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DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

**René Daumal's *Mount Analogue* and Alejandro  
Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain*:  
From Pataphysics to Power**

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V Praze dne 10.8.2020

I declare that the following MA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

In Prague, 10 August 2020

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**René Daumal's *Mount Analogue* and Alejandro Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain: From Pataphysics to Power***

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## Introduction

The thesis seeks to analyze René Daumal's unfinished novel *Mount Analogue: A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing* (1952) and Alejandro Jodorowsky's film *The Holy Mountain* (1973). The connection between the two works in question departs from the undetermined relation between the two cultural objects that lies in the assumption that the film was conceived as an adaptation of the unfinished pataphysical novel. Contrary to the traditional method of comparative analysis, the thesis attempts to explore *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* separately in order to discover what important aspects and themes will surface in the process. Only after that, the aspects extracted in the process of the analysis will be considered together in an attempt to see a bigger theoretical picture. The theoretical approach of choice is Lacanian psychoanalysis with an emphasis on the theory of R.S.I. (the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary). Such an approach proves to be efficient in the process of discussion of such topics as language, ideology, and power, all of which play an essential role both in the analyzed film and novel as well as in general theoretical discussions that take their roots in post-structuralism and continue to spark interest till these days.

René Daumal's *Mount Analogue* tells a satirical story about traveling, mountain climbing, and most importantly spiritual ambition. It begins with an article — an investigation of the symbolic significance of mountains in mythology. The article stresses the importance of one particular mountain, Mount Analogue — an imaginary mountain that unlike those mountains that figure in many ancient mythological stories, is purely symbolic and, therefore, inaccessible.

The article, written by the narrator of Mount Analogue, catches attention of an eccentric, larger-than-life character, who is known under the name of Father Sogol. Together, they decide to initiate an ambitious journey to the mysterious mountain. Both Father Sogol and the narrator invite their friends to join the expedition and soon the group sets out on a journey that in the end turns out to be not only physically and financially demanding, but also life-changing. As the travellers reach the base of Mount Analogue, they understand that in order to achieve their goal, which is ascending to the very summit of the mountain, they have to shed their old personalities and undergo a complete spiritual transformation. Sadly, the novel abruptly ends after Father Sogol, who is the first to experience the crucial metamorphosis, finds a peradam (an extremely valuable stone that can be used in order to pay for the debt the travellers went into during their stay at the mountain's base as well as for the expenses connected to the services of mountain guides) and the company starts their ascent. As the travellers set up the first camp and take care of the others that would follow their steps, the novel ends mid-sentence due to the author's death.

Alejandro Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain* is a film that follows the steps of a Jesus look-alike that is referred to as the Thief. As he wakes up from a drunk sleep, the Thief proceeds to explore the streets that are filled with the exaggerated aspects of entertainment and violence. After getting drunk once again, the Thief finds out that during his state of unconsciousness his body was replicated numerous times and he is now part of the industry that sells touristic and religious souvenirs. The Thief leaves in a fit of anger and stumbles upon a tower, where he finds the Alchemist — a mysterious figure that first lures the thief by offering him gold, but eventually begins to prepare the latter for a considerable personal transformation. The Alchemist gathers a group of nine seekers of knowledge and immortality. He introduces seven 'industrialists and politicians' who join the Thief and the Alchemist in their journey to enlightenment. The gathered people take part in a series of rituals directed at the destruction of their social roles and material status as well as at the development of unity between the members of the group. The Alchemist reveals that their ultimate goal lies in the attempt of finding the Lotus Island, where the Holy Mountain is situated. He

assures that the summit of the mountain is occupied by nine wise men who possess the secret of immortality. As the group arrives to their destination, the Alchemist reveals that there are no wise men and there is no immortality; he insists that their greatest achievement is 'humanity'. As the Alchemist, now stripped of the attributes of a 'magician', reveals that they have been seeking 'real life', he breaks the fourth wall and orders the camera to zoom back in order to reveal that the group of his disciples are characters in a film.

From the point of view of theoretical background, the two works will be considered from the perspective of psychoanalysis. Although, Freudian psychoanalysis is understood as the starting point, the theory of Jacques Lacan occupies the central place in the discussion of the film and the unfinished novel. The triad of the functions of the psyche — the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary, or as it is called 'the Borromean knot' — will be used in order to conduct a reflection on the nature of such fundamental aspects of the two works that discuss the topics of language, ideology, and power. Importantly, the discussion of language, ideology, and power will be realized within the post-structuralist framework. Another emphasis will be on the contrasting works of Louis Althusser and Slavoj Žižek as both extensively analyze the topic of ideology and, connected to this, realities of psychoanalysis. Jean Baudrillard's connections to pataphysics and Lacanian psychoanalysis along with his reflections on simulacra, doubles, and the distinction between the concepts of domination and hegemony make his works a valuable addition to the present discussion. Finally, the role of power in the possibility of the understanding and potential influencing of ideology will be discussed, while power itself will be viewed from the constructivist perspective that endows it with the ability of constructing social and subjective reality.

The thesis outlines a specific methodology that will be used in the process of analysis. As the 'scientific' approach of psychoanalysis (to both its patients and to cultural works) is juxtaposed to the 'unscientific' philosophy of pataphysics, the chosen synthesized methodology will concentrate on the specifics of *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain*; that is to say, it will endorse the theoretical constituent of psychoanalysis, but will discard its limiting approach to its subjects.

Additionally, the chosen method will be tailored in accordance with the main theoretical content of the two symbolically and theoretically rich works. The two works will not be involved in a comparative analysis, instead, they will be explored separately in order to bring out the most important aspects enhanced by the R.S.I. theory.

As a result of such an analysis, there appear two aspects — action and balance — that figure in *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* accordingly. The importance of action in Daumal's *Mount Analogue* will be discussed from the point of view of the presence of the *sinthome*, which is presented as an additional, fourth element of the R.S.I. model. At the same time, the essential role of balance will be investigated by means of a closer look at the aspect of the Symbolic and its exaggerated representation in Jodorowsky's film. The final discussion of power and authority in the analyzed works expands on the meaning of action and balance in the said works and investigates the connections between power, language, and ideology. The thesis ends with a discussion of the role of power both in the formation of ideologies as well as in the possibility of their understanding and potential altering.

Thus, the thesis analyzes Daumal's *Mount Analogue* and Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain* with a specifically chosen method and psychoanalytical theoretical background (i.e. Lacanian R.S.I.) that help to highlight the essential position of language, ideology, and power in the works in question. The investigation of the interplay of the mentioned concepts reveals a series of important conclusions about the interconnections between the roles of language, ideology, and power and contributes to the ongoing debate of ideological regimes, possibilities of their understanding and transformation.



## Chapter 1 - Language

The following chapter will formulate the part of the theoretical background of the thesis that concerns three major topics of psychoanalysis, language, and ideology. The main goal of the two parts of the chapter is the definition of the concepts of language and ideology along with an investigation into the nature of psychoanalysis, its inner structures and its connection both to language and ideology. The topic of psychoanalysis will be explored with a focus on Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis and, specifically, Lacan's notion of R.S.I., or as it is also known — the Borromean knot, which consists of three functional areas of the human psyche, namely, the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. One of the main points of the discussion is the distinction between objective reality and Lacanian Real that forms an inseparable part of R.S.I. The distinction lies in the presumption of inaccessibility of 'authentic' reality and, on the other hand, in the formation of the Real supported by the processes of signification in the Symbolic and the formation of images in the Imaginary. Additionally, the position of meaning in the Lacanian topological model will be emphasized, while its connection to the Symbolic and the Imaginary, along with its opposition to the Real will be discussed in details. Ideology, in its turn, will be seen through the prism of the development of its definition — from its marxist roots, through ideology as an imposed mechanism of control, to neutralized definition that sees ideology as an innate structure by which human beings consciously understand and interpret internal and external reality. Language, in this respect, can be viewed as an underlying structure on which both psychoanalysis and ideology are based. Lacanian psychoanalysis, grounded in the assumption that 'the unconsciousness has a structure of language', does not only rely on language as an instrument of

analysis of its patients' experiences, it can be said that it creates narratives out of related experiences, and consequently fictionalizes its subjects in order to treat them. The second part of the chapter will address the relations between ideology and language with the understanding of the latter as the primary structure of ideology. The final paragraphs will assemble the discussed information in order to see why psychoanalysis may be an effective tool for the exploration of the topic of ideology and why it is a suitable instrument for cultural criticism.

## I.

Considering that psychoanalysis from Freud to Lacan and beyond has been inseparably connected to the studies of language and linguistic expression, its meaning and interpretation, it is logical to start the exploration of the link between language and psychoanalysis from the definition of the word 'language' that will be used in this work from this point onward. The definition of 'language' that can shed light on the interest psychoanalysis takes in linguistic expression stems from the pinnacle of the development of linguistics at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – from structuralism and semiotics. As it is defined in structuralist linguistics, primarily by Ferdinand de Saussure, language is a system of signs that allows communication and transmission of meaning between subjects by means of expression of ideas.<sup>1</sup> Such a definition of language, which privileges the importance of expression, seems to lack an essential aspect. Language, apart from being a tool of information exchange, is also a means by which individuals understand reality. Therefore, language takes part not only in individual exchanges of information, but also in the formation of the description of reality, identification and self-identification. It is not the matter of separate languages, but of general structures of language (to be more specific: Lacanian *langage* that does not distinguish between different languages, be it English, Chinese, or any other language) that operate on the basis of and according to biological and cognitive predispositions of the mind (e.g. the cognitive economy principle, simplicity over

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) 15-16.

complexity and the privileging of binarism)<sup>2</sup> that tend to form a meaning that contributes to a limiting understanding of reality.

This can be further illustrated by the words of Nietzsche concerning ‘the original form’ that Peter Dews evokes in ‘Adorno, Post-structuralism and the Critique of Identity’:

one leaf is never quite like another, so it is certain that the concept of leaf is constructed by an arbitrary dropping of individual differences [...]; and this awakens the idea that there is something in nature besides leaves which would be ‘leaf’, that is to say an original form [...]. The overlooking of the individual gives us the form, whereas nature knows no forms and no concepts [...], but only an X, which is inaccessible and indefinable to us.<sup>3</sup>

This inaccessibility of X, the ‘overlooking of the individual’, the reduction, all of which become reflected in language, condition the existence of limits in the description and understanding of reality.

In the course of the development of psychoanalysis, the problem of limits in the understanding of reality is precisely the point, where Lacanian psychoanalysis breaks off the agreement with structural linguistics and where previous, Saussurean definition of language and its role, begins its further development. The definition offered above shows a fundamental problem in the structuralist view of language and its relation to reality. This issue is precisely the one that Lacan attempts to address in his rethinking of Saussurean semiotics, specifically in his reevaluation of the balanced relationship between the signifier and the signified. According to the reformed hierarchical relationship (the signifier *over* the signified) that Lacan offers in ‘The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious’, the

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<sup>2</sup> The principle of ‘cognitive economy’ is based on the method of ‘inductive systematization’ (‘simplicity, harmony, uniformity etc.’) that allows one to use mental resources economically by seeking patterns as well as the simplest solutions to cognitive problems – as it is explained by Nicholas Rescher in *Cognitive Economy: The Economic Dimension of the Theory of Knowledge* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989) p.88-89. In certain cases, the principle leads to errors and misjudgments as it tends to rely on previous experiences and recognizable patterns instead of using the cognitive resources to make a series of new conclusions about each particular problem.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Dews, ‘Adorno, Post-structuralism and the Critique of Identity’ in *Mapping Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2012) 56.

emphasis is transferred to the impossibility of any real access to reality.<sup>4</sup> Instead, what emerges as the Real, following Lacanian terminology, is a distortion of reality<sup>5</sup> produced by ‘incomplete-failed symbolization’<sup>6</sup> and generally governed by the laws of so-called R.S.I.

The difference between reality and the Real is central to Lacanian psychoanalysis and plays a crucial role in the three functional areas of the human psyche, which, apart from the Real, are the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. Reality can be defined as the objective world, that which exists independently of the human perception of it. The Real is described on several occasions throughout Lacan’s works as ‘the impossible’<sup>7</sup> and is always held in opposition to reality. Slavoj Žižek writes that in Lacanian psychoanalysis ‘not only does the world — as a given whole of objects — not exist, [...] neither do language and subject exist’; and while this ‘absolutism of the signifier’, along with the refusal to ‘take into account the objective world’, and the limitation of his theory ‘to the interplay of subject and language’ is, according to Žižek, the reason of frequent objections to the psychoanalytical theory in question, it is its defining feature.<sup>8</sup> The Real is unattainable in a sense that it lies beyond the reach of language, or, in other words, there is no direct access to that which constitutes the Real, that is why the subject Lacanian psychoanalysis deals with is uncovered with the help of the Symbolic and the Imaginary.

The Symbolic, contrary to the Real, consists of linguistic components and is based on the functioning of signification. Here, in the Symbolic, the hierarchy — signifier over signified — reveals itself; it can be said that it is the area of cultural mythology, where signs operate based on the cultural knowledge and contribute to the formation of the Imaginary. The Imaginary, the area of imagination, is where images are built through the signifying functions of the Symbolic. An excellent

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<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious’ in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W&W Norton & Company, 2001) 1292.

<sup>5</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2012) 26.

<sup>6</sup> Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* 21.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016) 98.

<sup>8</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008) 77-78.

example of Lacanian Imaginary can be observed in his ‘mirror stage’ theory. The theory holds that an infant (6-18 months old) undergoes the so-called ‘mirror stage’, in which through identification with its own reflection as an external object, the child forms an *imago* that represents its body through the process of subjective alienation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, an image of the body is created as not only something alienated (the only category that can be grasped, as it is impossible for a system to understand itself without critical distance), but also that, which is constructed by means of language and hence is strictly Imaginary. Although, the production of speech originates from all of the three functioning areas, it can be noted that only the Symbolic and the Imaginary are themselves accessible for language.

In his 22nd seminar (1974-1975), known under the name ‘R.S.I.’, Lacan stresses that the space between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, which, according to his numerous topological illustrations, can also be found in direct opposition to the Real, is the one that contains meaning.<sup>10</sup> All of the three functional areas are presented in a form of a Borromean knot, where each of the three toruses correspond to the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary (fig.1).<sup>11</sup> The chosen knot has a specific feature, namely, if one of the toruses breaks the connection with the others, the two remaining toruses are also separated. This topological illustration supports the notion of indivisibility of the three functional areas, whose connection is a necessary condition for the functioning of the human psyche. Meaning, in this case, is situated in the empty space formed at the intersection of two rings that symbolize the Symbolic and the Imaginary (fig.2).<sup>12</sup> This demonstrates that meaning in Lacan’s theory is dependant on linguistic results produced by the functioning areas that have no means to reproduce objective reality authentically and in order to describe the latter can solely rely on language.

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<sup>9</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I*’ in *Écrits* (Oxon: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘R.S.I.’ in *Ornicar?* Nos.2-5 (Paris, 1975).

