

Psychoanalysis and the Evolution of Psychological Research Represented in Films

Kristen C. Ryan

University of South Carolina Aiken

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Jeremy Culler

Psychology and art are interdisciplinary fields that affect almost every aspect of daily life. The core development of both fields traces back thousands of years. In recent centuries, they have become more connected. This is most evident during the 20th century, when artists begin to interpret the theories in their works. The films in this study reflect two periods of research: developmental and applied. Despite the differences, both periods contain portions of psychoanalytic theory to connect them. This study analyzes symbols and theory elements in animated psychodramas such as *Streets of Crocodiles* and *The Periwig Maker*. It creates a dialogue between the two fields in a set context; showing that as psychological research changes, artists, specifically film makers, reflect the transition in their approach to style and narrative.

Psychology focused primarily on development and information processing from the 1800-1990ⁱ. Psychologists were interested in how the mind interpreted and stored information throughout life. The beginning of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory developed from 1885-1895ⁱⁱ. By 1923, most of his theory was completed with his publication of *The Ego and the Id*.ⁱⁱⁱ Freud emphasized a conflict between unconscious thoughts. The base of his theories was not limited to psychology. Other fields were also interested in dreams and the unconscious. Surrealism was an artistic movement, which peaked in the 1920s, that focused on irrational and dream-like thought. Picasso, Dali, and Giorgio de Chirico are prominent painters of the style. Surrealism was not limited to paintings. It expanded into all artistic mediums such as literature and film. Jan Švankmajer and the Quay Brothers were greatly influenced by this movement in the 1980s. They incorporate style and theory to create captivating films on development.

Švankmajer produced a film, *Alice*, that explored the imagination of a small child. Dreams and make-believe are similar. Neither are bound by the limits of reality and allow one to express unconscious or suppressed desires. Freud stated dreams are "what claimed our attention in the day."^{iv} Role playing games are influenced by these same scenarios. *Alice* is influenced by the state of Czechoslovakia in the 1980s. In one scene, the background is a mash up of broken stone, wood, buckets, barrels, and a discarded wine rack. It is a room of trash. It may not even be a real room as there is a drain behind the skull creature. A communistic government with limited trade created an economic problem for citizens. People lost jobs and lived in poverty. Seeing broken roads or floors, heaps of disheveled home supplies, and other trash in alley ways would not have been uncommon. The setting draws on the reality of Alice's life. It is comparable to a child running around a house acting out an imaginary tale. They see a majestic landscape and the observer sees plain, normal furniture. *Alice's* characters further this comparison. The rabbit is dirty fabric stuffed with sawdust. "The White Rabbit is a stuffed rabbit that leaks sawdust meaning, he constantly has to eat more."^v The rabbit could represent a constant state of hunger as families live on few, small meals. The bone creatures are just that, bones. A fish skeleton a cat would find in the trash and a skull maybe from a horse or cow with simple hats and googly eyes added. These characters are what a parent or child would make when they have nothing else. They are not logical antagonists. Švankmajer uses her secret desires for real friends to create an eerie scene for viewers.

Alice is a lonely girl suffering through circumstances she does not fully understand. She reflects Erikson's stage theory^{vi}. She is trying to fit into the world but is meeting resistance. It is through abstract play that she can process and overcome the stage conflict^{vii}. Adult supervision never appears in the film. Alice is alone with no familiar support. She is growing up in a difficult world with no one to communicate with. She has only her toys to fulfill her need for companionship. Her toys remove the immediate anxiety of her circumstances and allow her to process potential government altercations^{viii}. Alternatively, Alice's moment of imprisonment is

the moment she overcomes a feeling of inferiority. Her socioeconomic status was a point of distress as it put her below peers and authority. Breaking out of the porcelain doll solidified her sense of self. Alice sees herself as more than her status. She focuses on her skills; fulfilling Erikson's theory by gaining confidence. Confidence that allows her to escape the craziness of her make-believe world.

