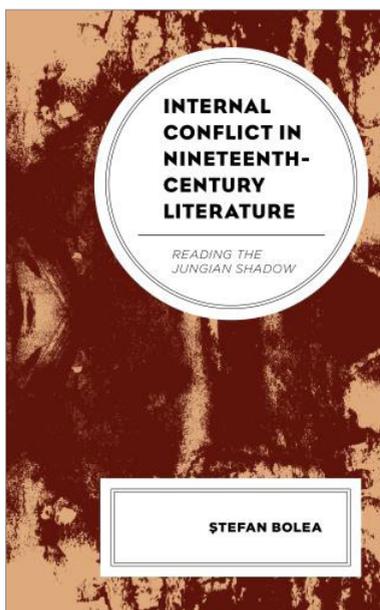


The Philosopher and the Shadow



Review of:

Bolea, Ștefan. *Internal Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Literature. Reading the Jungian Shadow*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020.

Ștefan Bolea's first book in English (*Internal Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Literature. Reading the Jungian Shadow*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020) is based on his second PhD thesis, supervised by Corin Braga. Through an interdisciplinary approach, *Internal Conflict* aims to investigate the motif of the shadow in Romantic and post-Romantic literature, starting with the psychological meaning of this concept (Carl Gustav Jung)—the theoretical framework of the study—and also taking into account the philosophical undertones of the term, discernible in Nietzsche's *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. The genesis of this research is disclosed by Ștefan Bolea in an interview taken in 2019 by Andra Rotaru for the German–Romanian blog *DLite* (“Trăim într-o cultură a suprafeței”/“We live in a culture of the surface”). The discussion is revealing for the personal choice of the subject matter:

In 2012 I was contemplating doing a PhD on Jung, in order to have the chance to study

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him for a long period. I was especially interested in the archetypes: I was reading one night about the “shadow” and I had a sort of tiny revelation when I found out that the “shadow” differs from “anima,” having the same gender as the psychological subject. This opened up a huge mental territory for me: it was taking me in the regions of the double and the demonic, two of my obsessions. I am a conflictual individual and I often lose the fight with myself. Furthermore, I am extremely shadowy. Therefore, my thesis and my book have been therapeutical for me: I have tried to withdraw some of my projections and to accept part of my shadowy content. I have chosen to study *the shadow in literature* because, in case one is not a cocky philosopher, one realizes that poets and novelists *know* at an intuitive level what philosophers later “discover.”

We can also see from the interview that the author has chosen psychoanalytical phenomenology as his method of investigation. Moreover, the researcher from Cluj-Napoca confessed his interwar nostalgia for the *philosophy of literature*: “It’s a shame that there is no real solidarity between those who study philosophy and those who study literature, because, in fact, they are related disciplines, streams of the same river...” (“Trăim într-o cultură a suprafeței”/“We live in a culture of the surface”).

As one would expect, the book is structured in three parts, which correspond to the three investigated research fields—psychology, literature, philosophy—, followed by six appendixes, giving a certain depth and consistency to the whole argument.

The first part is dedicated to the psychological analysis of the “shadow” archetype. Although Nietzsche had, two decades earlier, the intuition of the proto-psychoanalytical shadow (in his *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, published in 1880), and could be considered an important precursor of psychoanalytical terms—such as self, persona, anima, id, repressions, censorship and so on—, the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung is the first author who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, thoroughly defined the concept of the “shadow” in his analytic psychology. Considered as a Jungian archetype, the shadow is the counterpart of the social archetype (named by Jung with a concept of Greek etymology—*persona*), and includes the fears, the obsessions and the embarrassing truths hidden from the sunlit part of the consciousness. From this perspective, the shadow became known in popular culture as *the dark side of the psyche*. Indeed, facing our own darkness, or the descent into our hell, may be seen as a necessary step of the process of individuation. Bolea distinguishes between the personal and archetypal (or transpersonal) shadow: “If the personal shadow can be seen as the first obstacle we encounter on the road to individuation, the transpersonal shadow has a more deconstructive or degenerative feature, leading to madness, psychosis, death, or suicide. Its archetypal feature can be compared to a nuclear bomb” (20).

In an inspired fashion, the second theoretical chapter of the book investigates the relationships between the Jungian shadow, the double and the demonic. Bolea argues that

the double “cannot exist without the previous expansion of the ego. If we consider the relationship between the ego and the non-ego, we can state a law of the genesis of the double: ‘Where there is I, there will always be double’; with the corollary: ‘Where there is no I, there is nothing.’” (29). Furthermore, there

is an intimate connection between duality and demonism. The nature of the double is to be demonic: for instance, the number 2 signifies dissociation, as the number 1 suggests the perfect identity of God... The duality (afterward plurality) of the ego is suggested by the snake from Genesis, who declines the noun “God” at plural... If classical identity is modeled on the divine subjectivity, the death of God is in agreement with the disappearance of a unitary, self-centred subject. (35)

