

5TH INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY
SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON
SOCIAL SCIENCES & ARTS
SGEM 2018

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

VOLUME 5

SCIENCE AND ART

ISSUE 6.1



CULTURAL STUDIES
ETHNOLOGY & FOLKLORE
LITERATURE & POETRY
HISTORY OF ARTS
CONTEMPORARY ARTS
PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS

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**19 - 21 March, 2018
Vienna, Austria**

HOFBURG Congress Centre

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Published by STEF92 Technology Ltd., 51 "Alexander Malinov" Blvd., 1712 Sofia, Bulgaria

Total print: 5000

ISBN 978-619-7408-34-8

ISSN 2367-5659

DOI: 10.5593/sgemsocial2018H/61

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mean the artist's effort to create a background with no other purpose than to complete the face description.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, this painter, who had a great success in life (in opposition to the stylized figures by Modigliani) respects the classical aesthetics, interprets but also respects the external world and, a bit like all the artists, could not completely translate all the images his mind and heart suggested¹.

About the three self-portraits by De Chirico, it can be said that in the first one there is a certain premonition of a man going to devote himself to art and to his sometimes painful problems, in the second one the plaster bust represents the aim of achieving the ideal Self, as already said, more than a retouched picture of himself, in the third portrait the framework of time takes part in creativity, but observing carefully the picture, it can be seen that years have impressed a personality who is still standing, in spite of everything, searching for a knowledge that somehow can answer to the need of learning, remaining an essential factor for the acceptance of life, in its different aspects, from youth to old age. At the end, the difference between a man and a so called artist is that for the artist the approaching of the end of life does not cause a giving up but rather an intensification of the desire for understanding and knowledge.

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¹Carducci wrote "era una parte del poema eterno quel che io sentivo e picciol verso ora è".

PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF WILLIAM UTERMONHLER'S SELF PORTRAITS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this work is to analyze the psychopathological components that emerge from the self-portraits of Williams Utermonhler, contemporary painter suffering from Alzheimer's disease. This pathology usually begins in old age and has as main characteristic the progressive decline of the faculties of thought and of the logical-critical capacities. The painter, however, begins to have the first symptoms of the disease at a young age. The nine self-portraits are examined using a survey methodology specific to the psychology of art. Psychological analysis shows that the symptoms of progressive psychophysical breakup are unconsciously but carefully translated by the author into meaningful images in his self-portraits.

Keywords: psychology of art, self-portraits, psychopathology, Alzheimer's disease.

INTRODUCTION

The self-portrait, from a psychological point of view, can be considered as an expression of the need to represent oneself in multiple versions, to give you visibility, which corresponds to the desire defined by Freud (1991) [1] to "live a multiplicity of lives". Through the self-portrait, the artist can offer to the observer different versions of himself, disguising himself and modifying his own identity, or he can stage the conflict, the doubt and the anguish concerning his own existence, typical of contemporary artists (Ferrari, 2002) [2]. As everybody knows, in the Alzheimer's disease there is a more and more severe injury of the right parietal lobe, that activates so as to make images morphologically visible (to which the pictorial transformation follows). So when there isn't the image processing, there won't be the following transformation. This pathology usually begins in old age and has as main characteristic the progressive decline of the faculties of thought and of the logical-critical capacities. The painter, however, begins to have the first symptoms of the disease at a young age.

METHOD

The purpose of this work is to analyze the psychopathological components that emerge from the self-portraits of Williams Utermonhler, contemporary painter suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The nine self-portraits are examined using a survey methodology specific to the psychology of art. Utermonhler with his nine self-portraits suggested the idea that he could put into pictorial representations the following and progressive decay

of neuroglial centres in charge of processing both reality and the effects of this deficiency on the creative activities of the subject.

In accordance with this interpretative hypothesis we have analysed any of the portraits, from the first to the ninth. It could be possible to have a manual that, in Alzheimer's cases in a painter, could add "graphic" medical records to the verbal ones. On the other hand, the importance art can have in holding down the disease progression, is supported by the fact that, among the recommendations given to patients (not in pharmacological field), there is also to go into music (and particularly singing) and painting.