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016) 11.

<sup>12</sup> Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII* 36.

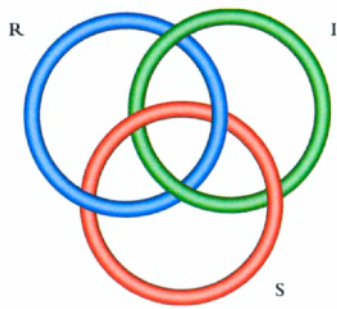


fig.1

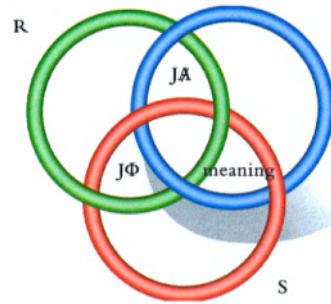


fig.2

To further investigate the connection between Lacanian psychoanalytical theory and language, it is important to explore how it sees its own subjects, namely, what the human psyche is according to Lacanian psychoanalysis and what are the exact structures it works with. Dealing with psychoanalysis inevitably implies the understanding of the unconsciousness. Lacan famously stated that ‘what the psychoanalytical experience discovers in the unconsciousness is the whole structure of language’.<sup>13</sup> The connection between language and structures of the mind and psyche seem to be obvious; however, it is important to stress that not only human description of reality is based on language, the very essence of the mental processes and mechanisms, even the unconsciousness itself, according to Lacan, operate by means of structures similar to those of language and, therefore, they are subjected to the same laws and possess the same predispositions and weaknesses as language does. Moreover, the human being as such is defined throughout Lacan’s works with the help of a portmanteau word — ‘parlêtre’ (*parler* and *être*) — from which it is evident that the existence of human beings, and especially their self-identification and self-interpretation, is inseparable from speech and language.

On the other hand, the approach psychoanalysis offers its patients is the one that is also fully dependant on language. From the basic form of treatment through psychoanalytical sessions at which patients relate their problems by means of linguistic expression, to the interpretation of dreams that are examined through their descriptions, and Freudian analysis of jokes and speech errors, known as

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious’ in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W&W Norton & Company, 2001) 1290.

slips, the subject of psychoanalytical treatment consists of language.<sup>14</sup> Louis Althusser justly notices:

Freud himself said everything depended on language. [...] [He] studied the ‘mechanisms’ and ‘laws’ of dreams, reducing their variants to two: displacement and condensation. Lacan recognized these as two essential figures of speech, called in linguistics metonymy and metaphor. Hence, slips, failures, jokes and symptoms, like the elements of dreams themselves, become signifiers, inscribed in the chain of an unconscious discourse.<sup>15</sup>

Speaking of Freud, it can be said that his psychoanalysis not only stems from language, uses it as a tool for analysis, it also turns its subjects into pure linguistic expression consistent of symbols and subsequently forms comprehensible narratives out of related experience. These narratives both in terms of their coherent structures and the approaches applied to them are closely related to fiction. All of these types of linguistic expression (retold daily experiences, dreams, jokes and slips) are analysed in order to detect traces of symptoms that in their turn denote the presence of mental disorders. Objectively, all a psychoanalyst can gain access to is linguistic expression that is later arranged and analysed in such a manner that each element has its own meaning, which, therefore, allows for the entire narrative to be unequivocally interpreted.

As for Lacanian psychoanalysis, it evolved with respect to its predecessor with the exception of the level of consciousness with which the theory’s dependence on language is used. Lacanian psychoanalysis acknowledges that it works with language and its products, with symbols processed in the Symbolic, and with entire images based on the said symbols that are produced by means of the Imaginary. One can illustrate and sum up the aforementioned information on the structure of R.S.I. and the role of language for psychoanalysis with the words of Lacan that are transcribed in his 23rd seminar (1975-1976). Towards the end of his seminar on the *sinthome*, Lacan proclaims that ‘there’s no collective

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<sup>14</sup> Freud’s analysis of linguistic expression as it can be observed in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconsciousness* (1905).

<sup>15</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: NLB, 1977) 191.

unconsciousness'.<sup>16</sup> He continues by explaining that it is with a 'living tongue' that a person creates the unconsciousness, which means that '[t]here are only particular unconsciousnesses' and that 'one creates [them] from one minute to the next'.<sup>17</sup> Having stated this, he makes another commentary on the distinction between the Real and reality:

I draw a firm distinction between on the one hand, the supposed real, which is that organ, so to speak, that has nothing whatsoever to do with an organ in the flesh, by which imaginary and symbolic are tied in a knot, and, on the other hand, that which plays its part in grounding the science of reality.<sup>18</sup>

The combination of these two ideas: the unconsciousness as the perpetually-created individual based on language, along with the strict distinction between the Real (the impossible, related to *dit-mansion*) and reality, leads to the conclusion — psychoanalysis occupies itself with narratives that are not grounded in reality and can therefore be considered to be a special type of fiction.

It is important to remember that the approach psychoanalysis uses does not only analyze its subjects, it can be said that it creates them as it interprets their language. The information a psychoanalyst receives becomes arranged according to the pre-existing theories of psychoanalysis and, therefore, it can be noted that psychoanalysis does not analyse the objective facts, instead it chooses the suitable parts of related experiences, interprets them according to the stable paradigm and, finally, finds matches in psychoanalytical description of disorders and complexes. For instance, one can witness the approach in action in numerous cases described by Freud in his writing (e.g. the story of 'Little Hans' whose phobia in accordance with Freud goes back to Oedipus complex, or treatment of Mr. Pankejeff — the case of 'The Wolf-Man' — whose depression Freud, through an analysis of the subject's dream, attributed to the latter supposedly being a witness of a primal scene).<sup>19</sup> Psychoanalysis attempts to decode the unconsciousness and to create a

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<sup>16</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016) 114.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Wolfman and Other Cases* (London: Penguin, 2003).



subjective 'self' according to its laws; it transform human experience into a narrative that is constructed with the help of chosen fictional (mythological) elements and plot structures.

However, psychoanalysis does not only approach its subjects as sources of narratives that can be analyzed in a way that is similar to the one fiction undergoes while being interpreted by critics, it sometimes resorts to direct analysis of subjects through literary writing they produce, thus, confirming its successful operation within the field of fiction. Among the examples, in the early days of psychoanalysis, is Freud's analysis of Fyodor Dostoyevsky through *Brothers Karamazov* in 'Dostoyevsky and Parricide', where the psychoanalyst connects parricide with Dostoyevsky's epilepsy by means of the exploration of the text of Dostoyevsky's novel.<sup>20</sup> Lacan, in a similar manner, analyses James Joyce's *Sinthome*, the addition to the R.S.I. theory that Lacan presents in his 23rd seminar, through the texts of his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>21</sup> Psychoanalysis, thus, primarily examines the symbolic verbal dimension (*dit-mansion*) that in the process of analysis acquires a form of fiction based on psychoanalytical theories and its definition of disorders, which themselves are rooted in fictional, mythological and dramatic narratives. In the words of Althusser, these imposed structures in the use of psychoanalysis that create their very own fictional subjects declare the inevitability of the 'Law of Human Order'<sup>22</sup>: 'the Oedipus complex is the dramatic structure, the 'theatrical machine' imposed by the Law of Culture on every involuntary, conscripted candidate to humanity'.<sup>23</sup>

The 'Law of Human Order' and the 'Law of Culture' which Althusser refers to in his essay on Freud and Lacan is the domain of a cultural, sociological, historical, even anthropological origin. He insists that psychoanalysis exclusively deals with the cultural, while attempting to operate in the domain of science, in

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<sup>20</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion, Civilisation and its Discontents and Other Works* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961).

<sup>21</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: NLB, 1977) 197.

<sup>23</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* 198.

other words, the biological.<sup>24</sup> The psychoanalytical theory, be it the version suggested by Freud, or the one developed by Lacan, does not possess all of the essential scientific components, which, following Althusser's words, are practical, technical, and theoretical.<sup>25</sup> Psychoanalysis, therefore, does not concentrate on the exploration of objective reality, which is among the primary preoccupation of science, it dissects the unconsciousness by means of symbolical interpretation. The symbolical interpretation in question, as it has already been suggested, is grounded in linguistic and semiotic structures that from the perspective of psychoanalysis represent the human psyche. The area of investigation of psychoanalysis, thus, shifts from the biological and the objective to the cultural and subjective. Additionally, when the subjective is analysed with the help of uniform tools — fictional and mythological elements that themselves occupy the domain of the cultural — the subjective and individual turns into the intersubjective and cultural. Indeed, Lacan acknowledges that there is no collective unconsciousness and that each human psyche functions according to its individual traits and their corresponding developments, but at the same time, Lacanian psychoanalysis uses the same interpretive approach that distributes each individual case into one of its pre-established categories. The effect is similar to the traditional Freudian psychoanalysis — the received information, after being analyzed, is subjected to strict, usually unequivocal, interpretation in accordance with what is considered to be a narrative that suits the said 'Law of Culture'. It is, however, not to say that psychoanalysis does not have its effect on the subjects it aims to treat; on the contrary, it raises the following questions: if it works, then why, and what are the preconditions for its effectivity?

This unveils yet another point that proves to be crucial for the present investigation: psychoanalysis, seen from the perspective of fictionalization of its subjects, accentuates the mechanisms of functioning of ideological factors that are at play behind the human psyche.

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<sup>24</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*.

<sup>25</sup> Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* 183.

## II.

In order to continue the discussion, another important definition has to be made. Again, as it was the case with the definition of language that was chosen for the purposes of this thesis, the definition of ideology will be composed with regard to the rapid historical development of interest in the topic (prior to the second part of the 20th century), before the radical changes in the understanding of ideology took place, and, in contrast, after it.

Traditionally, the marxist understanding of ideology revolved around the notions of false consciousness, class struggle, and later — cultural hegemony.<sup>26</sup> These notions contribute to the understanding of ideology as a set of imposed, usually false or illusory ideas exploited by the ruling classes and states to their own benefit. Althusser, relying on the basis of the marxist definition, wrote that ‘[i]deology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence’<sup>27</sup> and that ‘the State apparatus secures by repression (from the most brutal physical force, via administrative commands and interdictions, to open and tacit censorship) the political conditions for the action of the Ideological State Apparatuses’.<sup>28</sup> Although, Althusser’s notion of ideology included various types of ideological influence, such as political, religious, educational, and cultural ones among others, the focus remained on class and its interests. In accordance with Althusser, ideology also remained a factor of oppression, a dominant structure, which negatively affected the working class as well as simultaneously aimed to achieve beneficial results for the elites.

The definition of ideology started to change when structuralism reached the point of its transformation into post-structuralism. The boundaries of the definition were becoming increasingly blurred and the idea of ideology was expanded to include a wider variety of the areas of its influence, while the influence itself increased its arsenal. Roland Barthes invented a specific term —

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<sup>26</sup> ‘false consciousness’, ‘class struggle’, and ‘cultural hegemony’ as they are understood in the definitions of Marx, Engels, and Gramsci.

<sup>27</sup> Louis Althusser, *On Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008) 36.

<sup>28</sup> Althusser, *On Ideology* 24.

mythologies<sup>29</sup> — that he used to describe the linguistic and semiotic influences that in their processes resembled the mechanisms of operation of ideology. This event coincides with the beginning of a new understanding of ideology where emphasis is shifted to the domain of the cultural. In his work, Barthes discusses how mythologies invade everything from sports to literature, from advertising to manufacture, and even food. For him, the mythological influence consists of an altered representation of reality that, nevertheless, bears negative connotations connected to the illusory origins of mythologies and retains the idea of a ruling class responsible for the maintenance of mythologies. ‘Myth hides nothing’ writes Barthes, ‘its function is to distort’;<sup>30</sup> and later notes that ‘bourgeois norms are experienced as the evident laws of natural order’.<sup>31</sup> Barthes’s suggestion comes down to the view of mythology as a ‘type of speech’<sup>32</sup> responsible for the formation of human perspective with which the cultural world can be perceived and interpreted.

The original understanding of ideology continued to dissolve and transform. In 1980, Göran Therborn, offered a more neutral definition of ideology:

[ideology] will not necessarily imply any particular content (falseness, miscognition, imaginary as opposed to real character) [...]. Rather it will refer to that aspect of the human condition under which human beings live their lives as conscious actors in a world that makes sense to them to varying degrees. Ideology is the medium through which this consciousness and meaningfulness operate.<sup>33</sup>

It is worth stressing that Therborn’s definition includes the part that transforms ideology as it used to be defined — an imposed structure of oppression — into an instrument that plays a significant role in the formation of human consciousness.

When the definition of ideology becomes more neutral, that is to say, with the elimination of negative undertones, it is only logical to start questioning the

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<sup>29</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies* 145.

<sup>31</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies* 166.

<sup>32</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies* 131.

<sup>33</sup> Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1999) 1-2.

necessity of critique of ideology. In other words, if the problem in question is not as acute as it used to be, do human beings still live in a society, where individual freedom is under the threat of ideology? The answer to this question will help to shape the final definition of ideology as it will highlight the contemporary issues connected to the understanding of ideology and the mechanisms of its function.

In order to answer this question, one can address Žižek's view on ideology that seems to be in partial agreement with the two previous theorists, but at the same time, it takes into consideration the latest decline of the importance of ideology in theoretical fields. In the introduction to *Mapping Ideology*, Žižek defines ideology as 'a systematically distorted communication: a text, in which under the influence of unavowed social interests (of domination etc.), a gap separates its 'official', public meaning from its actual intention — that is to say, in which we are dealing with an unreflected tension between the explicit enunciated content of the text in its pragmatic presupposition'.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Žižek automatically transfers the discussion of ideology into the domain signification, which, in Lacanian terms corresponds to the Symbolic, and instantly elevates language to the position of extreme importance. From this, another crucial point follows, when Žižek insists that ideology is always already present, it does not hide the reality, it is innate both to the reality and to human beings. "Ideological' is not the 'false consciousness' of a (social) being,' writes Žižek in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 'but this being itself in so far as it is supported by 'false consciousness".<sup>35</sup> He continues:

[i]n the more sophisticated versions of the critics of ideology [...] it is not a question of seeing things (that is, social reality) as they 'really are', of throwing away the distorting spectacles of ideology; the main point is to see how the reality itself cannot reproduce itself without this so-called ideological mystification. The mask is not simply hiding the real state of things; the ideological distortion is written into its very essence.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2012) 10.

<sup>35</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008) 16.

<sup>36</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 24-25.