The Quay brothers take a different approach to development and their psychological approach. The brothers were heavily influenced by the work of Švankmajer and all fields of academia^{ix}. Psychology and pathology are the main contributors to their works^x. The Quay brothers examine stages of human thought and experience through the animation of puppets^{xi}. *Streets of Crocodiles* explores an alternative view to development. Development is not experienced gradually, but all at once. The protagonist is connected to a string throughout the film. It is by completing a journey through town that he is able to gain freedom expressed by cutting his string. Along the way, he is shown different stages of awareness. The Quay brothers include innocent children's games, voyeurism, suggestive erotica, and the physical deconstruction of the protagonist. The protagonist becomes aware of the individual life stages, from childhood to puberty and adult, during one experience. Critics describe the film as a combination of poetry, imagination, and childhood^{xii}. Poetry referring more to poetical use of tropes and polysemy. Childhood is the interesting term. The protagonist is childlike in his desire to absorb the new information before him. He looks and touches everything.

However, this quality causes discomfort to the viewer when confronted by the sexual material in the film. Phallic objects, or representatives such as screws and pins, and images are displayed in many scenes and placed on walls. Meat is used to symbolize the flesh of man^{xiii}. In one scene, a pair of kidneys are laid on a table. Behind the table is a phallic image. The kidneys are being caressed by the tailor and pierced with pins. It is a highly suggestive image conveying the primal instincts of human beings^{xiv}. Following scenes also allude to female and male genitalia, but the sequence prior to the kidneys offers some understanding.

The protagonist enters a tailor's shop. He is grabbed by the staff and disassembled. The tailor places a liver on the table as the fabric for the reconstruction^{xv}. The assistants replace the protagonist's head with a doll face matching their own. The man's identity has been replaced. This moment defines a metamorphosis in development. The screws and bodies meant nothing to him until now. The man is intimately aware of how people view his fertility and the importance the small society placed on intercourse^{xvi}. The transition from child to adult is quick. The viewer does not have enough time to grasp a transition has occurred when confronted by the explicit imagery. It is this fact that causes an uncanny feeling. The uncanny attribute is usually ascribed to the mannerisms of the puppets^{xvii}. However, there is a culturally taboo to young children being exposed to suggestive material. Even at puberty, adults try to limit it. The viewer has a persecution of the protagonist as a child who then walks into the film's equivalent of a brothel. Adults are not always ready to accept that adolescents are at a point to experience these images. Freud's theories on repression and the uncanny take root here. Freud viewed the uncanny as a disruption in one's defense mechanisms. He described as an "old established [concept] in the mind which has become alienated through the process of repression."^{xviii} An uncanny experience is one that causes a dissonance in what one says they believe and the true, suppressed belief. In *Streets of Crocodiles*, the viewer believes the young protagonist should not be exposed to explicit material. However, the viewer also knows 10-13 year old adolescents are viewing this material. It is a normal stage that the viewer could have engaged in at that age. It is a hypocritical stance which causes the viewer to suppress their opinions as they grow older. Unlike

Švankmajer, the Quay brothers used Freud's theories to create an experience for the audience instead of limiting it to the puppets themselves.

The late '90s and early 2000s experienced a transition in psychology. Research shifted from basic to applied studies as psychologists realized disorders needed better treatments^{xx}. Animators interpreted this shift in their own mediums. Theories that were alluded to were now the theme of case study styled stories. *The Periwig Maker*, directed by Steffen Schäffler, and *Madame Tutli-Putli*, directed by Maciek Szczerbowski and Chris Lavis, are examples of films showing the influence of this transition and other literary context.

