally it was a mistake. I was more ambitious

A corporate repatriate points out how her colleagues are different from her and how she feel as an alien while deciding to invest her energies over her baby as a project:

-Sometimes they (my new colleagues) think that I am crazy, I am an alien. Me and my husband have underestimated how much we changed over the years..

-In US there are more career opportunities but on the other hand there are many lonely people

-Which were the main challenges you had to face during repatriation?

-The approach to work. I send an email for a kindergarten and you get an answer after three days.

-Other things related to work?

-Here there are many people who have always worked in this company so they are not stimulated to improve and change.

-Have you ever considered to change company?

-I have a baby now so I was looking for part-time jobs

-So between family and career you say I choose family

-Yes, but ten years ago I would have never thought my career would become of secondary importance. I think the human being needs to have a project in which to invest. So my daughter has become the project of my life. I don't know why but I know this has been the outcome of 10 years of work.

An entrepreneur moved to a very different country suddenly connects her business with the fact that she can not spend much time with friends:

-at the beginning did you have any friends who could speak your language?

-yes I met some friends but I have my company so I spend my time there. When you have your own business you don't have much time for other things.

A young professional “compensate” the souvenir of his loneliness with his internationally renowned job:

-when I moved here competition among students was very high. You see that some students leave you apart because they think they are the best. So I have learnt to be more aggressive and dynamic

-do you think this environment is more challenging?

-Yes since you realize that you are prepared and your peers succeed and you too, moreover London is a very desired place financially speaking. Many people try to get here, it's not Milan. Salaries has been reduced and life is hard but I am happy to work for an internationally renowned bank.

A professional repatriate recall her experience after many years of foreign assignments and shifted her career object when the HR professional destroys her ego:

-when I came back to my country I tried to search for a new job but It was difficult since I was absent for many years and I tried with a headhunter who told me: do you really want to work at your age? And this hit me so much that I decided to change my career.

-in France experience is not considered, what matters is your education and your age even after many year of working experience

A self-initiated professional links her uncaring motherland with the important job she now has:

- if you are a foreigner you are more likely to dealing with important people and even if I am the youngest one I am much more important than I would be in my country. Detaching from your country gives you the chance to get out from the small village mentality where rivalry and envy reign. Here, the consideration they give you as a person is minimal if compared to the importance you have as a professional. Language barrier insulates you from this lousiness, so I am happy to work for a company in which I have no compatriots.

Another self-initiated expatriate offset racism she suffered by recalling the “top position” she got

-From normal barista I became store manager which is top level for this industry and I dealt with many things that allowed me to move on and find a better job.

-So you didn't like to stay in that company?

-You still have to deal with customers..

-So you were dealing with customers and now you are dealing with students..

-Students (international students) have real problems but locals customer feel entitled to treat you with no respect because you are a foreigner, they really play this game a lot of time to show this is their country.

A young repatriate professional said that he used to share a house with people he barely knew and he could not be promoted to a managerial position because he was a foreigner. Later in a non-recorded interview he even specified he was not even granted a business card.

Conclusions

After having revolved around the dimension of the other, the discourse of global workers rotates around the dimension of a primary narcissism. That means around an objectal narcissism. In particular the narcissistic investment intertwines a symbolic form (the investment is socially acceptable, even desirable) with a real object such as the or with imaginary elements such as work or career: the Lacanian concept of *Sinthome* (the subject is not recognized for what he/she is but for the socially acceptable qualities he/she has). These elements are not solely imaginary because the subject is recognized by the other by his job or career. From this point of view primary narcissism compensates the lack of the symbolic other.

Other expatriates do not show this pattern or treat the issue differently, for example a young professional said “ I don’t know how to make friends, if you know how to do it please write a book!” and replied, when asked how she coped with the situation, by saying “ I work-out!”. Not everyone compensate the ego disruption through an objectal shift and (almost) accept life as it is.