The characteristics of ideology that Žižek demonstrates support the notion of the impossibility of the existence of social (or cultural) reality, or general interpretation of reality, without inherent ideological structures that are based on the processes of signification and largely depend on language. Finally, Žižek concludes that considering the misconception of the previous theses, the critique of ideology is not a futile enterprise: ‘[t]he fundamental level of ideology, however, is not that of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself. And at this level, we of course are far from being a post-ideological society’.<sup>37</sup>

There exist several reasons why ideology got rid of the negative aspects, such as domination and oppression, in its definition in the past decades. The first reason may be attributed to the rise of entertainment industry through which ideological control is exercised in a much more efficient manner in comparison to strict laws and direct commands. The tactics with which ideology is spread have been changed and now ideology primarily occupies the cultural field. Such a change allows for its better dissolution in the medium of its presentation as well as subsequent acceptance by the masses. The consumption of ideological products becomes voluntary as it is linked with cultural objects and cultural knowledge, and therefore with high emotional responses, specifically pleasure. Again, returning to Žižek, ‘we are not really obeying the authority but simply following our judgement, which tells us that the authority deserves to be obeyed in so far as it is good, wise, beneficent’.<sup>38</sup> The current status of ideology is not that of a concealed malignant mechanism that interferes with ‘authentic’ perception of reality and prevents the masses from the understanding of the ‘real’ political situation, but rather that of consciously and hence voluntarily accepted set of directives and interpretative recommendations presented through pleasurable media.

Another reason may lie in the advanced comprehension of the division between the Real and reality that unveils the ubiquitous nature of interpretative devices that do not allow access to the immediate objective reality and by that

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<sup>37</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 30.

<sup>38</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 35.

always deal with the dimensions of the Symbolic and the Imaginary. The latter are always under the influence of ideologies as the analysis and interpretation of signs is executed according to the current ideological directives. Therefore, the definition of ideology underwent a considerable metamorphosis that consisted of the transformation of the understanding of ideology from purely political mechanism of control to a method of direction of interpretative devices whose origins are supported by the natural predispositions of the human psyche.

Taking into consideration the development of the understanding of ideology and its transformation in the recent years, one can define ideology according to the following characteristics: 1. ideology is a constitutive part of the means by which human beings perceive and interpret both external and internal phenomena; 2. simultaneously, ideology functions according to the natural predispositions of the human psyche with which objective reality is interpreted; 3. ideologies exist in all areas of culture and knowledge; 4. ideology is based on the processes of signification that are expressed in language. Additionally, ideology, as a source of power, can be intentionally realized as a set of directives used in order to support or undermine the current cultural and/or ideological situation.

One of the characteristics of the definition, mainly the one that connects ideology to language, needs to be considered in more detail. Language is the most important aspect of ideology and it can be said it is its 'building material'. This may be viewed on several levels, starting with the processes of signification. Language relies on signification, while ideology uses the instability of signifiers, the possibility of their indeterminacy, in order to interpret reality in accordance with current ideological preferences. Ideology forms an interpretative construction that organizes the perceived reality and there are no other means of realization of this enterprise but through language. It is language that forms the framework of ideology, its direction and ideological content itself, and it is with the help of language that these basic ideological elements can be conveyed. One may speculate and doubt that ideology can be strictly defined as language, but it is difficult to deny that there is no ideology without language.

Language, therefore, is the guarantor of the execution of all ideological contracts; it defines the rules and guarantees that human subjects comply with

them. No following the terms of contract is possible without a definite code the internal subjects are made to follow; ideology in its turn determines the terms, attempts to ensure that they are clear and unambiguous. Ideology is written in language, it is maintained by language, and reinforced on the basis of innate characteristics and potentialities of the power of language. There is no ideology outside of language, since without language there is no ideological power, there are no hierarchies, and there is no meaning which ideology can refer to.

The following question remains: is it possible to avoid ideological influences altogether? The answer, yet again, should start with the discussion of language and the possibilities of avoidance of linguistic and semiotic dependence. It is the answer that calls for the formation of an 'independent' understanding of reality delivered from fictionalization, the one that provides the necessary conditions for the understanding of the processes of signification and the ways in which language acts as a guarantor of ideological domination. According to the circumstances conditioned by the interplay of ideology and language, there exist two options of escape that differ in their effectiveness and their levels of radicality.

The first option suggests a complete refusal of participation. The method operates by means of silence and inaction. The effectiveness of the method is undeniable; however, it also leads to isolation and exclusion. To break ties with ideology and language means to enter the state of inaccessibility that proves to be effective only in relation to the individuals who adopt the said method. Isolation does not allow communication with those under the influence of ideology, it is a dead end, where no further development is possible.

The second option relies on the knowledge of the ways in which linguistic processes and processes of signification function; however, it does not involve isolation. On the contrary, the method uses direct interaction with linguistic and ideological inability to process multiplicities, diversity and indeterminacy. The method successfully employs these properties in order to destabilize the power of language and ideology. Importantly, what is achieved, is not complete isolation, from which it is impossible to continue communication and development, but a balance between the state of full dependence and exclusion.



Žižek announces that ‘stepping out of (what we experience as) ideology is the very form of our enslavement to it’<sup>39</sup>, he writes that we may ‘renounce the very notion of extra-ideological reality and accept that all we are dealing with are symbolic fictions, the plurality of discursive universes, never ‘reality’ — such a quick, slick ‘postmodern’ solution, however, is ideology par excellence’.<sup>40</sup> However, Žižek does not deny that there, nevertheless, exists a way to avoid ideology: ‘ideology is not all; it is possible to assume a place that enables us to maintain a distance from it, but this place from which one can denounce ideology must remain empty, it cannot be occupied by any positively determined reality’.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, the only effective way by which one can avoid ideological influences consists of 1. conscious understanding of the mechanisms of its function, 2. destabilization of ideology by means of indeterminacy presented in opposition to the defined and structured logic of ideology, diversity and multiplicity instead of identity, 3. operation with the help of ideology’s own tools (e.g. its language).

Ideology is of immediate importance to the question of psychoanalysis and its effectivity. Psychoanalysis is linked to ideology — it creates one and, upon a closer examination of its functioning, has the capacity to explain general mechanisms and structures at work behind other ideologies. One of the most important instruments of psychoanalysis is the framework that consists of narratives and tropes with the help of which patients’ disorders are analyzed and interpreted. What psychoanalysis wants to achieve is the exploration of the unconscious in order to construct a ‘healthy’ consciousness. The theory of psychoanalysis creates a limited selection of points of reference (e.g. symbols, complexes) that define the objective experiences of its patients in such a manner that allows a psychoanalyst to build a unified picture of a patient’s problem that lies in the unconsciousness in order to suggest further treatment. The final picture, notwithstanding the astonishing scope of human experiences, never transcends the frames established by psychoanalysis and its points of reference. This leads to the

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<sup>39</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2012) 6.

<sup>40</sup> Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* 17.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

creation of a perspective that conditions both patients' and psychoanalysts' understanding of internal and external reality and corresponds to the first point in the aforementioned definition of ideology.

Additionally to its resemblance to ideology, psychoanalysis can be useful in the understanding of the mechanisms of other ideologies and that is what makes it effective — it does not only create its own ideology that it writes on its subjects, it recognizes how other ideologies function precisely because it itself operates according to the laws of ideology. Lacanian R.S.I., for instance, is a powerful tool for the unveiling of the confusion between, on the one hand, the work of the Symbolic and the Imaginary (the dimensions in which ideology is grounded), and, on the other — objective reality. This double-sided experience with ideology, with its manifestations and inner mechanisms, is exactly what makes psychoanalysis effective, on the condition that it stays within the ideological frames. And it is precisely the reason why psychoanalysis is a popular instrument of cultural criticism.

Thus, there exists a set of theoretically important connections between the three subjects of the presented theoretical background, i.e. psychoanalysis, language, and ideology. Psychoanalysis, according to the provided definition of language, not only uses the latter as an instrument for the analysis of its subjects, it creates the entire dimension available for interpretation by means of its fictionalization and transformation of experiences into narratives. This, in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis, can be explained with the help of R.S.I., or the Borromean knot - a topological model suggested by Lacan in order to depict the relationship between the three functional areas of the human psyche, that is, the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. Lacanian psychoanalysis creates a subject that operates by means of language. In the offered topological model the Real, the subjective understanding of reality unattainable to language, is 'impossible' without the other two functions of the Symbolic and the Imaginary; the latter create the understanding of the external and internal world through signification

and further development of images in the Symbolic and the Imaginary correspondingly. Such a perspective on psychoanalysis links it to ideology, which also deals with the understanding of reality by means of meaningful construction of the Real through processes of signification. Ideology, in its turn, is also based on language, with the help of which it conveys its directives and recommendations, supervises the fulfilment of contracts, and maintains the reinforcement of the basic characteristics of language for its own benefit. Finally, as a conclusion, it can be noted that psychoanalysis operates similarly to ideology, especially when seen through its link to language; moreover, psychoanalysis, based on its operating mechanisms, can be used in order to reveal the inner structures of the functioning of ideology. This specificity in the connections between language, ideology, and psychoanalysis condition an opportunity of the usage of psychoanalysis in order to explore and understand the functioning of ideology; simultaneously, this close relation of psychoanalysis to ideology is what makes psychoanalysis a suitable choice in the field of cultural criticism.

## Chapter 2 - Method

The present chapter attempts to formulate the specific methodological approach that will be used in order to analyze René Daumal's *Mount Analogue* and Alejandro Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain*. Psychoanalysis, which figures in the present conditions as the theory of choice, has always been criticized for its approaches both to therapy and its patients, and to cultural works that are analyzed with the help of its theory. Among the objections of psychiatrists, psychologists, and, on the other hand, cultural critics and theorists was the inflexibility of psychoanalysis, its inability to adapt to particular cases, and the determined ideological framework to which the analysands were subjected. As it has been mentioned before, psychoanalytical theories can be effectively used in approaches to cultural phenomena; however, such actions have to be exercised with caution in order to avoid ideological constraints, excessive reduction and lack of attention to the details of analyzed works. Another important aspect, when it comes to the application of psychoanalysis, lies in the identification of its inclination towards the disclosure of universal 'truths' that frequently serve the purposes of psychoanalysis itself. As a counterpoint to psychoanalysis with its 'scientific' endeavours and aspiration for 'truth', pataphysics will be discussed in details. Considering that pataphysics as a complex collection of ideas is too difficult for definition, which will inevitably be simplified, it will be seen through its essential characteristics. The latter being: the reconciliation of opposites, preference of the particular over the universal, and fluidity of thought practically realized through creativity, improvisation, comic as well as absurdist elements. As a result of this synthesis, the theoretical and methodological approach of choice will be formulated. The approach, first of all, will be designed in accordance with the

analyzed text and film; both will be considered in isolation in contrast to traditional comparative analysis. Psychoanalysis will figure as the theoretical background of choice, while its approach to cultural works will be replaced by another one that takes into consideration the specifics of the analyzed works in question.

### I.

Psychoanalysis constructs an ideological dimension, which allows psychoanalysts to analyze and interpret their subjects according to the laws established within the said dimension. Essentially, it arranges the experiences of its patients in such a way that they correspond to the theoretical background that is pre-installed as a basis of psychoanalysis. A psychoanalyst does not rely on received information in order to draw a conclusion about patients' conditions, he or she looks for the hints that would allow to connect patients' experiences to psychoanalytic mythology. It is always an inevitable return to the fundamental complexes (e.g. Oedipal desire to kill one's father and to occupy his place at one's mother's side) that looms behind a mental disorder and it is always a childhood trauma that is at the root of the problem. It is important to note that subjects themselves have little to no say in the formation of their diagnosis — no matter what their experiences are, they will be reduced to the fundamental psychoanalytical tropes — and it is precisely the reason why psychoanalysis allows analysis without direct contact with its patients; what psychoanalysis needs for its successful functioning is nothing more than a text. From this perspective, the psychoanalytical practice can be regarded as an act of violent imposition of interpretative norms and in its essence it reminds one of yet another character from Greek mythology known under the name of Procrustes.

In 1884, Edgar Allan Poe wrote a short story that once again praised the unique deductive abilities of a fictional Parisian detective known under the name of C. Auguste Dupin. The story, titled 'The Purloined Letter', revolves around a letter written by the Queen's lover and subsequently stolen from her by a certain

Minister D. Dupin gets involved in a story when the police, despite being motivated by promised monetary reward from the Queen, acknowledge their inability to find the letter and return it to the Queen. Obviously, Dupin succeeds — not only does he find the letter, he also steals it from the Minister and delivers it to the Prefect of police; however, before the story is resolved and the methods of the amateur detective are disclosed, the readers learn about the differences in the approaches used by the Prefect and Dupin. The secret of Dupin's success lies, first of all, in the fact that the amateur detective does not dismiss the Minister's abilities to conceal the letter based on the fact that he is a poet (and all poets, according to the Prefect, 'are fools')<sup>42</sup>; Dupin reveals that the Minister is not only a poet, but also a mathematician, and thus, possessing the characteristics of both a poet and a mathematician, he is able to 'reason well'.<sup>43</sup> Dupin adds that in case the Minister were only a mathematician, the Prefect would have no need to ask him for help, referring to the problematic reasoning of mathematicians who tend to extrapolate their specific logic. 'The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure algebra*, are abstract or general truths,' says Dupin, '[b]ut the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths*, through habit, as if they were of an absolutely general applicability — as the world indeed imagines them to be'.<sup>44</sup> Supposing that the logic of the Minister combines the aspects characteristic both of poets and of mathematicians, the detective continues: 'my measures were adapted to [the Minister's] capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded'.<sup>45</sup> Dupin does not deny that the methods of the Prefect were rigorous, however, they were not oriented towards the specificity of the case: '[t]he measures, then, [...] were good in their kind, and well executed; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed, to which he

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<sup>42</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Purloined Letter' in *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006) 338.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Poe 338-9.

<sup>45</sup> Poe 339.

forcibly adapts his designs'.<sup>46</sup> These lines show that Dupin, when it comes to investigation and analysis of suspects, favours the individual over general; he also acknowledges the advantages of the type of logic that does not exclusively operate by means of strict laws and allows space for creativity and improvisation. The approach of the amateur detective, juxtaposed to the approach chosen by the police, is the exact opposite of the mentioned 'Procrustean bed', a mechanism designed to forcibly fit everything in its strict frame of limitation.

Lacan showed interest in 'The Purloined Letter' and issued a seminar that discussed the details of the detective story. In this seminar, Lacan sets a specific goal — 'to illustrate a truth [...] — namely, that it is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject — by demonstrating in a story the major determination the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier'.<sup>47</sup> It would be, however, more precise to say that Lacan did not 'show interest' in Poe's story, but rather took an example from it in order to demonstrate the application of the psychoanalytic theory. Lacan analyses constituents of the story, starting with the description of the two main scenes, he then proceeds to the three significant glances that figure in the story and later to all of the dialogues; relying on the structures of the story, he announces that displacement and intersubjective repetition will be central for his analysis, while the letter itself will be seen as 'a pure signifier' that in its reservation of a specific place between the main characters becomes responsible for said displacement and repetition.<sup>48</sup> The discussion, based on the examples from the short story, is designed to elaborate on the fluid nature of the Symbolic in contrast to the Real that 'is always and in every case in its place'.<sup>49</sup> Since the letter, according to Lacan, is the element that activates the movement of the Symbolic and 'the subject' in its turn 'follows the channels of the symbolic',<sup>50</sup> multiple subjects of 'The Purloined Letter', by 'coming into the letter's

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<sup>46</sup> Poe 335.