The Periwig Maker was released in 1999 and shows a man suffering from guilt induced madness during the Black Plague of 1665. Schäffler drew inspiration from Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* written in 1722. The film is narrated by the protagonist, the town wig maker, but from the perspective of his diary entries. The protagonist watches as the girl across the street loses her mother to the plague and slowly succumbs to the illness herself. The protagonist attempts to distance himself from the plague and the girl through various defense mechanisms^{xx}. Though he is a wigmaker, the protagonist is highly interested in science and philosophy. Without sound effects or visuals from other characters, one would assume this was an academic description of the plague instead of someone living through it. He is monotone. He lacks emotion. During the removal of the mother's body, he only stares and thinks about another way to purify the air in his house. There is no sympathy for the girl who is now an orphan and being mistreated in the road. The wigmaker falls prey to the mechanism of intellectualism and denial. He believes that his scientific methods will keep him healthy^{xxi}. Charcoal will purify the air granting him the safety he does not find in a higher power. He avoids human emotion by immersing himself in ponderings about science and God's role in the plague^{xxii}. The church presents the plague as a God's wrath. Wicked acts have cause a disease to spread. People are unfortunate souls that happened to catch a lethal infection from their sins, so he is not morally obligated to assist them. He is treating the plague a simple obstacle, so he does not have to face his mortality.

The viewer sees a physical depiction of his mental conflict as he avoids the girl. His sublimation mechanism begins to fail. He has no wig orders to distract himself. His attempts at writing are overshadowed by the girl coughing outside. The wigmaker begins to show physical symptoms of discomfort by her presence. He appears shocked and disturbed as she is locked away in her infection home. He hallucinates the girl standing in his hallway that night. He cannot look at her but hangs his head in shame as she disappears. He sits lethargically as the girl's dead body is removed the next morning. Overcome by grief and shame, he runs to the ash pit in the night. He steals her hair and works the next day to construct a wig.

He almost resolved the dissonance in his mind. The wigmaker was forced to acknowledge his faults. However, he was not able to fully accept the consequences of his actions. He returned to sublimation and dove into embodiment. He thought by taking on the girl's hair he could repay her memory. The time he spent constructing the wig would be restitution for the hours he let her sit outside his store. Yet, once he is ill he again tries to search purpose in philosophy. He ends with a monologue explaining life and death as if he has not wasted the last weeks of his life watching a child die. He misses the reality of his situation and moves on to the issues of others. He is stuck in the cycle of a superego/id conflict. His id continues to create pleasurable alternative to the conflicting understanding his superego holds about his approaching death.

Madame Tutli-Putli is a silent, stop-motion film released in 2007. It depicts a woman experiencing a bizarre train ride. The train is hijacked in the night, a passenger's organs are stolen, and the ending is an ambiguous transformation. The film is a constant exploration of unconscious interactions. The woman is downtrodden at the train platform as she carries every earthly possession. One must ask what happened. Other critics have cited materialism as the cause of her distress^{xxiii}. She is weighed down and consumed by her goods. Even the train cart becomes crowded by her belongings. Materialism is not necessarily the best explanation for her baggage. The event that brings her to the train is not revealed. Perhaps, she is escaping something instead of this being a holiday. The passengers in the train cart may give some insight. Szczerbowski and Lavis designed the passengers with Jung's archetype theory in mind^{xxiv}. Each passenger represents a different personality. The logical thinkers are playing chess. Absorbed in their own problems with little regard for anyone else. The sleeping old man and young child are almost a comic relief as Tutli-Putli waves at the child^{xxv}. Then, she is left with the disgusting tennis player. The standard jock stereotype that harasses women. Madame Tutli-Putli retreats to her corner of the cart and uses a newspaper to shield herself from the jock's inappropriate body language. Ironically, the child's book is titled *How to Deal with your Enemies*. Is this jock Tutli-Putli's larger context enemy? Most viewers would agree his crude behavior is uncomfortable, but maybe he is the type of person she is running from. She is hesitant to acknowledge him from the beginning. She is friendly and open with the other men but is skeptical of him. He could represent something that she is trying to repress.