The dosage of the neurotransmitters and in particular of the acetylcholine is one of the biochemical investigations to perform. As a consequence (only for information and in a broad sense), we are going to dedicate ourselves to the study of the nine self-portraits of Utermonhler, starting from the assumption that he understood the possibility of combining the clinical and paper description of the disease with a complementary accurate study of the influence that the neuronal alterations may have on important function such as higher abilities and in particular the artistic ones.

RESULTS

Figure 1. Self-Portrait by pencil 1967



The first portrait by William Utermonhler (Self-Portrait by pencil 1967) shows a normal face with a slight alteration of the gaze that makes one think of an introverted subject. The hair is normal, with an initial baldness on the forehead. A strand of white hair on the left frontal parietal limit is in slight disorder, as if it was waved by a gentle wind that could be the pictorial translation of an arousing psychiatric disorder. His beard is dark, and so is the moustache. The beard is limited to the lower part of the chin, and underneath the mouth the hair is well-groomed with white areas. The broad forehead shows a slight protrusion of a blood vessel on the left, arriving to the eyebrow.

Having to summarize the first impression got from the picture, it is about a subject at an early stage of mental confusion, or rather of acute introversion. The intent and deep gaze is the most important expression of the whole face, more than the facial expressions themselves. The cheeks are almost normal. The artist also paints the beard and moustache with no serious alterations. The neck presents a slight protrusion in its front, that is probably due to an Adam's apple hypertrophy. The shirt, or maybe better a white working coat, covers the shoulders, and the background probably points to an artist's studio wall. The message as a whole can be explained as the forerunner of mild mental alteration. To conclude, the 1967 painting shows a man still in good health,

perhaps with a tendency to a strong introversion that is not a true pathology yet. As an additional aspect there is quite a sad expression emphasized by two bags under the eyes. There is not an actual disease yet, but a disorder in the degree of contraction of the facial muscles is already in progress.

The psychologist can pose an interpretative hypothesis leading to the diagnosis: young subject probably introverted that according to gaze and facial expressions can suggest a diagnosis of mental health but without the quiet and optimistic look typical of young age. The self-portrait in a figurative manual could be the first warning of a person that for his age is inclined to introversion without pathological implication

Figure 2. Self-Portrait 1996



Figure 3. Self-Portrait 1996 B



The 1996 portrait (about thirty years after the first one, color painted), shows some anomalous valency. Both of the eyes, especially the left one, are diverted outwards, probably to attempt to explore the real. The hair makes the impression of two different stages, where the upper one is reddish as a vague shade, and the lower one is dark and gives the impression of real hair. The facial expression is painted as if the muscles were a little stiff and besides, in the region of lips, there is a slight deficiency of the left facial (the upper lip is slightly diverted outwards, as if there was a facial nerve abnormality)¹. The neck has a deviation to the left as to obliterate the right ear². A careful scholar make the diagnosis of a person at the limit of normality and then a likely beginning of diagnosable mental disorder not yet diagnosable on its own terms. The picture is completed by a kind of grid that may reflect a pictorial study but could also be the translation of a mental state where pathological valencies find their way without giving precise diagnostic possibilities yet. The psychologist may diagnose mental anomalies without being able to arrive at a precise diagnosis of specific disease.

The self-portrait called 1996 B has an emphasis on all data of self-consciousness of the disease that now has become for himself also a topic of study and curiosity. The long neck and a special shirt overlapped another neck might in an imaginative subject evoke the image of a Pope in a particular position (see image of Pius XII in one of the many television speeches). In fact it can even happen that the attention of a writer or a director falls on appearances of mental illness. In the self-portrait the hair is partially grizzled in

¹Showing that sometimes Alzheimer disease has a clear neurological element.

²It can be observed a clear analogy with the treatment Van Gogh gives his ear.

the frontoparietal region. Even the moustache is white to emphasize that maybe the subject is not young. The bottom of the portrait, dark colored in the upper part, is also crossed by white lines in harmony with baldness.