<sup>47</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'' in *Écrits* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006) 12.

<sup>48</sup> Lacan, 'Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'' 16.

<sup>49</sup> Lacan, 'Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'' 25.

<sup>50</sup> Lacan, 'Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'' 30.

possession', find themselves possessed by the letter's meaning.<sup>51</sup> What actually happens during the analysis can be described as a mirror that faces another mirror: while Lacan defines the letter in Poe's story as a defining factor in the identification of the three subjects (the Queen, the Minister, Dupin), the short story itself acquires the characteristics assigned to the letter and thus becomes inaccessible to psychoanalysis since the only thing it does effectively is reflecting the psychoanalytical theory that is being imposed on it. In other words, what Lacanian analysis of 'The Purloined Letter' demonstrates is nothing else but a set of psychoanalytical instruments in action.

Jacques Derrida made an exhaustive commentary on Lacan's seminar in 'Le Facteur de la Vérité', where he criticized the approach of Lacanian psychoanalysis (to be more precise, the usage of Freudian ideas applied by Lacan) to literary writing. The critique included disinterest in the text of 'The Purloined Letter' as such. Derrida insisted that Lacan in his analysis pursues only the content, the story, but not the 'narration itself',<sup>52</sup> so that '[t]he displacement of the signifier, therefore, is analyzed as a signified, as the recounted object of a short story'.<sup>53</sup> From the perspective of Derrida, Lacan's seminar seems to ignore important aspects of Poe's writing, it reduces and reinterprets the content in order to simplify the analysis and make the elements of the story suitable for the psychoanalytic theory. Derrida emphasizes that the three scenes of 'The Purloined Letter' are reduced to only two and he notes that where Lacan sees 'one or two 'triads,' there is always the supplement of a square whose opening complicates the calculations'<sup>54</sup> Among a series of objections to Lacanian approach to literary writing, Derrida names Lacan's desire to use the text of 'The Purloined Letter' in order to demonstrate the psychoanalytical truth, inscribed in the message of the story. Derrida writes: 'Poe's text, whose status is never examined — Lacan simply calls it 'fiction' — , finds itself invoked as an 'example.' An example destined to 'illustrate,' in a didactic procedure, a law and a truth forming the proper object of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Le Facteur de la Vérité' in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987) 427.

<sup>53</sup> Derrida, 'Le Facteur de la Vérité' 428.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



a seminar. Literary writing, here, is brought into an *illustrative* position: ‘to illustrate’ here meaning to read the general law in the example, to make clear the meaning of a law or of a truth, to bring them to light in striking or exemplary fashion. The text is in the service of truth, and of a truth that is taught.’<sup>55</sup>

The theoretical interplay that originated from the discussion of ‘The Purloined Letter’ uncovers an important interaction between the methods of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Poe’s text, and the deconstructive perspective suggested by Derrida. The latter demonstrated that Lacan’s analysis of ‘The Purloined Letter’ approaches only those parts of the text in question that can be easily subjected to the psychoanalytical theory, leaving out those aspects that do not fit the general picture. The practice can be compared to the one of ideological sieve that accepts only those elements that correspond to its inner laws and discards everything else that it deems unsuitable or damaging to its internal organization. Such an approach that attempts to build one coherent picture to the detriment of the results of analysis itself establishes a limit on the possibilities of psychoanalysis. The position of the psychoanalyst, thus, is the one of Poe’s Prefect, who, having mastered his logical thinking as a detective, can be compared to Dupin’s description of a mathematician that attempts to achieve ‘general applicability’ of methods and theories that are significantly more effective when applied selectively to the particular, instead of the general. Finally, the psychoanalyst in his attempt to teach the general truth through illustrative examples in the domain of cultural objects comes to resemble Procrustes himself in his desire to adjust and rearrange the world in accordance with his own pre-established limits and generated truths.

The question of constructed truths crystalized at the blurred border of ‘true’ and ‘false’, and the question of response to the reality possible beyond this border is the one that has been haunting both the field of sciences and cultural studies. The problem of truth, its definition and methods of achievement, arises everywhere where there is language, and the idea is not a new one (e.g. Hobbes: ‘For true and false are attributes of speech, not of things. And where speech is not,

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<sup>55</sup> Derrida, ‘Le Facteur de la Vérité’ 426.

there is neither truth nor [falsehood].<sup>56</sup>). With the rise of post-structuralism, the issue became central for many theoretical discourses. Jean Baudrillard suggested that the crisis of truth (e.g. the emergence of hyperreality that eliminates ‘any distinction between the real and the imaginary’<sup>57</sup>) foreshadows a greater crisis of meaning<sup>58</sup>, that there is ‘no hope for meaning’ for ‘meaning is mortal’ and that ‘[h]e who strikes with meaning is killed by meaning’.<sup>59</sup>

Outlining the ‘successive phases of the image’, Baudrillard proceeds from an authentic reflection of reality to its increasingly illusory depiction and finally to the terminal phase, the one of simulacrum, that ‘has no relation to any reality whatsoever’.<sup>60</sup> This final stage can be viewed as a ‘quick, slick ‘postmodern’ solution’ Žižek writes about in relation to ideology.<sup>61</sup> In other words, it may seem that Baudrillard reduces the experience of reality to a mere symbolic representation that does not allow access to the place from which a critique of ideology can be realized; however, it is important to understand that for Baudrillard, simulacrum acts as a surrogate of reality that for the perceiver becomes the reality itself. In the ‘era of simulacra and of simulation [...] everything is already dead and resurrected in advance’.<sup>62</sup> It is a procedure similar to the one described by Barthes — the incessant action of stealing and restoration of speech that creates the basis for the formation of mythologies.<sup>63</sup> Baudrillard illustrates the process of ‘resurrection’ with an example:

[...] Renaissance Christians were [fascinated] by the American Indians, those (human?) beings who had never known the word of Christ. Thus, at the beginning of colonization, there was a moment of bewilderment before the very possibility of escaping the universal law of the Gospel. There were two possible responses: either admit that this Law was not

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 23.

<sup>57</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2019) 2-3.

<sup>58</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 83.

<sup>59</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 161-4.

<sup>60</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 6.

<sup>61</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2012) 17.

<sup>62</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2019) 7.

<sup>63</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2009) 150.

universal, or exterminate the Indians to efface the evidence. [...] Americans flatter themselves for having brought the population of Indians back to pre-Conquest levels. One effaces everything and starts over. They even flatter themselves for doing better, for exceeding the original number.<sup>64</sup>

Elsewhere, Baudrillard writes: '[i]n the symbolic order, life, like everything else, is a crime if it survives unilaterally, if it is not seized and destroyed, given and returned'.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, Žižek's thought (i.e. ideology is not a source of illusion, or a mask that hides the truth of reality, but rather 'an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself'),<sup>66</sup> is not in dissonance with Baudrillard, for whom 'it is always a false problem to wish to restore the truth beneath the simulacrum'<sup>67</sup>, for there is no truth behind ideology or simulacrum that is waiting to be disclosed, both ideology and simulacrum acquire the characteristics of truth and authenticity through their constructed meaning.

'Information devours meaning. [...] Rather than producing meaning, it exhausts itself in the staging of meaning,' writes Baudrillard.<sup>68</sup> Returning to the 'The Purloined Letter', the approach Lacan uses in order to analyze the short story with the help of psychoanalysis can be described as the one that exhausts both the meaning of the text and the power of its own instruments through the process of creation of 'staged' meaning. It is the case of the one, who 'strikes with meaning' and through the power of imposed theoretical weight creates an 'image' of the text. However, Baudrillard hinted where a possible solution to the problem may be found: 'Challenge or imaginary science, only a *pataphysics of simulacra* can remove us from the system's strategy of simulation...'<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2019) 10-11.

<sup>65</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London: Sage, 2017) 153.

<sup>66</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2012) 30.

<sup>67</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2019) 27.

<sup>68</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 80.

<sup>69</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 154.

## II.

The importance of pataphysics<sup>70</sup> for the present discussion is conditioned by numerous aspects that, first and foremost, can be highlighted through the definition of the term. Before that can be accomplished, an outline of what pataphysics is not may prove to be useful. Pataphysics, despite its connections with other artistic and philosophical movements, is not a movement, but rather a set of ideas that surfaced in various cultural as well as scientific domains.<sup>71</sup> Roger Shattuck wrote that the idea of pataphysics

has always existed, ever since a man first scratched his head to quell the itch of reflective thought, ever since Socrates demonstrated to Meno that his slave boy had known the Pythagorean theorem all along, ever since the day Panurge defeated *the* English scholar in a disputation by signs, ever since Lewis Carroll established the equivalence of cabbages and kings. Not until the end of the nineteenth century, however, at a time when science, art, and religion were coming very close to bumping into one another in the dark, did ‘Pataphysics drop its disguises and disclose its intentions.’<sup>72</sup>

In order to define pataphysics, one would inevitably have to resort to a certain degree of selectiveness and generalization, since the term ‘pataphysics’, due to the specifics of its nature, resists univocal descriptions. One may start with Alfred Jarry’s classic definition, which says that ‘[p]ataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments’.<sup>73</sup> However, this will not be nearly enough as the offered definition is itself pataphysical and in order to be understood requires the basic understanding of pataphysical logic. The problem of the definition of pataphysics, according to Andrew Hugill, has two sides: ‘[t]here

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<sup>70</sup> The term pataphysics will be used throughout this work instead of ‘Pataphysics in order to distinguish between Jarry’s particular type of ‘Pataphysics and its other developments, as Hugill recommends in the introduction to *Pataphysics. A Useless Guide*.

<sup>71</sup> Andrew Hugill, *Pataphysics. A Useless Guide* (Cambridge US: MIT Press, 2012) 3.

<sup>72</sup> Roger Shattuck, ‘Superliminal Note’ in *Evergreen Review* 4 (1960) 24-33.

<sup>73</sup> Alfred Jarry, *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician: A Non-Scientific Novel* (Boston: Exact Change, 1996) 22.

is a risk of reduction: pataphysics is rich and complex, so anything that resembles a simplified ‘explanation’ will fail to do it justice. Conversely, there is the problem of taking it all too seriously’.<sup>74</sup> This double-sided obstacle discloses one of the defining features of pataphysics that demonstrates the reconciliation of opposites within the domain of pataphysics — the balance between seriousness and humour, complexity of ideas and their absurdism, abundance of scientific terms and their imaginary application. It seems that unlike many standard definitions that start from the central elements of terms in question and proceed towards the periphery, pataphysics, according to its laws, would benefit from a definition that would leave its centre empty. Thus, the most efficient way of defining pataphysics for present purposes will consist of discarding the traditional form of definition and concentrating on a selection of specific pataphysical characteristics and particular defining traits.

Apart from allowing the co-existence of opposites — a phenomenon usually attributed to radically unscientific discourses — pataphysics defies the laws of traditional scientific approaches by positioning itself as the science of exceptions. Jarry’s definition stresses this particular characteristic: ‘pataphysics will be, above all, the science of the particular despite the common opinion that the only science is that of the general. Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one’.<sup>75</sup> While generally it is ‘the exception that proves the rule’, in pataphysics ‘the rule itself is the exception [...] that rules out the rule’.<sup>76</sup> The exceptional approach suggested by pataphysics, thus, focuses on the particular and not on the scientific general. This allows pataphysics to break ties with the strict laws of science and at the same time with metaphysics that hardly has any laws apart from those that are dictated by its linguistic framework. In such a way, pataphysics works in both directions: it enhances scientific opportunities and transcends the metaphysical ones; this is what allows pataphysics to avoid the limitations of both exact sciences and metaphysics. As Hugill notes:

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<sup>74</sup> Andrew Hugill, *Pataphysics. A Useless Guide* (Cambridge US: MIT Press, 2012) xi.

<sup>75</sup> Alfred Jarry, *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician: A Non-Scientific Novel* (Boston: Exact Change, 1996) 21.

<sup>76</sup> Andrew Hugill, *Pataphysics. A Useless Guide* (Cambridge US: MIT Press, 2012) 12.

[t]he realm beyond metaphysics will not be reached by vaster and vaster generalities; this has been the error of contemporary thought. A return to the particular shows that every event determines a law, a particular law. 'Pataphysics relates each thing and each event not to any generality (a mere plastering over of exceptions) but to the singularity that makes it an exception.'<sup>77</sup>

The strict laws and determinacy of scientific approaches are confronted with the fluidity of pataphysical logic. Jarry writes that '[c]ontemporary science is founded upon the principle of induction: most people have seen a certain phenomenon precede or follow some other phenomenon most often, and conclude therefrom that it will ever be thus. Apart from other considerations, this is true only in the majority of cases, depends upon the point of view'.<sup>78</sup> Pataphysics, in connection with its inherent co-existence of opposites, argues that the world represented by sciences does not form a complete picture of possibilities ('I can see all possible worlds when I look at only one of them. God — or myself — created all possible worlds, they coexist, but men can hardly glimpse even one').<sup>79</sup> In order to avoid this limitation, pataphysics invents a special type of reasoning that 'rather than progressing according to the relationships of extension between terms, is endowed with an instantaneous and fluid reality for the very comprehension of concepts; it is able to slide through that dimension of reasoning which everyday logic reductively conceives of as a single immobile point'.<sup>80</sup> This fluidity allows pataphysics to focus on exceptions and by that it offers a chance of evading the rigid intellectual environment offered by scientific approaches.

The aspects of pataphysics mentioned so far constitute just one perspective from which pataphysics can be understood and this perspective, considered in isolation, may lead to a 'too serious' definition of pataphysics. Therefore, apart from acknowledging the reconciliation of opposites, concentration on exceptions and the particular, as well as the fluidity of its logic, pataphysics should be

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<sup>77</sup> Hugill, *Pataphysics. A Useless Guide* 104.

<sup>78</sup> Alfred Jarry, *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician: A Non-Scientific Novel* (Boston: Exact Change, 1996) 22.

<sup>79</sup> Jarry, *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician: A Non-Scientific Novel* x.

<sup>80</sup> René Daumal, *Pataphysical Essays* (Cambridge US: Wakefield Press, 2012) 8.

considered from yet another point of view that encompasses its creative, comic, and poetic constituents grounded in language. These constituents are essential for pataphysical experimentation that once again stands in opposition to scientific methods. '[T]o be a good pataphysician,' writes René Daumal, 'one would have to be simultaneously a poet: and what I mean by that is someone who creates what he is talking about the very moment he is talking about it'.<sup>81</sup> The creative improvisation Daumal talks about can be observed in many pataphysicians' works and it is one of the defining characteristics of pataphysical writing that is possible only with the help of specific language. Gilles Deleuze observed that

Jarry's thought is above all a theory of the Sign: the sign neither designates nor signifies, it shows... It is the same as the thing, but is not identical to it; it shows the thing. The question is knowing how and why the sign thus understood is necessarily linguistic, or rather under what conditions it becomes language. The first condition is that we must form a poetic conception of language, and not a technical or scientific one.<sup>82</sup>

Language, in a case of pataphysics, becomes more than just a medium through which the ideas are expressed, it is a tool that by using its poetic and comic features simultaneously engenders and exercises these ideas, despite the fact that language is commonly used in order to define and stabilize, to write rules instead of working with exceptions.