Lavis and Szczerbowski carefully chose the location of the film's climax. The train stopped in the middle of a forest. There is not a soul within a hundred kilometers, roughly 62 miles. Lavis and Szczerbowski modeled it after a train ride they took through Canada to prepare for the film^{xxvi}. While riding, they "...realized that was the true dread...the idea that the train-which was supposed to be moving forward...stops."^{xxvii} An eerie uncertainty overtakes someone when they cannot predict even the most basic things. By stopping the train, the directors removed all outside elements for Tutli-Putli to control. Tutli-Putli can only control her own actions as the story progresses.

She is the only conscious victim of the train high jacking. She watches as the Jock has his kidney removed which symbolizes the missing pieces he has in his life. He lacks admirable character traits from some life event or disposition. The organ removal symbolizes something deeper. If this type of man did hurt Madame Tutli-Putli, this was the type of revenge she wanted. A physical cut on his body. Removing pieces of him like she was emotionally scarred. However, Tutli-Putli is still not ready to accept this part of her^{xxviii}. She gives him respite from the pain. The high jackers released gas to insure everyone was knocked out. The man would feel nothing and pass from blood loss peacefully unaware. She is fighting with herself about revenge and morality. The entire train ride is her coming to terms with herself and her trauma. A transformation expressed through a moth.

Madame Tutli-Putli alone sees the moth flying around the train. The moth shows up a few times. It is forever stuck following lights. A clever idea from the directors^{xxix}. A change from the butterfly metamorphosis cliché. Tutli-Putli is not completely transforming. She is altering her thoughts about an event, so she can move on. The moth is first seen circling the light in her train cart. It is repeatedly flying into the light bulb; distracting her from her writing. Her letter is left unaddressed and unwritten. It is unclear whether it would be to the person she left behind or to herself as she tries to clear her thoughts. The moth appears later to lead her through the train as she flees her cart. The moth is free in the dining cart. Flying where it pleases and into a larger

light. A light that appears to come from outside instead of a light bulb. Tutli-Putli fell to her knees in that cart. She was distraught. Looking if she was about to cry. She went through the stages of grief in one night. She relived, denied, became aggressive, wept, and accepted her fate. She followed the moth into the light and became the moth. Free from the confines of the train. She is able to fly out the window she looked out earlier. She is finally free to move on from the chaos and stop running away. The manifestation of her repressed emotions allowed the ego to process the situation completely. Her dream-like adventure prevented her from avoiding the confrontation. She had experienced dissonance between her desire to repress her anger and her desire to move on. Madam Tutli-Putli was able to recover herself with proper resources and support even if that support was a moth. Hope improves the cognitive processes that feed destructive cycles^{xxx}. The meaning behind the moth inspired the perseverance in her to return to her superego perception of herself.

Each film produced a unique experience. Just as each person has their own cognitive experience in life. However, the basic principles that govern psychological theories connect them. Švankmajer explores the imagination of a child and the Quay brothers show a transition to adulthood. Schäffler allows a man to drift into insanity while Lavis and Szczerbowski enable a woman to recover from an ambiguous trauma. Throughout the specific themes of each film, the defense mechanisms inherent to human nature show themselves. It is through these mechanisms that individuals thrive and destroy themselves. The four works highlight the best and worst scenarios. The film makers created these works to explain the current understanding of the theories. The collection ultimately shows that defense mechanisms are unavoidable cognitive skills that individuals and psychologists still struggle with.

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ⁱHerman Ebbinghaus, *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology*, trans, Henry A. Ruger and Clara E. Bussenius. (New York: Columbia University, 1913).; Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and society*, (New York: Norton, 1993).; L. S. Vygotski, "Learning and Mental Development at School," in *Educational Psychology in the USSR*, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963): 21-34.; L. S. Vygotsky "Development of Higher Mental Functions," in *Psychological Research in the USSR*, (Moscow, Progress Publishers).

ⁱⁱ C. James Goodwin, *A History of Modern Psychology*. 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 356-357.

ⁱⁱⁱ C. James Goodwin, *A History of Modern Psychology*. 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 359.

^{iv} Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams: The Complete and Definitive Text*. (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 197-198.. Accessed March 24, 2018. ProQuest Ebook Central.