The part of literary analysis, dedicated to Romantic and post-Romantic fiction, starts with E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Devil’s Elixirs*, which operates with the disjunction between the ego and the shadow (“the second I”), and goes on with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, where the motif of the shadow is discussed in the context of Romantic solitude: “The solipsistic feeling of being ‘alone in the world,’ of being ‘disjointed’ from the *In-der-Welt-Sein*, transforms one into a sort of monster, a being without contemporaries, removed from society” (56). Already from the chapter dedicated to E. A. Poe’s “William Wilson,” Ștefan Bolea creates the concept of “the shadow of the shadow,” in order to capture the dynamics between the “classical” shadow and the more post-modern super-shadow. Dostoyevsky’s *Double* is read through the tension between the I and the not-I and the Freudian theory of paranoia: the main character of the novel, Golyadkin “conceives himself as a sincere man in an insincere world, suffering from the romantic Hyperion complex, which manifests itself through separation, differentiation, and isolation” (77). Moreover, he anticipates Kafka’s famous Gregor Samsa: “Golyadkin was ‘crushed’ like a Kafkian bug, for which society has nothing but contempt and loathing” (78). Reading R. L. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the author insists on the episodes of scission and identification with the shadow, reflecting that “Hyde’s adventure discloses the truth that there are inside us territories as dark as the ninth circle of hell. Both Judas and the Lord of Lies appreciate and feed from our inferiority” (98). Taking into account Cioran’s conception of the not-man (man becomes not-man when he is different from himself), Ștefan Bolea sees Maupassant’s “The Horla” as an illustration of Nietzsche’s post-Darwinian evolutionism: the shadow is seen here as a reflection of the not-man, being an obstacle and standing “between the mirror and the ego” (104). Last but not least, we receive a new key of interpretation of Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* through the idea of the fall, theorized by Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety*: “The nihilism of his characters is only a mask of an Eden complex: their sophisticated freedom hides an infantile nostalgia for nonage. Their duality reproduces the quartering of their author, torn between the cult of beauty and the worship of ‘Adam-like’ purity” (119).

In the same line of argument, many works from the twentieth century are mentioned or quoted throughout the book. The dichotomy ego/shadow from the Romantic age of European culture is exemplified with various references, such as Meyrink's *Golem*, Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, Klaus Mann's *Mephisto* or Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*. It clearly shows that the theme also reverberated in the following centuries.

In the final chapter, dedicated to the philosophical shadow in Nietzsche's works, Ștefan Bolea convincingly identifies the avatars of Zarathustra's shadow (the dwarf, the jester, the soothsayer, the last pope, the ugliest man), seeing the German philosopher's trajectory as that of a devotee of the transcendence of the nihilistic "shadow" in pursuit of anti-nihilism: "I am ... that shadow all things cast whenever the sunlight ... falls upon them" (139), writes Nietzsche, thus anticipating the Jungian vision of the inner development of an individual. Analyzing Nietzsche's soothsayer, Bolea sees an inner split in the personality and philosophy of the German philosopher: "Schopenhauer is a Nietzschean sub-personality, who, along *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, has a significant degree of autonomy: we could divide Nietzsche into Nietzsche 1/Schopenhauer and Nietzsche 2/Zarathustra-Dionysus (a split similar to that between William Wilson 1 and 2, or between Jekyll and Hyde)" (131). In his discussion of atheism related to his interpretation of the last pope, the author makes an interesting distinction between *belief* and *belief in belief*: "Because the entire Platonic level of transcendence disappears, the idea of immortality vanishes: that is why the church has become a tumulus. If the priest no longer believes, being an atheist like the Great Inquisitor, the simple man does not believe: he only believes he believes" (133).

The book is followed by six appendixes. The second appendix contains an interesting chronology of nineteenth century Romantic and post-Romantic works that deal with the shadow. The third and fourth appendixes offer a systematization of Jungian psychology: the individuation from persona to self, and the moments of the shadow. The fifth appendix contains a note on the history of archetypology. The first appendix ("Year Zero: The Avant-garde of the Avant-garde") claims that the year 1888 may be considered a turning point in the "cultural history of the world" and a sort of (re)birth of modernity: "a landmark in the confrontation between old and new, between the feeling of exhaustion and the presentiment of avant-garde" (149). Bolea conceives 1888 as a "ground zero," reading the final pages of Nietzsche's *Antichrist* and referring to ideas from works published by *fin de siècle* poets, philosophers and scientists, such as Charles Swinburne, Lautréamont, Mihai Eminescu, George Moore, William James, G. C. Lichtenberg, Ernst Mach and others. The first part of the appendix ("The End of the I") refers to the deconstruction of the classical unitary ego:

The death of the unitary I prepares the way for the Doppelgänger: when I disappear as myself, I can survive as another to myself. The other me is able to do things I cannot allow myself to be aware of. My un-lived and repressed life finds its force of expression in my double. Lichtenberg's and Rimbaud's deconstructions of

the Cartesian *cogito* (“it thinks = it lightnings,” “I think = I am thought”) go against the traditionally rationalistic orientation of the Western culture. (150)

In the second and third parts of the appendix, Bolea discusses the death of God and “the end of all things” (154), starting from the post-Schopenhauerian project of universal death.

The sixth and final appendix deserves special praise for its novelty. “The Shadow in Music” takes into account the visual content of music and the fact that death and madness are two notions that accompany the shadow. Ștefan Bolea discusses pieces by Schumann, Mozart and Beethoven. For instance, in his famous *Funeral March*, Chopin “syncs with the shadow of death, which consumes souls from the beginning of time, symbolically allying himself with the supreme executioner to desensitize his melancholic spirit, to die easier” (180). Beethoven’s late masterpiece, the *Great Fugue* is seen as “the end of the end and the beginning of musical deprogramming. No more alterity, no more intersubjectivity: it is almost as if we were watching the depth of hell from a submarine or if we visited the basement of mental hospital where incurable patients are isolated” (182).

The originality of the subject, the accurate and fine interdisciplinary analysis and the systematic and vast bibliography turn *Internal Conflict* into an impressive book. However, beyond the academic value of the study, one seems to hear resonating in the subtext, throughout the whole book, the Jungian principle according to which “there is no development unless the shadow is accepted.”