Therefore, taking into consideration these essential aspects of pataphysics, one can note that the question of language in pataphysics is closely connected to the problem of truth, which in the domain of pataphysics is closely related to absurdism. '*Credo quia absurdum*' evokes Daumal,<sup>83</sup> for whom pataphysics is inseparable from laughter and absurdism, while truth is as fluid as the reality of pataphysics itself. Shattuck, in his introduction to a collection of Daumal's essays, related the latter's experience of 'threshold asphyxiation' and wrote that Daumal 'was convinced that a ground of being and consciousness beyond the grasp of reason, existed just as concretely as the reality defined by any given culture. That

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<sup>81</sup> Daumal, *Pataphysical Essays* 92.

<sup>82</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 96.

<sup>83</sup> René Daumal, *You've Always Been Wrong* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) 27.

it exists concretely and is ‘real’ makes it ‘evident’; that it cannot be expressed in any language makes it ‘absurd’.<sup>84</sup> This impossibility of authentic expression through language is one of the central themes of Daumal’s writing. In accordance with his philosophy, language is a source of dangerous confidence, the root of the belief that holds that there is unequivocal truth that can be objectively perceived and expressed by language. Daumal addresses his concern in *Les Pouvoirs de la Parole*: ‘Aucun mécanisme verbal ne peut créer de vérité. Aucune pensée réelle ne peut s’exprimer en mots si elle n’a pas été vécue. Mais l’emploi constant du langage parlé dans les relations humaines engendre l’illusion que le langage peut contenir en lui-même une connaissance’.<sup>85</sup> The dissatisfaction with the role of language and its relation to ‘truth’ in Daumal’s text is a recurrent theme that he keeps coming back to. In one of his essays, he ‘interviews’ Faustroll, who reveals the necessity of a new science — ‘copulistics’ — and explains that ‘our languages [...] break the copula into person, numbers, tenses, moods (is, were, would be...). And for you philosophers, the copula is the handmaiden to all your arguments, and you use or make implications with the verb *to be* as if it had no consequences. But the bank of Logos and Company puts all that in your credit column; and one day you will pay!’<sup>86</sup> The false confidence with which the verb ‘to be’ is used, according to the words of Daumal, is illustrative of the pataphysical view of ‘truth’. Shattuck summarized the pataphysical understanding of the problem of truth with the thought expressed by Hans Vaihinger: ‘we construct our own system of thought and value, and then live ‘as if’ reality conformed to it. The idea of ‘truth’ is the most imaginary of all solutions’.<sup>87</sup>

It is important to understand that it is not sciences as such that pataphysics opposes, but rather their approach and the unshakable cultural as well as ideological hegemony they exercise; or, in other words, pataphysics opposes the ideology of scientism. From the perspective of pataphysics, the issue of science is as problematic as the question of truth, for in both cases it is the exaggerated

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<sup>84</sup> Thomas Vosteen, Introduction to *Pataphysical Essays* (Cambridge US: Wakefield Press, 2012) xiii.

<sup>85</sup> René Daumal, *Les Pouvoirs de la Parole. Essais et Notes, II (1935-1943)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) 19. A translation of all quotes in French can be found on p. 91, in the Appendix.

<sup>86</sup> René Daumal, *Pataphysical Essays* (Cambridge US: Wakefield Press, 2012) 84-6.

<sup>87</sup> Roger Shattuck, ‘Superliminal Note’ in *Evergreen Review* 4 (1960) 24-33.



confidence and inability to acknowledge the existence of the unknowable as well as the existence of that which cannot be understood by means of a chosen approach, or properly expressed with language, that pataphysics vehemently confronts. For instance, Jarry believed that unconditional faith in science was not different from the ‘old superstitions of religion’.<sup>88</sup> While Daumal, despite the fact that his pataphysics was definitely of a different breed, similarly noticed that the process of the discovering of truth attained by scientific methods can potentially lead to misleading results (this topic is touched upon in detail, for example, in his satirical novel — *A Night of Serious Drinking*). The disagreement with the functioning of sciences and with the specific role of language led Daumal to the following conclusion: ‘[...] on risque, à coups de ‘vérités’ verbales, de tuer toute recherche réelle’.<sup>89</sup> Daumal’s warning along with Jarry’s concerns can be interpreted as an opposition to ideological influences within the field of sciences. In other words, science should be free from imposed beliefs and ideological frameworks in order to function properly. A pataphysician is always ready to see another world, one of many or even several at once, while a scientist seems to be rigid, immobilized by strict laws, which makes him or her unsuitable for ‘recherche réelle’. Indeed, pataphysics does not attempt to present itself as a serious cultural phenomenon, but its ideas find response ‘in any mind that thinks the objective truths of empiricism at least demand a little playful tweaking, if not wholesale reevaluation’<sup>90</sup> and it is because of this, among other reasons, that it still retains its major influence.

Pataphysics criticizes scientism for its weaknesses, but it is not solely the problem of sciences. Similar ideological predispositions can be also discovered in near-scientific fields, where the problems of ideology and its dominance cause even greater damage. This is exactly the case of psychoanalysis, which by borrowing, or ‘importing’ concepts, from scientific disciplines, pursues the status of science. According to Althusser, psychology was dramatically transformed when psychoanalysis initiated a fundamental change in the object of psychology:

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<sup>88</sup> Andrew Hugill, *Pataphysics. A Useless Guide* (Cambridge US: MIT Press, 2012) 221.

<sup>89</sup> René Daumal, *Les Pouvoirs de la Parole. Essais et Notes, II (1935-1943)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) 24.

<sup>90</sup> Andrew Hugill, *Pataphysics. A Useless Guide* (Cambridge US: MIT Press, 2012) 3.

psychoanalysis redefined the object of psychological examination, the soul, as the unconscious.<sup>91</sup> This was the move that conditioned the transfer of psychology into a new category that instead of having an abstract, non-identifiable object as the centre of its expertise, now acquired something much more substantial and by that more scientific, which was the unconscious. The inclination of psychoanalysis towards sciences continued and while Freud actively exploited concepts from biology, physics as well as from many other scientific fields by redefining them for psychoanalytical usage, Lacan went even further and inserted algebraic and topological ideas in his theory. Indeed, the scientific concepts were masterfully included in psychoanalytic theories, however, considering sometimes inadequate interpretation of the said concepts, it is unknown to what extent psychoanalysis was in need of the scientific transformation and not in fact of the prestigious connection to sciences. The psychoanalytic method based on scientific affinities came dangerously close to what pataphysics satirically ridiculed in the domain of sciences. Psychoanalysis grew rigid, it attempted to approach each unconsciousness with a ready-made template and confidence which discouraged the development of its theory that could be achieved by means of actual analysis of its subjects. Instead, psychoanalysis continued to narrativize the experience of its analysands, which rendered the achievement of a deeper and more efficient understanding of the processes behind the human psyche practically impossible.

It is not surprising that the position of psychoanalysis in the field of cultural studies acquired a similar orientation. Lacan's analysis of 'The Purloined Letter' is an illustrative example of the approach that is widely accepted in cultural criticism. The approach that instead of reading into a cultural object and extracting a method suitable for a specific work, attempts to develop a specific type of methodology that would suit each and every one. This is, of course, a utopian desire that nevertheless persists despite being ineffective. The ineffectiveness of such an approach that deals with the general instead of the particular in a purely subjective field of culture is conditioned by numerous factors some of which have already been mentioned. Among these factors are: the

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<sup>91</sup> Louis Althusser, 'The Place of Psychoanalysis in the Human Studies' in *Psychoanalysis and the Human Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

dominance of particular ideologies, desire for categorization, and lack of interest in those aspects that do not easily fit within the general paradigm created by chosen theories. Thus, theories adjust the creative and technical content of cultural works to their framework in order to disclose the ‘truth’ that is ‘hidden’ behind them, while the significant elements of the works escape the gaze of analysts. It is the story of Poe’s Prefect that is reiterated time and time again: a man with a specialized training has no other choice but to address to an ‘amateur’ in order to uncover the location of meaning. That is not to say that the Prefect’s theory and methods are useless or have no meaningful application; the problem lies in the fact that his method is not the only one that can be applied and that with more creative freedom and careful investigation in a particular situation, the detective, or in our case an analyst, have the potential of reaching much more valuable insights.

Therefore, for the selected works, namely the text and the film, the following theoretical and methodological approach is chosen: 1. theoretical connections are developed directly from the interaction with the works in question; 2. Lacanian psychoanalytic theory serves as the theoretical background that enhances the understanding of particular aspects of the work, while the psychoanalytical approach to cultural works is discarded; 3. each of the two works is treated in isolation, instead of comparison, except for the instances when the connections clearly manifest themselves; 4. there can be no pursuit of universal ‘truths’ that first and foremost serve the ideological framework of a chosen method — on the contrary, the ideological framework itself along with the entire structure and functioning of ideology has to be constantly questioned. In this way, pataphysics becomes both an essential innate element of the discussed works and a defining element of the chosen critical approach.

### Chapter 3 - Action

René Daumal's writing is frequently seen through the prism of pataphysics and while it is true that his writing possesses a series of features that pertain the traditional definitions of pataphysics, his works can, relying on and expanding the fundamental pataphysical principles, offer more than a mere recapitulation of these postulates. *Mount Analogue: A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing* is a novel that Daumal started in 1952. The novel, due to the author's death, remained unfinished; however, the direction that was set in the text reveal a culturally important development that is valuable both for the milieu of pataphysics and the domains beyond. Through the investigation of the role of language in the text, the present chapter aims at highlighting the main goal of the journey to the Mount Analogue, which is 'awakening' — conscious life by means of authentic perception of reality. The emphasis will be put on the essential distinction of Daumal's pataphysics from its earlier definitions, which starts with the addition of the element of laughter that serves as an expansion of the pataphysical comic and signifies the break with the theoretical fixation of pataphysics as well as shifts the focus to the domain of the practical. Finally, Daumal's writing in *Mount Analogue* will be seen as a reflection of the desire to revolt against the stasis of Western ideologies. The exact mechanisms of function of the mentioned specificities of the text will be emphasized by means of the application of the Lacanian triad of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. As a result, *Mount Analogue* can be seen as an original combination of diametrical Western and Eastern perspectives that, if applied practically, creates a potential of achieving the authentic experience of the action of 'awakening'.

Relying on the offered definition of pataphysics through its main characteristics, it can be said that Daumal's unfinished novel *Mount Analogue* is a good illustration of pataphysical writing. On several occasions it attempts to reach a balance between opposing views and concepts, to reconcile them and to examine how they co-exist. In the text, this can be clearly seen in the diametrical opposition of two brothers' directions of interest, Hans's occupation as a 'mathematical physicist' and Karl's specialization in 'oriental metaphysics'.<sup>92</sup> A more subtle, but with that important, example of this lies in the philosophy that underlies the text: '[t]he path to our highest desires often lies through the undesirable'.<sup>93</sup> It seems that Daumal's writing attempts to take into consideration the entire spectrum that is life, with all the multifaceted details, even if they cannot be simply woven into the logic of Western civilizations that prefer clear definitions and categorization to multiplicities and indeterminacy present in the natural state of the world. Another pataphysical aspect, namely, concentration on the exceptional cases instead of the general, can be found in the mysterious mountain that is the goal of the expedition (the point of concentration for both the characters and the novel), which itself is as unique and exceptional as the eccentric ways that are chosen in order to discover its localization. Strictly speaking, the text of *Mount Analogue* never generalizes, each character is an original figure that does not serve as an archetype that reflects a specific group in a society. Even though it is to a large extent a satirical piece of writing, in the best traditions of Daumal, the typical traits that are subjected to the author's criticism are mixed in such a unique manner that the formed figures, taken each as a self-sufficient character, do not adhere to stereotypes and, therefore, represent exceptions.

Considering that *Mount Analogue* is a satirical text, naturally, it possesses another pataphysical feature — it is comical. It is precisely this feature that prevents the text from being taken too seriously as a satirical commentary or a spiritual advice. The fact that *Mount Analogue* is comical, contributes to yet another frequent pataphysical characteristic, which is that of absurdism. The

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<sup>92</sup> René Daumal, *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 44.

<sup>93</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 61.

elements of the absurd in *Mount Analogue* are frequently connected to scientific methods and scientific grounding mentioned in the text: Sogol's localization of the mountain, or Beaver's 'portable kitchen garden' among the examples. The link between the absurd and the 'scientific' in the text is not coincidental. Similarly to the position of sciences in the domain of pataphysics, science in *Mount Analogue* is seen as a possible point of view, one among many others, that does not have the potential of reaching the truth without creativity. Physics, a woman who works for Sogol in the first chapter, is the only one who uses the stairs, a simple way of getting to Sogol's working place, instead of the tricky and imaginative route offered in Sogol's instructions. However, to state that *Mount Analogue*, according to the described features, is strictly pataphysical in its traditional sense or simply satirical is to deny the text's multilayered value.

The pataphysics of Daumal, despite sharing some of the basic characteristics with the first definitions of pataphysics, differs from those proposed by Jarry and endorsed by such organizations as Le Collège de 'Pataphysique. This distinction finds reflection in all of Daumal's writing and *Mount Analogue* is not an exception. Daumal's writing contains the desire for ideological revolt, which is significantly stronger in comparison to Jarry's texts; or, speaking more precisely, the call for revolt, which is a clearer and bolder call for action, is direct and is not entirely hidden behind symbolism. It is a revolt against Western ideological foundations and it begins with the investigation of the role of language, while its ultimate goal is 'awakening'.

As it has already been mentioned before, the problem of language is discussed by Daumal in his essays, as well as in his works of fiction. Shattuck writes in the introduction to *Mount Analogue*: '[Daumal] had to struggle with the temptation to which poets are prone: the tendency to conceive of life and reality entirely through language. *Mount Analogue*, in its simplicity of expression and universality of meaning, probably represents Daumal's ultimate reckoning with the problem of language, vehicle and obstacle.'<sup>94</sup> In *Mount Analogue*, Daumal is conscious of the fact that human experience, especially within the Western

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<sup>94</sup> Roger Shattuck, Introduction to *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 10.

tradition, is defined by dominant ideological constructions and the language on which they are based. Daumal constructs dialogues and describes situations in *Mount Analogue* that, even if not directly, discuss the problematics of language (e.g. Hans and Karl's argument about icebergs — Hans cannot accept anything that begins with 'perhaps', for him definitions and ideological stability is crucial, everything that exceeds the borders of the ideology of scientism and definite linguistic structures is discarded as nonsensical); however, Daumal simultaneously shows that the problem he writes about is intrinsic to his text as well, that is to say, the author does not attempt to criticize the Western perspective by pretending to have transcended it altogether, which is a frequent position of such criticism. Instead, based on the development of *Mount Analogue's* characters, it can be speculated, since the text remained unfinished, that the characters were destined to undergo an essential change on their way to liberation, or 'awakening'. In such a manner, their transformation could be perceived as authentic, which is ironic, considering the level of absurdism in the text, but is nevertheless not surprising for a type of writing that can be deemed pataphysical. There is an important lesson that lies at the basis of this conclusion and which is once again linked to language — realism does not condition authenticity.