^v Stephen Cavalier, *The World of Animation* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2011), 267.

^{vi} She is the Industry vs. Inferiority stage (6-12 years). This stage is a conflict between one's ability and how one compares oneself to others. Self-esteem is developed here based on the amount of reinforcement provided for effort and achievements. Laura E. Berk, "Physical and Cognitive Development in Middle Childhood," in *Exploring Lifespan Development*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Pearson, 2013).

^{vii} Also representative of Anne Freud's work on play therapy and defense mechanisms. Alice is using sublimation to deal with her problems. Sublimation is a type of suppression that focuses energy on other tasks to distract from underlying emotions. C. James Goodwin, *A History of Modern Psychology*. 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 359.

^{viii} There is a sequence where the toys chase Alice and imprison her inside a porcelain doll. If Alice or her family committed an infraction or opposed the communist party, government forces may come and arrest them. Or, maybe someone had been arrested and that is why no parent is present. The sequences provides a safe place for Alice to experience the actions and process the information. She can replay the actions until she is no longer scared by it.

^{ix} The brothers were interested in all types of knowledge. They studied poetry, prose, history, science, foreign language, and several art mediums. Literary works are incorporated into all their films. *Streets of Crocodiles* was inspired by Bruno Schulz's book of the same title. The plot is not identical, but the uncanny atmosphere was taken from Schulz's descriptions. Suzanne, Buchan, *Quay Brothers: Into a Metaphysical Playroom*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 39-41.

^x Suzanne, Buchan, *Quay Brothers: Into a Metaphysical Playroom*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 44.

^{xi} Suzanne, Buchan, *Quay Brothers: Into a Metaphysical Playroom*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 44.

^{xii} Suzanne, Buchan, *Quay Brothers: Into a Metaphysical Playroom*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 64.

^{xiii} A common symbol in surrealism work such as Svankmajer's *Meat Love* short film.

^{xiv} The image and those follow are only suggestive if the person has an understanding of its implications. A certain context is needed to grasp this. It is dependent on a developmental stage such as puberty when most people become aware of human relations and difference in body types. Similar, to the subjective understanding of a Rorschach test. It relies on an internal quality. It is important to note due to the implication of the scenes prior.

^{xv} The liver represents the protagonist being fitted by the tailor, but also a larger context. The Quay brothers were inspired by concept of territory division following World War Two. Specifically, the way Poland had changed and the impact it had on people. Schulz's prose also contained a portion about matter and its qualities. The flesh is the passive matter allowing the assistants to enact their will on it. Suzanne, Buchan, *Quay Brothers: Into a Metaphysical Playroom*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 115, 116.

^{xvi} A screw he previously collected was replaced by one of the assistants suggesting he was not up to standards for the perfect partner. Alternatively, it could have alluded to the physical changes a person experiences during growth.

^{xvii} Suzanne, Buchan, *Quay Brothers: Into a Metaphysical Playroom*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 106, 110.

^{xviii} Suzanne, Buchan, *Quay Brothers: Into a Metaphysical Playroom*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 96.

^{xix} Research examples include: Alan E. Kazdin, "Effectiveness of psychotherapy with children and adolescents," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 59, no. 6 (1991): 785-798.; Robert J. DeRubeis, "Empirically ^{xix} Research examples include: Alan E. Kazdin, "Effectiveness of psychotherapy with children and adolescents,"

Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 59, no. 6 (1991): 785-798.; Robert J. DeRubeis, "Empirically supported individual and group psychological treatments for adult mental disorders," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 66, no. 1 (1998): 37-52.; Johannes Siegrist, "Adverse health effects of high-effort/low-reward conditions," *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1996): 27-41.; Jo Derisley, Sarah Libby, Sarah Clark, and Shirley Reynolds, "Mental health, coping and family-functioning in parents of young people with obsessive-compulsive disorder and with anxiety disorders," *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* 44, no. 3 (2005): 439-444.; Larry C. James, "Integrating clinical psychology into primary care settings," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 62, no. 10 (2006): 1207-1212.