The white lines in harmony with baldness could also be a further expression of the disease progress. The eyes in practice do not exist and are replaced by black spots, likely symptom of amaurosis which translates the serious difficulty in dealing with the outside world. The clothing suggests the presence of a shirt and a working coat. To conclude, the picture can be considered the first attempt of self figuration of a serious mental illness of which the patient has not a precise diagnosis yet³. The mosaic of the rational self gradually deconstructs and finally the human creature, this miracle of life and pursuit of knowledge, will fall behind the curtain of "Chinese lanterns" from which it was released. "*Gnoti s'autòn*" remains an illusion that vanishes like lightning balls lost into nothing. From the point of view of our alleged iconographic manual it starts here an alteration of chromatic aspect that is not in the disease but that could possibly be depicted from the pictorial point of view better than from a paper form (the picture instead of medical records).

Figure 4. Self-Portrait from 1997



Figure 5. Self-Portrait from 1997 bis



The 1997 self-portrait is the clear image of a mental patient. The eyes have a dead look. The forehead is very wide but not in relation to a Lombrosian interpretation that is a broad frontal brain. Rather it suggests the Neanderthal man for whom intellectual abilities were not the strong point. One gets the impression of a subject now closed to the outside world. If the psychologist is allowed to make a general point, the portrait also gives an impression of severe suffering of the rational ego who adds negativity to the sense of self⁴. Particularly relevant is the description of the two eyes: the right one seen in frontal projection seems absorbed from a dark spot that can lead to a real change in vision, while the left one gives the impression of an abnormal eye with the look stiffened in a fixed projection. The face as a whole suggests a lack of intellectual potential and the open mouth could result from breathing difficulties.

³Were it possible to describe the course of an illness exclusively by figurative means, Williams' portraits would be a successful anatomical and physiological and psychological code.

⁴The feeling is not transformed into a cognitive fact regarding the perception of reality.

The half open mouth also implies a muscle hypotonia, itself a symptom of the progressive obliteration of the nerve centres.

The self-portrait 1997 B, presenting a certain exuberance of the skull (perhaps once again of the Neanderthal type) shows for the first time clear anatomical bones alteration with deformation of the entire brow ridge that is absolutely deformed and among other things there is an alteration in the position of the right eye probably connected to the frontal brain lobe and to the right fronto-orbital arch deformity. Certainly the look is highly altered and is reasonable for scholars to assume that the portrait could translate in figurative terms a real mental confusion. Another element of interest can be the highlighting of the right ear. Such an element has to be noted because it is an ear of wide proportions, maybe the representation of the vain attempt to get into relationship with the reality. The isolated view of the right orbital zone and of the right ear, strengthens the impression of a possible vain attempt to get in touch with the real. To conclude, while in the first four pictures the artist keeps the essential characteristics of his appearance, in the fifth one the unconscious seems to prevail on conscience while creating the picture. It can be concluded with a brief interpretation: madness prevails in the picture.

Figure 6. Self-portrait from 1998



The self-portrait from 1998 at first sight can make one think of a mental patient on the way of a swift evolution. The right eye is obscured by a stain that denies the possibility to see the pupil, while the left eye is visible but has a look out of the ordinary for a clear mydriasis. Facing his gaze, it is completely absent or very limited with severe alteration verging on the possibility of a blank vision. The left ear is not shown while the right one is slightly distorted with a forward projection, as if the patient wanted to capture something important. The nose has a strange whitish reflection and there is some evidence of the nostrils. The chin, where there is a particular form of beard, in its upper part is also covered with a whitish stain that is partly surrounded by a hoary beard quite weird in its distribution. Below the chin there is a sort of greyish scarf that appears incomplete and covers a white spot. This whitish-grey complex may be the involuntary translation of the mental dimension recalling the grey atmosphere of the Stygian swamp. Every part of the painted surface is the projection of the severe uneasiness clearly dominating the patient's psychic dynamic. The colors are not rather dull like in other paintings. The vault is a yellowish color that suits the coloured line both on the

right and on the left side of the portrait (more marked on the left side). Behind the head there is a kind of abnormal double screen that reminds of the picture where there is a real window and that in the present case might represent the background of the face itself. To conclude, it must be considered that the previous and the following portraits to the last one, are an original indeed but maybe involuntarily attempt to offer the audience a special kind of figurative translation of a disease that finally could even become an essay about Alzheimer's disease set with pictorial representation.