This attempt tries to describe how the career object acts as a backbone for people who work under turbulent conditions which reduce the extent to which the subject can be recognized by the other. Further research could then investigate how the skills and competences of global workers may become a source of resilience: can more skilled or experienced workers cope better with transitions from an affective point of view? Furthermore to what extent the investment on the object career is a source of resilience rather than a source of burn-out? What is the role of the organizations in sustaining practices that could help reducing affective demands (coaching, the number of languages spoken within the company, cultural training, etc..)? Are there any expatriates who are more or less able than others to invest affectivity into people rather than into objects?

Affectivity, according to Lacan, is a matter of bags and ropes. In other words affectivity flows from one dimension to another (subjects, objects, thoughts, identities, etc) and when the homeostatic equilibrium is broken the subject tries to find a new one. Investing into socially

desirable objects may be a way to build a useful backbone for global workers. Whether symbolic objects may be an effective way to cope with “affective turbulences” is still to be investigated.

REFERENCES

Arnaud, G. (2012). The contribution of psychoanalysis to organization studies and management: An overview. *Organization studies*, 33(9): 1121-1135 .

Baruch, Y., & Vardi, Y. (2016). A Fresh Look at the Dark Side of Contemporary Careers: Toward a Realistic Discourse. *British Journal of Management*, 27: 355–372.

Brannen, M-Y. (2004). When Mickey loses face: Recontextualisation, semantic fit, and the semiotics of foreignness. *Academy of management review*, 29(4): 593-616.

Brewster, C., Bonache, J., Cerdin, J.L., & Suutari, V. (2014). Exploring expatriate outcomes. *The international journal of human resource management*, 25(14): 1921-1937.

Caligiuri, P. Developing global leaders. (2006). *Human Resource Management Review*, 16: 219-228

Cerdin, J.L, & Dubouloy, M. (2004). Expatriation as a maturation opportunity: a psychoanalytical approach based on ‘Copy and Paste. *Human Relations*, 57(8): 957-981.

Chidlow, A., Plakoyiannaki, E. and Welch, C. (2014). Translation in cross-language international business research: Beyond equivalence. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 45(5): 562-582.

Dali, 50 segreti magici per dipingere, La Feltrinelli, 2004, translated by M. Martignoni

Dali, Diary of a Genius

Dali, The secret life of Salvador Dali, 1993, Dover publications

(1) Dali, Interviews:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuMKFQ1tObk&lc=UgjNUwUAVb7c23gCoAEC>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uI9NeMdCUGE>

Ferrerira, Dali-Lacan la rencontre: ce que la psychanalyse doit au penitre, 2003, Editions L’Harmattan

De Masi, Slotkin; Vulnerability to Psychosis: A Psychoanalytic Study of the Nature and Therapy of the Psychotic State, 2009, Karnak

De Rick, A., Vanheule, S., Verhaeghe, P. (2009). Alcohol Addiction and the Attachment System: An Empirical Study of Attachment Style, Alexithymia, and Psychiatric Disorders in Alcoholic Inpatients. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 44(99)–114.

Fotaki, M., Long, S., & Schwartz. (2012). What can psychoanalysis offer organization studies today? Taking stock of current developments and thinking about future directions. *Organization studies*, 33(9): 1105-1120

Freud, On Narcissism an Introduction, 2013, Read Books Ltd.

Gilles Néret, Dalì, 2000, Taschen

Glasze, G. (2006). Segregation and seclusion: the case of compounds for western expatriates in Saudi Arabia. *GeoJournal*, 83-88.

Harzing, A.W. (2010). Babel in Business: The Language Barrier and its solutions in the Hq-Subsidiary Relationship. *Journal of World Business*, 46(3): 279-287.

Harzing, A.W. (2007). The Language Barrier and its Implications for HQ-Subsidiary Relationship. *Cross-cultural Management: An International Journal*, 15(1): 49 - 61.

Hemingway, E. 1926. The sun also rises. *New York: Grosset & Dunlap*.

Hoedemaekers, C. and Keegan, A. (2010) ‘Performance pinned down: Studying subjectivity and the language of performance’, *Organization Studies* 31(8): 1021-1044.

Hofstede, G., & Bond, M.H. 1988. The Confucius Connection: From Cultural Roots To Economic Growth. *Organizational dynamics*. 16(4): 5-21.

IPIECA Report (2013). Managing psychosocial risks on expatriation in the oil and gas industry. *OGP Report number 495*.