The problem of language in *Mount Analogue*, thus, can be clearly noticed in connection to the following characters that participate in the expedition to Mount Analogue: Ivan Lapse, the narrator Theodore, and Father Sogol. Ivan Lapse is the most straightforward example — he is a linguist, whose surname reflects both the nature of his character and the author's understanding of the quality and function of language; the narrator introduces him as '[e]specially outstanding' linguist 'because of his capacity to express himself orally or in writing with simplicity, elegance, and precision in three or four different languages'.<sup>95</sup> The characteristics of Ivan Lapse demonstrate the lacking possibilities of language, its inability to express authentic reality.

The narrator, whose name is Theodore, is also a part of the commentary on language. He is responsible for the beginning of the adventure and for Sogol's renewed interest in the impossible enterprise. Theodore is the author of the article

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<sup>95</sup> René Daumal, *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 41.

on the mysterious inaccessible mountain that captures Sogol's attention and leads to the start of the expedition. At the beginning of the first chapter, Theodore expresses his thoughts on the piece of writing: 'I re-read the article. It was a rather hasty study of the symbolic significance of the mountain in ancient mythologies. The different branches of symbol interpretation had for a long time been my favourite field of study; I naively believed I understood something about the subject'.<sup>96</sup> It is the imperfection of symbolic communication, the variety of possible interpretations that used to fascinate the narrator; however, he chooses to abandon the futile search for truth with the help of words and together with Sogol attempts to pursue that which is beyond meaning. The ambivalence of language, its weakness that lies in adequate representation of truth and reality, is central to the image of the narrator and is one of the most important topics that is raised in Daumal's writing (not only in *Mount Analogue*, examples can be also found in several collections of Daumal's writing, such as *You've Always Been Wrong* and *Les Pouvoirs de la Parole*, some of them already discussed).

Finally, Father Sogol — an all-encompassing figure of a genius or a mad person with elusive identity that resonates with Jarry's Faustroll, or even Henrik Ibsen's Peer Gynt<sup>97</sup> — is the only character whose transformation the readers of *Mount Analogue* are lucky to witness. Just as it was the case with Ivan Lapse, the significance of the character is enclosed in his surname, which is 'logos' spelled backwards. 'Logos' can be interpreted as 'reason'; in this case, Sogol represents the insatiable desire for knowledge and 'incurable need to understand'<sup>98</sup> that is an inseparable part of human existence accompanied by the eternal search for truth. 'Logos' can also be understood as 'word' and, therefore, Sogol, as a leader of the group, plays the role of the concentration of power up until the point when he undergoes a metamorphosis and gives up his authority in order to proceed with the journey to the unknown. Sogol gives up his leadership 'in order to become what he is without imitating anyone,'<sup>99</sup> he compares himself to a child and returns to

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<sup>96</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 22.

<sup>97</sup> Henrik Ibsen's Peer Gynt is not a random point of reference: Julie Bonasse, a character in *Mount Analogue* (p.44), is apparently a fan of Ibsen.

<sup>98</sup> René Daumal, *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 32.

<sup>99</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 89.



the state, in which both linguistic and ideological dimensions of the social do not interfere with the processes of perception. The difference between an adult and a child is seen from the perspective of the usage of language and can be observed by the readers in the first chapter in a conversation between the narrator and Father Sogol: ‘And then you grew up, went to school, and began to ‘philosophize’, didn’t you? We all go through the same thing. It seems that during adolescence a person’s inner life is suddenly weakened, stripped of its natural courage. In his thinking he no longer dares stand face to face with reality or mystery; he begins to see them through the opinions of ‘grown-ups’, through books and courses and professors’.<sup>100</sup> For Daumal, this stage of verbal ‘philosophizing’ is nothing more but a stage that needs to be completed in order to proceed with individual development: ‘[I]a philosophie verbale n'est qu'une étape nécessaire de ce voyage’.<sup>101</sup> At the end of his speech in the fourth chapter, following his transformation, Sogol is rewarded with an extremely valuable gift — a peradam.

The development of the particular understanding of the functioning of language, the instability of its signifying chains, as well as the potential of reaching the state of ‘awakening’ in the writings of Daumal is partly indebted to the influence of the teachings of George Gurdjieff. The latter warns about the importance of being aware of the imperfections of language<sup>102</sup> and the necessity of verification of linguistic expressions by means of authentic experiences. In other words, truth for Gurdjieff can only be reached if it is achieved individually and if it is practically verifiable. He elaborates on this thought in the thirteenth chapter of *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson*, where Beelzebub, using an example of an ignorant but nevertheless celebrated writer, explains that man’s search for truth always ends with what a certain authoritative voice has to say about the matter in question:

to put it in their language, they believe everything anybody says, instead of believing only what they have been able to verify by their own ‘sane

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<sup>100</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 35.

<sup>101</sup> René Daumal, *Les Pouvoirs de la Parole. Essais et Notes, II (1935-1943)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) 55.

<sup>102</sup> G.I. Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson: An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man* (Los Angeles: Penguin, 1999) 17.

deliberation’—in other words, only those convictions they have reached as a result of confronting and evaluating the data already deposited in them, which have given rise to different conceptions in each of their localizations of diverse nature. [...] In general, a new conception is crystallized in the presences of these strange beings only if Mr. Smith speaks of somebody or something in a certain way; then if Mr. Brown says the same, the hearer is quite convinced that it is just so and could not possibly be otherwise. Thanks to this particularity of their psyche, most of the beings there, having heard the writer I spoke of praised so highly, are at present quite convinced that he is a very great psychologist, with an incomparable knowledge of the psyche of the beings of his planet. [...] I found him, according to my understanding, just like all the other contemporary writers there, that is, extremely limited or, as our dear Mullah Nasr Eddin would say, ‘unable to see further than his nose.’ As regards any knowledge of the real psyche of the beings of his planet in actual conditions, he might safely be called a ‘complete ignoramus’.<sup>103</sup>

The influence of Gurdjieff on the writing of Daumal does not end here. Gurdjieff’s philosophy and teachings contribute to the formation of another distinct feature that helps to distinguish Daumal’s pataphysics from its earlier versions. In the introduction to *Mount Analogue*, Shattuck writes that ‘Daumal is one of the few men in this century to have combined Eastern and Western thought into something more valuable than a set of personal eccentricities’.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, *Mount Analogue* is a point of intersection of Western experience and Eastern spiritual philosophy. The balance between two polar perspectives is another factor that conditions the rebellious mood of Daumal’s writing and reflects one of the basic principles of pataphysics, which is the reconciliation of opposites. The ‘awakening’ Daumal propagates in his texts — the conscious way of existing and of perceiving reality as well as cognition by means of individual experience — is similar to the one described by Gurdjieff (conscious existence in Gurdjieff is achieved through what is known as the Fourth Way — a combination of self-

<sup>103</sup> Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson* 100-101.

<sup>104</sup> Roger Shattuck, Introduction to *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 8.

developing techniques rooted in the Eastern philosophy). Despite somewhat harsh criticism of the Western tradition,<sup>105</sup> Daumal attempts to preserve the balance between the two perspectives as both of them are crucial for harmonious development of individuals. It appears that human beings, in Daumal's understanding, can never remain immobile in their journey to conscious life, instead they travel between the state of absolute consciousness on the one hand, and worldly experiences on the other. Daumal sees 'verbal philosophizing' as a 'necessary step in this journey', because '[y]ou cannot stay on the summit for ever; you have to come down again'; '[o]ne climbs, one sees. One descends, one sees no longer but one has seen. [...] When one can no longer see, one can at least still know'.<sup>106</sup> Or, as he notes in his essays: '[l]'homme de la caverne dont parle Platon doit en sortir, contempler la lumière du soleil et, muni de cette lumière qu'il garde dans sa mémoire, rentre dans la caverne.'<sup>107</sup> The journey Daumal writes about in *Mount Analogue* is a revolt against the stasis of the Western culture, but the author does not suggest substitution of one ideology with its opposite, he offers a unique combination of the two in many aspects diametrical cultures.

Daumal's interest in Eastern spiritual practices and mysticism is naturally intertwined with the desire to understand the enigma behind the processes of death. Death in this case is seen not as the end of existence that entails nothing but ceasing of conscious and physical functioning of organisms; it is understood as a continuation of altered existence beyond the material world in a state of pure consciousness. The desire to come closer to the understanding of death led Daumal to the experimentation with near-death experiences through which it was deemed to be possible to reach supposedly authentic state that was identical to actual dying. The fundamental conclusion made after such an experiment led Daumal to believe 'that a ground of being and consciousness beyond the grasp of reason, or what the post-Enlightenment West defined as reason, existed just as

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<sup>105</sup> The village where the travellers spend their first days before attempting to reach the summit of Mount Analogue is full of Western people; somewhere in the text, Daumal writes that the majority of these people are French. The port is called Port o' Monkeys. The narrator wonders what the name refers to, since it is a known fact that not a single population of monkeys lives in the area.

<sup>106</sup> René Daumal, *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 103.

<sup>107</sup> René Daumal, *Les Pouvoirs de la Parole. Essais et Notes, II (1935-1943)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) 55.

concretely as the reality defined by any given culture'.<sup>108</sup> The imminence of death ('we're constantly mistaking [...] ourselves for something eternal'<sup>109</sup>), its oppressive omnipresence ('...the disintegration and dispersion of matter which await all inert objects, even if they served the highest purposes'<sup>110</sup>), combined with the desire to understand it by means of consciousness, revealed the entrance point to the impossible and unattainable, to the dimension that lies beyond the rational interpretation of reality.

Even though death is not an immediately noticeable presence in *Mount Analogue*, the acknowledgement of the constant presence of death visible in Daumal's philosophy goes hand in hand with the ultimate goal presented in *Mount Analogue*, which is awakening. Sogol's Superior tells him: [J]ust think of the unfathomable laziness of man; all the schemes which are supposed to keep him awake and watchful end up by putting him to sleep. We wear a hairshirt the way we might wear a monocle; we sing matins the way other people play golf. If only scientists today, instead of constantly inventing new means to make life easier, would devote their resourcefulness to producing instruments for rousing man out of his torpor!<sup>111</sup> The path that leads to awakening can only be realized by means of acute awareness of the close presence of death and its ultimate significance for one's life. It is through death that the absurdity of life becomes evident (Sogol: 'I can't bring myself to fall in with this monkey-cage agitation which people dramatically call life'<sup>112</sup>) and it is death that reinforces the desire for conscious perception of reality.

Dealing with the imminence of death as well as staying conscious of the absurdity of life required a corresponding reaction that could be reflected in pataphysical methods. That is why Daumal introduced laughter as another element that many of those involved with pataphysics considered to be incompatible with the fundamental principles of pataphysics. Daumal's 'characterization of

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas Vosteen, Introduction to *Pataphysical Essays* (Cambridge US: Wakefield Press, 2012) xiii.

<sup>109</sup> René Daumal, *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 63.

<sup>110</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 77.

<sup>111</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 31.

<sup>112</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 33.

pataphysics as comic nihilism is precisely the sort of interpretation which the College de 'Pataphysique attempted to undo. [...] Pataphysics does not shatter systems of thought with the abandon of an anarchist, but rather its goal is empowerment and enlightenment, a 'profound concordance between men's minds,' which is 'beyond laughter'.<sup>113</sup> This objection to Daumal's development of pataphysics should be discussed in more detail since it uncovers an essential misunderstanding, resolution of which has a potential of highlighting an important dimension of *Mount Analogue* as well as explaining why the author's pataphysics differs from its earlier version.

'The revelation of laughter will come to every man,' writes Daumal, 'but there will be nothing joyful about it. Having gotten this far, the world's sheaths turn inside out like the fingers of a glove: the obvious becomes absurd, light is a black veil and a dazzling sun slumbers, whereas my eyes do not'.<sup>114</sup> Laughter, the way Daumal presents it, is not a hysterical laughter of a madman, nor is it a trace left by foolish jokes; naturally, none of these misinterpretations can lead to 'empowerment and enlightenment'. The main idea behind Daumal's pataphysical laughter is not nihilism; the author's goal is to galvanize those seeking ways to awaken into action. The difference between what is considered to be the traditional pataphysical comic and Daumal's laughter lies in the latter's activity — the comic is based on ideas, while laughter is pure action. It is this action that can be found at the very centre of Daumal's pataphysics that not only serves as a set of ideas, but also ignites active participation.

*Mount Analogue's* revolt against the Western tradition begins with the comic, namely with satire; however, the practical achievement of the text is the resulting laughter that by means of satirical language discloses the absurd nature of purely rational approach to reality. Within the world of linguistic dominance, such an approach is among a few possibilities that allow one to criticize the ideological structure. Since 'ideological distortion is written' in the 'very essence' of 'the real state of things'<sup>115</sup>, the method of Daumal can be regarded as Žižek's

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<sup>113</sup> Andrew Hugill, *Pataphysics. A Useless Guide* (Cambridge US: MIT Press, 2012) 146.

<sup>114</sup> René Daumal, *Pataphysical Essays* (Cambridge US: Wakefield Press, 2012) 11.

<sup>115</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008) 24-25.

‘place from which one can denounce ideology’<sup>116</sup> — the place, which with the help of laughter creates indeterminacy and reveals the element of absurdity that allows one to question ideology without falling into the traps of other ideologies; the place of critique that, thus, remains empty.

In his ‘R.S.I.’ seminar, particularly in the lecture given on the 11th of March in 1975, Lacan makes the following statement: everything that is considered to be related to the phallic, will consequently be comic; however, this comic will be characterized by a certain level of sadness, it will be endowed with a special bittersweet feeling.<sup>117</sup> Later, in the same lecture Lacan says that the phallic is a manifestation of the Real. It is difficult to say to what extent it was intended, but following the conclusion based on these two statements, it is logical to suppose that the Real produces the same bittersweet feeling, the one that combines the sad and the comic. It is exactly the combination of these opposing emotions that are characteristic of *Mount Analogue*, where the satirical comic is parallel to the sadness that is connected to the sacrifice of traditional world-views left behind along with the shed personalities of the members of the expedition in their journey.