Figure 7. Self-Portrait 1999



Figure 8. Self-Portrait 2000



The 1999 self-portrait at first sight could be mistaken for something indefinite that reminds of the Holy Shroud. The various parts of a face that cannot be recognized as such are confused. The human morphology disappears into a special shape of dimorphism. The head has got a broad white stain underneath which the eyes cannot be seen. In the place of the nose, there is a kind of malformed appendage. The neck covered with a kind of whitish cloth is from the chromatic point of view the antithesis of the picture background. It may be thought as the remains of telencephalic potential. In practice there is a great confusion among the different parts of a face that is not easy to recognize as such in itself, and among other things cannot be identified as a human face at all. The left eye is visible only because the closed eyelids are a light visible colour, while about the right eye it can only be said it is closed. Moreover, about the left eye it can be said that it has no more human characteristics but could even be an animal's eye (for example a wolf, but roughly outlined). In the middle of the face there is a formation like a kind of abnormal nose, but spread too much either to the lower part or the higher one, where it seems, passing through the orbital cavities, to reach the forehead.

From the psychological point of view, supposing the disease progression could be represented through portrayals, the painting as a whole with its very dark colour in the background, shows a moment when the patient is beyond the limits of a forthcoming loss of his perceptive and self-cognitive potential. It may remain only an ability of para-oneiric thought on the way to become an oneiric alogical atemporo-spatial defining thought. The self-portrait from 2000, that is the last but one known of the artist, has no more the shape of a human head. Anyway the picture can be looked at as if any image was real. The only recognizable eye looks like Polypheme's eye and the subject has got an odd creature on the head not easily identifiable in explanatory terms as a real

creature. It can be thought as the presence of a kind of "homunculus" of Goethian memory, following this line of thinking, it can be thought to be in the presence of a deformed creature that may come from men. But with a careful examination of details, it can be thought, even though with a lot of imagination, he is a Caduceus raised on the head by an imaginary Asclepius. The human morphology is lost. The patient is given morphologically non existing deformities (generally madness is restricted to even severe changes in the expression, and changes in the facial expression). What can be certainly stated is that the metamorphosis from a normal man to a subject completely destroyed by a severe mental disease, can create a universe standing on its own where the greatest thing is the psychic potential of the central nervous system. The neurons and all the glial tissues are irreversibly altered, the mind has arrived to a complete loss of the cognitive potential of thought. The psychologist is being asked an essential question that is whether an artist can survive by his creative potential when his mind is diseased. There are examples of great artists such as Van Gogh for whom the mental alteration did not cause a loss of the creative abilities (see *Wheatfield with Crows*). If psychiatrists have excluded a link between psychological disease and art, it is unquestioned that in some great authors such as Van Gogh, Donizetti, Dostoevskij and almost all the poets maudits there is also a background of psychoneurosis. The average man may only be an ordinary creature who does not ask himself the famous question by Cicero "ad quid sumus; unde et quo pergimus" (What purpose we live to, where do we come from and where do we go). Finally, importance must be given to Pizzo Russo's (2004) [3] studies, that are a satisfactory interpretative hypothesis to explain how a surviving colour can become essential to the interpretation of a painting by a creative artist. If Utermonhler's paintings before the disease are compared to the last painting, it reminds of Gregor Samsa before and after the Metamorphosis. If it is right to think that the fate of mankind is determined by the central nervous system, maybe the attempt not to reduce a disease to mere paper medical records will bring some elements that the only verbal language could not completely understand and clarify. There is need to repeat that in the long and difficult journey through a symbolic and ill rail line it might be discovered something that only morphological and chromatic changes may reveal.

Self-portrait number 9 shows a figure with the prevailing outline of a dysmorphic white face with black lines. The image surrounding what was a face, still gives the possibility to think to a human creature though very ill. Considering that the self-portrait technique is generally based on a kind of support made essentially of two intersected basic lines, in this picture at least a memory of this structure remains. Considering that generally a painting of a face is based on two intersected basic lines set at right angle, two lines can be seen but they intersect in an irregular way (for an expert).