Jones, S. (2000). Medical aspects of expatriate health: health threats. *Occupational medicine*, 50(8): 572-578.

Kets de Vries, M. (1995). Life and death in the executive fast lane. *San Francisco: Jossey-Bass*.

Kets de Vries, M. (2004). Organizations on the Couch: A Clinical Perspective on Organizational Dynamics. *European Management Journal*, 22(2):183-200.

Kraimer, M., Bolino, M., & Mead, B., (2016). Themes in Expatriate and Repatriate Research over Four Decades: What Do We Know and What Do We Still Need to Learn? *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, (3): 83-109.

Lacan, J. (1932). De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité. *Paris: Seuil*.

Lacan, J. (1955-56). Book III, Les psychoses. *Paris: Seuil*.

Lacan, J. (1956-57). Book IV, La relation d'objet. *Paris: Seuil*.

Lacan, J. (1959). Book VI, Le désir. *Paris: Seuil*

Lacan, J. (1959-60). Book VII, L'éthique de la psychanalyse. *Paris: Seuil*

Lacan, J. (1973-1974). Book XXI. Les non-dupes errent. *Unpublished*.

Lacan, J. (1975-1976). Book XXIII, Le Sinthome. *Paris: Seuil*.

Lauring, J. and Selmer, J. (2010). The supportive expatriate spouse: an ethnographic study of spouse involvement in expatriates careers. *International business review*, 59-69

Marcos, L.R. (1976). Bilinguals in psychotherapy: Language as an emotional barrier. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 30(4): 552-560

Meunier, Y. (2007). Globalization Health Challenges for Multinational Corporations. *Journal of International Business and Law*, 6(1).

Pascoe, R. (2009). Substance abuse in expatriate life. *Escape from America magazine*.

Peltokorpi, V. (2010). Intercultural communication in foreign subsidiaries: The influence of expatriates' language and cultural competencies. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 26(2): 176-188.

Recalcati, *Incontrare l'assenza*, 2016, Asmepa edizioni

Recalcati, *Elogio dell'inconscio*, 2007, Mondadori

Recalcati, *Di Ciaccia, Jacques Lacan*, 2000, Mondadori

Recalcati, *Il vuoto centrale*, 2016, Poiesis editrice

Recalcati, Il vuoto e il resto, 2013, Mimesis Edizioni

Recalcati, Melanconia e creazione in Vincent Van Gogh, 2014, Bollati Boringhieri

Recalcati, I tabù del mondo, 2017, Einaudi

Recalcati, Un cammino nella psicoanalisi, 2016, Mimesis Edizioni

Recalcati, Le complexe de télémaque, 2015, Odile Jacob

Schumann, J.H. (1976). Second language acquisition: the pidginization hypothesis. *Language learning*, 26(2): 391-408

Selmer, J. and Luring, J. (2015). Host country language ability and expatriate adjustment: the moderating effect of language difficulty. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(3): 401-420.

Selmer, J. (2006). Language ability and adjustment: Western Expatriates in China. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 48(3): 347-368.

Shaffer, M.A., Kraimer, M.L., Chen, Y.P., & Bolino, M.C. (2012). Choices, Challenges, and Career Consequences of Global Work Experiences: A Review and Future Agenda. *Journal of Management*, 38(4): 1282-1327.

Steyaert, C., Ostendorp, A. and Gaibrois, C. (2011). Multilingual organizations as 'linguascapes': Negotiating the position of English through discursive practices. *Journal of World Business*, 46: 270-278

Tenzer, H., Pudelko M., Harzing, A.W. (2013). The Impact of Language Barriers on Trust Formation in Multinational Teams. *Journal of international business studies*. 45,(5) : 508–535

Valantin, C. (2015). Lifestyle, sleep quality and mental health of Hong Kong expatriates. *PhD thesis, Alliant International University*.

Verhaeghe, P. (1995). From impossibility to inability: Lacan's theory on the four discourses'. *The Letter: Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*, (3): 91-108.

Zhang, L.E. and Peltokorpi, V. (2015). Multifaceted effects of host country language proficiency in expatriate cross-cultural adjustments: a qualitative study in China, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*