The Lacanian theory of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary resonates with Daumal’s *Mount Analogue* in such a way that allows a better understanding of both the world depicted in the unfinished novel and the author’s philosophy. All of the three domains of R.S.I. are clearly present in the text. The journey that the group undertakes is naturally situated in the Imaginary, which in its turn is constituted by the elements of the Symbolic, such as the mysterious mountain and peradams among the most noticeable examples, while the Real is that which can be found ‘behind the scenes’ of the characters’ identities and worldly perspectives. The striving for authentic experiences and conscious perception, in other words, the desire to circumvent the Real in order to access reality, is reflected in the final cause of the journey, which is reaching the summit of *Mount Analogue*. However, the entire enterprise of accessing authentic reality

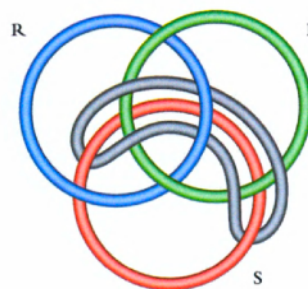
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<sup>116</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2012) 17.

<sup>117</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘R.S.I.’ in *Ornicar?* Nos.2-5 (Paris, 1975).

and moreover the description of such an endeavour would be impossible without another essential element — a disruption in the domain of the Real.

Again, in the ‘R.S.I.’ seminar (the lecture on the 10th of December, 1974), Lacan said that there exists a manifestation of malfunctions in the Real. Such malfunctions, according to him, can be identified with psychoanalytical symptoms (the word that derived from Marx and was actively used in Freudian psychoanalysis).<sup>118</sup> In the following academic year, the year of 1975-1976, Lacan introduced another element of his R.S.I. triad, which he called the ‘sinthome’. The sinthome was designed to reflect the errors in the Real and, thus, to serve as the fourth function in the system of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary.<sup>119</sup> The sinthome’s function consists of repairing the loose rings in case of instability in the triadic system so that the operation of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary can go on uninterrupted (*fig.3*).<sup>120</sup> Lacan continued his explanation of the sinthome by saying that it ‘subsists in so far as it is hooked onto language, at least if we believe that we can modify something in the [sinthome] by means of a manipulation that is said to be interpretative, that is, by playing with meaning’.<sup>121</sup> Since the sinthome arises from the Real and the Real is supported by writing,<sup>122</sup> the sinthome exists in writing and it is precisely where one can discover the sinthome presented by the narrator of *Mount Analogue*.



*fig.3*

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016) 11.

<sup>120</sup> Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII* 12.

<sup>121</sup> Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII* 28.

<sup>122</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘R.S.I.’ in *Ornicar?* Nos.2-5 (Paris, 1975).

For the narrator, Theodore, his *sinthome* is a key to the particular functioning of his R.S.I. system that builds the world around him. Since the *sinthome* itself cannot be interpreted, it can be observed through its influence on the other functions of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. The presence of the *sinthome* is crucial, since without it the failures in the R.S.I. systems would either be non-existent, or they would destroy the system altogether, preventing any kind of understanding of the peculiarities of its functioning.

It is not a coincidence that the description of the journey to *Mount Analogue* is realized through a piece of writing, where the Real and the *sinthome* can be manifested. The narrator dominates the world of *Mount Analogue* on several levels: he is the one who tells about the journey, assesses the other characters and situations, and his article about an imaginary mountain that captivates Father Sogol is the one that triggers the entire adventure. Theodore's article is of a great significance. The narrator, after receiving the enthusiastic letter from Sogol, writes: '[t]hough flattered by this evidence of interest on the part of an unknown reader, it made me more than a little uneasy that someone should have taken seriously, almost tragically, a literary fantasy by which I had been carried away at the time, but which had already faded in my memory'.<sup>123</sup> The moment of the writing of the article is the precise moment of a failure in the Real and the simultaneous creation of the *sinthome* that gained its momentum as the decision to accept Sogol's offer and undertake the journey. The break in the Real in the case of the narrator proceeded to be seen through his numerous encounters with the malfunctions of both the Western logic and its corresponding identity construction. The result of this is the disagreement with the Western 'unconscious' way of life on the one hand, and the desire to be transformed by escaping the constraints of identification on the other.

The Symbolic, thus, resembles a 'bridge' to reality as it is the only possible dimension that establishes a connection between reality and its image. However, the connection is both indirect and imaginary. Theodore's *sinthome* is the moving force behind the narrator's desire to uncover reality behind the veil of the Symbolic. He, however, is aware that there is no other way of attaining authentic

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<sup>123</sup> René Daumal, *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 22.



reality, but through the understanding and conquest of the Symbolic. That is why Mount Analogue as the major symbol in the text is the central point of the expedition's attention. '*For a mountain to play the role of Mount Analogue, I concluded, its summit must be inaccessible but its base accessible to human beings as nature has made them. It must be unique and it must exist geographically. The door to the invisible must be visible.*'<sup>124</sup> Indeed, if the mountain is easily accessible, it bears no characteristics of being authentic; at the same time, if it is spared of its symbolic features, it is non-existent in this world and therefore completely inaccessible to human beings. The symbolic mountain with its unattainable summit and visible base is, therefore, a reflection of reality that is inaccessible. The resolution to the problem of the inaccessibility of the summit lies in the Imaginary — the journey that activates metamorphoses through action. '[A] few *theoretical* points still remain obscure to me [...] *in practical application* there can be no doubt.'<sup>125</sup>

The journey to Mount Analogue signifies the only possible way of liberation, which is through identification with the *sinthome*.<sup>126</sup> One cannot destroy the *sinthome* because of the risk of worse outcomes.<sup>127</sup> Žižek writes that identification with the *sinthome* 'means to recognize in the [...] disruptions of the 'normal' way of things, the key offering us access to its functioning'.<sup>128</sup> The best decision for the conscious recognition of such disruptions is action. Conscious action in *Mount Analogue* blurs the borders between the 'notions of abstract and concrete,'<sup>129</sup> it destroys the illusion that symbols are themselves authentic reality,<sup>130</sup> it deconstructs identities,<sup>131</sup> displaces language from its dominant position,<sup>132</sup> and helps to find authenticity in experience.

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<sup>124</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 24.

<sup>125</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 52.

<sup>126</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008) 81.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 144.

<sup>129</sup> René Daumal, *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 61.

<sup>130</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 22.

<sup>131</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 88.

<sup>132</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 34.

The journey to Mount Analogue, thus, is more than just a pataphysical adventure; it is a guide to René Daumal's philosophy that is based on the practical application of the Eastern thought in the conditions of the Western ideological system. The biggest possible achievement of the journey is what Daumal calls 'awakening' — a conscious way of living that leads to authentic perception of reality through concentration on individual practical experiences. As is the case with other Daumal writings, *Mount Analogue* is a call for action and this is the specific feature that makes his pataphysical understanding a unique one — for Daumal it is not enough to endow pataphysics with the comic, it is important to stress the action of laughter, and similarly, it is not enough to express the theoretical background of a crucial transformation, it is necessary to present it in an active form, which is that of a journey. The resulting awareness of the instability of language and signifying chains along with the masterful combination of opposing Eastern and Western perspectives that defies the innate stasis of the Western approach but with that does not deny its omnipresent influence, creates a position from which critique of ideology becomes possible.

## Chapter 4 - Balance

Departing from the undetermined relation between René Daumal's *Mount Analogue* and Alejandro Jodorowsky's 1973 film *The Holy Mountain*, the following chapter seeks to conduct an independent analysis of Jodorowsky's film with the help of the Borromean-knot model suggested by Lacan with an accent on the exceptional role of the Symbolic in *The Holy Mountain*. From the point of view of Lacanian triad of functions, the mental environment presented in the cinematic work in question can be seen as a deformed R.S.I. knot, where the excessive Symbolic overlays the two other functions and creates the illusory atmosphere with the abundance of symbols that prevents the creation of adequate images in the area of the Imaginary that can efficiently reflect the functioning of the Real. The state of disorder created by such an imbalance of functions in the knot, leads to the creation of numerous doubles and simulacra within the film that distance the characters from authentic experiences. A group of characters, the seekers of knowledge that are referred to as thieves, attempt to reach authentic reality by means of a combination of Eastern philosophies and practices suggested by their spiritual mentor, the Alchemist. However, the way to 'enlightenment', or immortality as the Alchemist calls it, lies through the realization of the role of the Symbolic, language and ideology; the realization leads to the harmonious co-existence of the triad of functions. Upon reaching their destination — the summit of the Holy Mountain — the travellers, however, discover that there is no way to transcend the perceived reality in order to find the objective truth — the reality is itself an illusion that can be understood and effectively perceived by means of balanced functioning of the psyche and through individual practical experience. The search for truth, thus, is a never-ending adventure.

There exists an opinion that Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain* is an adaptation of Daumal's unfinished novel *Mount Analogue*. It is highly probable that the opinion stems from a 1993 book, a collection of writing by a number of authors that focuses on Daumal, his philosophy, practices, and the cultural influence of his ideas; this collection, created by Pascal Sigoda and entitled simply *René Daumal*, contains a text that establishes a connection between the novel and the film based on the practical and financial issues linked to the rights for adaptation that surrounded the alleged desire of Jodorowsky to transfer the story told by Daumal in *Mount Analogue* to the cinematic dimension. In the text, Luc Moullet claims that he was addressed by a certain 'producteur anglais' who wanted to adapt Daumal's *Mount Analogue*;<sup>133</sup> however, the idea due to technical and financial difficulties was never realized. Later, in 1972, Jodorowsky attempted to buy the rights from the said 'producteur' and did not succeed. This, according to Moullet, resulted into another plan developed by Jodorowsky — the director, true to his initial intention, based his film, *The Holy Mountain*, on Daumal's novel and, in order to avoid legal problems, changed all of the details of the story except for its main concept — the spiritual journey to the mysterious mountain.<sup>134</sup>

It seems that the publication of Moullet's text in *René Daumal* remains the only available<sup>135</sup> source that establishes a connection between the two cultural works. There are traces of the knowledge of the connection that surface on the internet<sup>136</sup> and there are published accounts of comparisons between the film and the novel (e.g. in Ben Cobb's *Anarchy and Alchemy: The Films of Alejandro Jodorowsky*,<sup>137</sup> or in *Cult Cinema: An Introduction* by Ernest Mathijs and Jamie Sexton<sup>138</sup>). None of these traces, however, refer to the statement made by Moullet or any other sources that document the fact of the adaptation. Kathleen

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<sup>133</sup> Pascal Sigoda, *René Daumal* (Lausanne: L'age d'homme, 1993) 240.

<sup>134</sup> Sigoda, *René Daumal* 241.

<sup>135</sup> According to research on the Internet: encyclopaedias, online libraries, academic resources etc.

<sup>136</sup> Several academic articles as well as publications that are part of collections on Jodorowsky's works, online reviews, descriptions of *The Holy Mountain*, even Wikipedia.

<sup>137</sup> Ben Cobb, *Anarchy and Alchemy: The Films of Alejandro Jodorowsky* (London: Creation Books, 2006) 120.

<sup>138</sup> Ernest Mathijs, and Jamie Sexton, *Cult Cinema: An Introduction* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 14.

Rosenblatt's book *René Daumal: The Life and Work of a Mystic Guide*, the only study of such a scale that concentrates on Daumal's biography and works, despite listing the collection of writing assembled by Sigoda in the bibliography, does not refer to the contribution made by Moullet and the controversy of the adaptation question. That is why, it is unknown, what are the prerequisites of the mentioned claims and comparisons and why the words of Moullet have been escaping the gaze of academics.

Naturally, as a response to the difficulty of localization of the roots of these assumptions, there appeared people who saw no relation between *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain*.<sup>139</sup> In both cases, critics and academics that built their analysis of the film and the novel on the (non)existent relation, tend to use the familiar method of Procrustes — if, according to them, *The Holy Mountain* is an adaptation of *Mount Analogue*, they see only the elements that connect the works, and if, on the contrary, they believe that there is no relation between the two works, they seem to intentionally overlook common themes in favour of their personal conclusions. Such an approach does not help to discover the variety of perspectives from which the works can be seen and instead limits the analysis to the topics that in the first case are present in both works and in the second case make the works different. In other words, it does not matter, if *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* are related. Indeed, the latter can be seen as a contemplation of the main themes of Daumal's text with such common elements as a spiritual journey, a group of enthusiasts, and finally a mountain; the film can be even called pataphysical to a certain extent, as it propagates the reconciliation of opposites and fluidity of logic that pertains to the majority of pataphysical works. However, *The Holy Mountain* is an independent cinematic work that among many themes that are explored in the film, offers its own views on the problematics of language, ideology, and spirituality.

The cinematic form is a perfect medium for commentaries on the functions of language and its role in the formation of ideological structures. It creates the necessary distance between the audience and the image it absorbs, which in the

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<sup>139</sup> David Pecotic, 'Mountains Analogous? The Academic Urban Legend of Alejandro Jodorowsky's Cult Film Adaptation of René Daumal's Esoteric Novel' in *Australian Religion Studies Review* 27(3):367-387 (2015).

case of reading experience is confined within the mental world of the perceivers together with their simultaneous reflections on the perceived subject.<sup>140</sup> Film creates the image that is exterior to the mental world, which in its turn allows a different type of interpretation that is distanced. In case of *The Holy Mountain*, this effect is even more significant as the film creates a recursive picture of distancing and subsequent liberation, the pinnacle of which is the final scene — the broken fourth wall. Additionally, as *The Holy Mountain* proceeds from a fairytale to a film and beyond, the level of the significance of the dimension of the Symbolic changes and imitates the differences of the audience's involvement with the Symbolic. Here, the presence of external images is crucial as it is capable of demonstrating the diminishing of the dominance of the Symbolic with the increasingly realistic setting. This particular effect is foreshadowed with a series of pictures at the beginning of the film — after the ritual of de-identification of two women is over, the camera zooms back several times as if to illustrate the process of waking up from a multilayered dream. The central position of the Symbolic in *The Holy Mountain* is the element that contributes to a fruitful discussion of the role of language in the processes of the construction of the laws of ideology and the (im)possibility of their transgression.

Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain* is often described as 'exotic' and 'surreal', while in fact the film is the concentrated Symbolic. This, nevertheless, is not directly related to such movements as surrealism. For surrealists the creation of symbolic images is the process and the main achievement, the dream they fully believe in the context of their artworks, while for Jodorowsky, the created symbolic dimension is constructed in order to be disassembled, be it through analysis or through individual psychological practices. From the point of view of Lacanian R.S.I., the hypertrophied Symbolic in *The Holy Mountain* is the power that deforms the knot. In these conditions, the sphere of the Symbolic becomes dominant and in terms of its graphic depiction, it is a knot with the increased

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<sup>140</sup> Under the term 'mental world' is understood a philosophical and psychological concept of subjective and nonmaterial representation of reality and identity as they are seen based on 'a person's cultural background, internalized cognitive patterns, emotional states, and situational factors' (as it is defined by P. Hietaranta in 'Cognitive economy and mental worlds: Accounting for translation mistakes and other communication errors' in Silvia Hansen-Schirra, Oliver Czulo and Sascha Hofmann (eds.), *Empirical Modelling of Translation and Interpreting* (Berlin: Language Science Press, 2017) p.461.)