But there are two characteristics to underline: the face makes one think to a woman rather than a man, and more than in the previous portrait the hypothesis of a sick but human creature is unusually nearer than in the former portraits.

It may be the traditional smouldering fire or better the swansong expressing its last breath. The scholar asks if in the progressive destruction of the higher mental centres there is some progression so as to arrive to a remain of cognitive potential that will be deteriorated just before the miracle of thought fade forever. The scholar asks himself a serious, more than important question that is: is there any defence for neurons and the glia against the progressive invasion of the destroying tissues?

Probably there is no self-consciousness in this masterpiece of aseptic destruction where microbes and viruses are missing, substituted by a random process talking about destruction and death only.

CONCLUSIONS

Williams Utermonhler, contemporary painter suffering from Alzheimer's disease, begins to have the first symptoms at a young age. This pathology has as main characteristic the progressive decline of the faculties of thought and of the logical-critical capacities. Psychological analysis shows that the symptoms of progressive psychophysical breakup are unconsciously but carefully translated by the author into meaningful images in his self-portraits. It must be noted that in Alzheimer's disease there is often a kind of "regression", so that there is the reappearance either of the pencil picture or para-anomalous primitive slips of paper that surely have dysmorphic appearance according to the classical aesthetics. There is also a para-child behaviour.

The psychologists may notice that both the behaviour of "homo sapiens sapiens" and his way of thinking are related to bio-physics and bio-chemistry of neurons and glia. Freud said that near the patient there must be always a man with a syringe in his hand.

Today it can be considered that because of the great progress in biophysics and biochemistry, increasingly advanced therapies are possible, among which it is enough to recall the therapeutic use of some chemical mediators like serotonin. It is also important the possibility to investigate various nerve centres and affect their behaviour.

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REPRODUCING A DETECTION TEST FOR MAGNETIC TAPES DEGRADATION: ACETONE EXTRACTION TEST

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ABSTRACT

Magnetic tape is an important medium in the capturing of information and has had widespread use in audio, video, and computer applications over the past 60 years. As years go by, the preservation of the information stored on tape is becoming of increasing concern to society, particularly as the carriers suffer from physical decay and they threaten the survival of recordings holding a great cultural and commercial value. This article presents the methodology and the results of a chemical test aimed to determine the state of degradation of magnetic tapes. The test can reveal the state of degradation of the polymeric chains composing the tape layers, which are subject to an irreversible process of degradation over time. This study contributes to the long-term goal of building a structured knowledge base about diagnostic tools and recovery methods for magnetic tapes.

Keywords: recovery methods, detection test, acetone extraction, magnetic tapes degradation, audio preservation, sound archives, digitization, multimedia cultural heritage, digital humanities

INTRODUCTION

The history of recorded sound normally dates back to the 1860s, when the Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville invented the *phonograph* with which he recorded the French folk song "Au Clair de la Lune". From Thomas Edison's mechanical phonograph patented in 1878, to the "liquid" music we listen to today, a wealth of *historical audio documents* has been produced. This capital is normally stored on *audio carriers*, from the most obsolete like wax discs or cylinders (popular between the mid-1890s to the mid-1910s), to the most recent like optical discs (e.g. the well known Compact Discs) or non audio specific carriers like Solid-State Drives (SSDs).

Audio heritage comprises a large part of our cultural legacy [1], influencing many aspects of our daily life: news reportages, scholarly studies especially those on *intangible cultural heritage*, including the performance practice of very popular music genres like jazz, where the training of young generations of musicians has invariably depended on the study of the recordings of the greats of the past. Memorable music productions have been recorded on tape, including international pop/rock hits as well as erudite compositions of "tape music" (the name derives from the physical manipulation that composers performed on the tapes in order to achieve the desired effects). Today, re-mastered editions (Legacy, Ultimate, etc.) of the original tapes are regularly released on the market with notable commercial success, for example "The Beatles Stereo Box Set" and "The Beatles Mono Box Set" in 2009.



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