^{xx} Defense mechanisms are processes in the brain that allow someone to dissociate from trauma or cognitive dissonance, which is a state of discomfort when one has conflicting thoughts or values. Defense mechanisms stem from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. His daughter, Anne, was particularly interested in defense mechanisms and explored it the most in her career.; C. James Goodwin, *A History of Modern Psychology*. 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 359.

^{xxi} Margaret Healy, "Defoe's Journal and the English Plague Writing Tradition". *Literature and Medicine*, 22 no.1 (2003), 34.

^{xxii} Margaret Healy, "Defoe's Journal and the English Plague Writing Tradition". *Literature and Medicine*, 22 no.1 (2003), 28.

^{xxiii} Daniel DiLandro. Madame Tutli-Putli - Educational Media Reviews Online (EMRO). February 07, 2008. Accessed March 19, 2018. (DiLandro is currently a SUNY Buffalo State Archivist & Special Collections Librarian.); Catherine Leonard,. "A Review: Madame Tutli Putli (2007)." Cappy Leonard. September 09, 2013. Accessed March 26, 2018. (Leonard is a graduate of Elon University and currently works as a Production Assistant.)

^{xxiv} Jung was one of Freud's followers. He branched off from Freud after conflicts with the psychosexual part of the theory. Jung believed the unconscious was driven more a collective consciousness based on the experiences of our familiar ancestors. He also studied personality's influence on behavior. Archetypes were the characteristics that were universally recognized for a specific personality type according to his theories. They separated the introvert and extroverts. C. James Goodwin, *A History of Modern Psychology*. 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 361.; Guillen, Michael. "MADAME TUTLI-PUTLI-Interview With Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski." ScreenAnarchy. December 01, 2007. Accessed March 26, 2018. <http://screenanarchy.com/2007/12/madame-tutli-putliinterview-with-chris-lavis-and-maciek-szczerbowski.html>.

^{xxv} The characters appear to be Asian. The nationalities could make this scene problematic. These are stereotypical depictions in North American media, particularly in the United States. An elderly figure is seen as uninterested or tired. Asian children are considered smarter than Americans; excelling in math and science. The boy's book was styled after a children's book however, it deals with a complex issue. The types of social relationships that would require a self-help style book are above a 5 year old level. The relationships would deal with work, romantic, and family environments and require knowledge about human biases that lead to conflict. Children fight and forgive quickly. He does not need this book. The book is directed at Tutli-Putli, but the person holding it causes the scene to be problematic.

^{xxvi} Guillen, Michael. "MADAME TUTLI-PUTLI-Interview With Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski." ScreenAnarchy. December 01, 2007. Accessed March 26, 2018.

^{xxvii} Michael Guillen, "MADAME TUTLI-PUTLI-Interview With Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski." ScreenAnarchy. December 01, 2007. Accessed March 26, 2018.

^{xxviii} She suppressed the desire for revenge. It is classically depicted as wrong. Religious texts call one to forgive. Women are also portrayed as less aggressive. Tutli-Putli is disregarding a label she has attached to herself as proper, kind woman if she engages in a violent behavior such as mutilation.

^{xxix} The directors were inspired by a moth that was trapped in their train car. Tutli-Putli embodies the moth's actions. She is forever trying to get back outside, but continues to fly into the lightbulb. She will perish quickly, leaving a small speck of her life accomplishments behind, if she cannot find the exit soon. Michael Guillen, "MADAME TUTLI-PUTLI-Interview With Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski." ScreenAnarchy. December 01, 2007. Accessed March 26, 2018.

^{xxx} This is a process highlighted in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). A person's thoughts influence their behavior and how well it is done. Negative thoughts increase the symptoms of problems like depression and anxiety. CBT uses techniques to alter the negative thoughts till a pattern of positive thoughts becomes reinforced.