Symbolic function, which diminishes and overlays the two remaining functions, the Imaginary and the Real. The Real in *The Holy Mountain* cannot be communicated through the harmonious cooperation of the Symbolic and the Imaginary. In the film, the Symbolic possesses such power that does not allow for the adequate construction of the Imaginary from the symbolic elements, these elements themselves become the distorted communication of the Real. The created imbalance is what the film is trying to resolve.

There can be no *sinthome* in action in the present knot, since technically the knot is functional, there is no break in the Real to be reflected in the creation of the *sinthome*. If the Imaginary, according to Lacan, represents consistency, the Symbolic is a hole, and the Real is the sphere relative to them,<sup>141</sup> the realm of *The Holy Mountain* is an attempt to leave the hole of the Symbolic that by devouring the two other functions made the Real inconsistent and, therefore, practically non-existent. The film starts with what Jodorowsky refers to as a ‘fairytale’, almost purely Symbolic dimension, where the characters are surrounded by symbols and are themselves symbolic; it then proceeds to the act of purification through specific practices suggested by the Alchemist that restore, purify, the Imaginary — the peak is reached when the Symbolic is exorcized through individual visions on the way to the summit of the Holy Mountain. The act of awakening (the two steps: the diminishing of the role of the Symbolic, and its reflection in the functioning of the Imaginary) is crowned by the final realization achieved through the restoration of the function of the Real — the understanding of the fact that the only attainable reality can be witnessed through the balanced and harmonious functioning of the three spheres of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. In such respect, the actions of the Alchemist cannot be deemed to be absurd, or a part of a ‘surreal dream sequence’, since they result into a realization of the fact that the illusory nature — the linguistic dimension — of the R.S.I. system is the wisdom the apprentices were striving to reach, and it is the only attainable reality.

*The Holy Mountain* creates an illusion — a Symbolic dimension — within another illusion, which is film. It is a realm of doubles and simulations that enter a

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<sup>141</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016) 44.

kaleidoscopic movement, which slows down only towards the end of the film. The entire journey to the restoration of the R.S.I. functions begins with the waking up of a drunkard, the Thief — a figure identified by means of his appearance (similarities to the image of Jesus) as well as two Tarot cards scattered by his side. Both of the cards depict the 22nd card (according to other sources the card bears no number and, hence, is considered to be the zero card) as it was presented in Tarot de Marseille. The card represents the Fool (le Mat) and, among various interpretations, is associated with a common man, uninitiated, oblivious of the functioning of the structures of the world, or, according to P.D. Ouspensky's interpretation, '[t]he end of the ray not knowing its relation to the centre'.<sup>142</sup> The picture of the Thief and the two cards that repeat one another depict the entire circulation of the Symbolic in the film. The character of the Thief — a purely symbolic figure that represents an ordinary man — is explained through the card of the Fool that in its turn is reiterated once again with an important distinction — the second card of the Fool that overlays the first is not signed 'The Fool' like its 'twin', instead it is signed 'crocodile'. The signature renders the overlaying Tarot card absurd and simultaneously destroys all of the meaning that could be found in the figure of the Thief, creating a distorted pastiche instead of his image.<sup>143</sup> This particular case of the demonstration of the absurdism of the realm presented in the film works as an extrapolation that can be used for the understanding of the entire structure of *The Holy Mountain*, where symbols refer to other symbols that in the end are revealed to be absurd in the context of the illusory nature of the depicted world.

The reiteration of the characters' figures is a prominent aspect in *The Holy Mountain*. The creation and the subsequent destruction of doubles in the film reflect the imbalanced and uncontrolled production of the elements of the Symbolic. When the Thief is seen drunk once again, he falls asleep and his body is replicated in a form of numerous crucified figures of Christ. The reaction of the

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<sup>142</sup> P.D. Ouspensky, *The Symbolism of the Tarot: Philosophy of Occultism in Pictures and Numbers* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1976) 16-17.

<sup>143</sup> The word 'crocodile' appears in Jodorowsky's biographical literary work *The Dance of Reality*. He explains that he used to use the absurd word in order to concentrate on the process of meditation. (Alejandro Jodorowsky, 'First Acts' in *The Dance of Reality: A Psychomagical Autobiography* (Vermont: Park Street Press, 2014)).



Thief has several stages: first, upon coming to his senses, he screams in despair, then, he calmly observes and later flogs those responsible for the replicas; he destroys a few copies and finally cries over one of the figures. The intensity of his reaction is conditioned by a significant disruption of self-identification and the prevalence of the Symbolic. Thus, through a multiplication the Thief's identity and its value were reduced and his already weak authenticity — destroyed. The emotions of despair, anger, and profound sadness can be interpreted from the point of view of the processes of the creation of self-image and its establishment in the domain of the Imaginary. Baudrillard, in his article on clones and doubles, writes that '[t]he mirror stage is abolished in cloning, or rather it is parodied therein in a monstrous fashion'.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, this is the case of the Thief, who does not have a mirror in front of him in order to develop a distanced image of the self that would fulfil the Imaginary. Instead, he is given countless copies of his own body that serve the only purpose — to be a symbol of religion. In such a process, the Thief can only be identified as a symbol of a symbol that has no connection to reality and which is a pure simulacrum. Later, when the Alchemist positions a mirror in front of the Thief, the latter covers his face and breaks the mirror in a fright. The scene is succeeded by another one, where both the Alchemist and the Thief can be seen meditatively walking in a mirror room in order to restore the connection between the Thief's picture of himself and the reflection of his body in a mirror, to 'ground' him in the Imaginary.

The Thief is not the only character that undergoes the transformation of the self-image. The other members of the group gathered by the Alchemist are asked to destroy their doubles in the process of their apprenticeship. There is a possibility that the other members of the group are also connected to Major Arcana Tarot cards in accordance with their planet. In such a way, if the Thief is the Fool, the Alchemist is the Magician whose planet is Mercury, which is not mentioned as the planet of other characters that are introduced in the film. Additionally, the imagery and the meaning of the Magician card, understood as 'a

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<sup>144</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2019) 97.

higher consciousness'<sup>145</sup> corresponds to the characteristics of the Alchemist, i.e. his extraordinary abilities and, importantly, his balancing between opposing powers and striving for harmonious existence. Similarly, the character of Isla, the manufacturer of weapons, whose planet is Mars, can be linked to the Tower card that, according to Ouspensky, signifies 'secterianism',<sup>146</sup> or in other interpretations — different types of violence and/or rebellion. All of the seven introduced characters give up their worldly possessions and burn their replicas with the intention of spiritual liberation. The Alchemist says: 'We shall destroy the self-image, unsteady, wavering, bewildered, full of desire, distracted, confused. When the self-concept thinks, this is I and that is mine, he binds himself and he forgets the great self'.<sup>147</sup> The ritual is similar to the one which opens the movie. It is the process of the reduction of the excess of the Symbolic that leads to de-identification (if by identity one understands the social persona built from the elements of the Symbolic). Thus, the characters destroy their symbolic personalities and end their existence in the form of simulacra.

Baudrillard writes that '[t]he symbolic is [...] an act of exchange and a social relation which [...] puts an end to the opposition between [reality] and the imaginary'.<sup>148</sup> Later, Baudrillard explains:

[t]he necessity [...] of a symbolic agency barring the subject, thanks to which the primary repression at the basis of the formation of the unconscious is implemented, by the same token gives the subject access to his own desire. Without this agency to arrange exchanges, without the mediation of the phallus, the subject, incapable of repression, no longer even gains access to the symbolic and sinks into psychosis.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> P.D. Ouspensky, *The Symbolism of the Tarot: Philosophy of Occultism in Pictures and Numbers* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1976).

<sup>146</sup> Ouspensky, *The Symbolism of the Tarot*.

<sup>147</sup> Alejandro Jodorowsky, *The Holy Mountain* (ABKCO Films, 1973) 79 min.

<sup>148</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London: Sage, 2017) 153. It seems that Baudrillard does not distinguish between the real and reality in his writing. In the case of this particular quote, the text says 'the opposition between the real and the imaginary', however, it appears that what is meant is 'the opposition between [reality] and the imaginary' - in Lacanian theory there is no opposition between the Real and the Imaginary as they together constitute part of the whole that is the Borromean knot.

<sup>149</sup> Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London: Sage, 2017) 158.

The Symbolic, thus, is an essential part of the triad of R.S.I., which is responsible for the harmonious functioning of the human psyche and its successful interaction with reality; however, its disproportionate involvement in the construction of the Real leads to delusion. In the case of *The Holy Mountain*, the hyperbolized Symbolic is one of the reasons behind the usage of the hallucinatory imagery by the director. Towards the second part of the film, following the transformation of the nine thieves, the imagery gets increasingly more natural and realistic. An exception can be observed when the travellers reach the Pantheon Bar, where for a moment the imagery gains some of its intensity again, however, this time it is seen through a significant critical distance as everything that happens at the bar is viewed as absurd, even idiotic. Relying on this comparison of the development of the characteristics of the film's imagery, the following conclusion can be made: *The Holy Mountain* is not only a film about a journey to awakening, it is a guide that gradually leads the audience through the stages of extreme symbolization to the balanced existence and understanding of accessible reality as harmonious illusion.

What are, then, the methods offered by Jodorowsky that allow one to access this particular knowledge? First, it is the realization that the accessible reality, expressed through the Symbolic and the Imaginary, is manifested through language. In order to change the perception of reality, one needs to implement changes in the way the language functions and influences the triad. In an interview, Jodorowsky emphasizes that in order to reach a balanced existence, one has to 'reconsider language and the way it shapes social reality'.<sup>150</sup> This advice is understood literally; Jodorowsky suggests an exercise that aims at ruining the frames within which language is usually used — he says that 'the largest prison is the articulate language, the logical language'<sup>151</sup> and suggests that the constraint has to be destroyed by means of exercising non-sensical utterance of existent and non-existent words. Such manipulations with language are directed at the

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<sup>150</sup> Alejandro Jodorowsky, *Psychomagic. The Transformative Power of Shamanic Psychotherapy* (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2010) 187.

<sup>151</sup> Jodorowsky, *Psychomagic* 282.

understanding of reality as a ‘social construct’<sup>152</sup> that can be altered according to the changes in the Symbolic and the Imaginary that reveal the objective instability of the said functions.

In *The Holy Mountain*, the realization of this instability leads to the destruction of the doubles (the twin figures of the seekers of knowledge) that were created in the process of the formation of ‘reality’ with the prevalence of the Symbolic. The nine disciples burn the doubles and their money in order to liberate themselves from the ‘dream called ‘reality’’.<sup>153</sup> This first step is succeeded by a series of profound transformations, which affect both the travellers’ body and mind (alteration of their perception, work with the corporeal form as well as with senses, and riddance of desires). The result of the metamorphoses is one harmonious entity, which consists of nine members of the group that completed their return to what can be seen as the state of *tabula rasa*. The thieves are, in such a way, ready for the reception of new experiences of the world that are not limited by the pre-established conditions dictated by the social, namely by language and ideology.

The common trope for many Eastern philosophies and spiritual teachings as well as their Western counterparts, is the ‘silencing of one’s mind’. Such was the advice of Jodorowsky’s teacher, Ejo, who insisted that the procedure is necessary as the mind ‘acts as an obstruction to Jodorowsky’s efforts to understand himself and the world. The intellect abstracts from life in forming its theories, and we come to live, for all intents and purposes, within theories rather than within the world. [...] Intellect abstracts from experience — and the result is that we wind up becoming abstracted ourselves: removed from life and from the present. To combat this, we must ‘empty our minds’’.<sup>154</sup> The lesson is frequently falsely interpreted as encouragement for further estrangement, cessation of rational thinking and/or emotional response. In fact, the goal of the practice is different — instead of creating distance between the subjects and their

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<sup>152</sup> Alejandro Jodorowsky, ‘First Acts’ in *The Dance of Reality: A Psychomagical Autobiography* (Vermont: Park Street Press, 2014).

<sup>153</sup> Jodorowsky, ‘From Psychomagic to Psychoshamanism’ in *The Dance of Reality*.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

experiences, it attempts to create distance between the subjects and prevailing ideologies. The approach is primarily directed at the detection of ideologies and their understanding, which may lead to a more authentic experience of reality. The characters of *The Holy Mountain* undergo a series of changes initiated by the Alchemist in order to understand that there exists a set of ideologies that pertain to the Western man. However, they do not strive to achieve authenticity behind a multilayered illusion. The Real, as it is expressed through the Symbolic and the Imaginary, is the only available type of authenticity; all that the Alchemist can do in order to help the seekers of knowledge is to balance their R.S.I. and suggest that the illusion itself is reality.

In *The Holy Mountain*, Jodorowsky uses a mixture of Eastern philosophies; his character, the Alchemist, says that ‘the elements of chemistry are many, but finite. So are the techniques of enlightenment. To reach it more quickly, we will combine the techniques. With the correct formula, any human being can become enlightened’.<sup>155</sup> Thus, the film directly mentions Taoism and uses one of its main postulates that prefers less over more — strength is achieved through weakness, humble behavior is the one that is rewarded, value is seen in the minimal number of possessions etc.<sup>156</sup> The influence of the ideas of Zen is also visible, especially in the strive for ‘enlightenment’. Additionally, the film relentlessly uses *I Ching*, specifically the Qián and Kūn triagrams that signify heaven and ground respectively.<sup>157</sup> The triagrams appear inside the Alchemist’s tower and are part of the emphasis on balanced existence between what is above and below mortal men; in this respect, it can also be seen as a connection to the Magician Tarot card, where traditionally, the magician is depicted with his hands pointing above and below him. Another obvious influence is Gurdjieff, his Fourth Way (a combination of fakir, monk, and yogi practices for enhanced effect),<sup>158</sup> and the Enneagram. The symbol of the Enneagram appears many times: the first time

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<sup>155</sup> Alejandro Jodorowsky, *The Holy Mountain* (ABKCO Films, 1973) 78 min.

<sup>156</sup> Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching: A Book About the Way and the Power of the Way* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2012).

<sup>157</sup> Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching, or Book of Changes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950).

<sup>158</sup> Nathan Bernier, *The Enneagram: Symbol of All and Everything* (Brasilia: Gilgamesh, 2003) 32.

it is seen as an amulet on the Alchemist's neck, later it is seen on the neck of the Thief, and, most significantly, the Enneagram is depicted on the table of the Immortals. The symbol of Enneagram, also commonly considered to be introduced by P.D. Ouspensky and not Gurdjieff himself,<sup>159</sup> is used in the explorations of spiritual development. It is associated with Gurdjieff's Law of Ninefoldness<sup>160</sup> and is meant to reflect the laws of the universe. In *The Holy Mountain*, nine is the number of travellers that seek the Holy Mountain, and upon reaching its summit, the thieves sit at the table with the Enneagram on it in such a way that each member of the Alchemist's group occupies one of the nine angles in the Enneagram. Together and united, the nine seekers of knowledge form a group that represents the laws of the universe as they are reflected in the Enneagram. However, it is likely that *The Holy Mountain* does not suggest that the only possible way of reaching the state of 'enlightenment' is through collective work; considering other essential elements of the film, it is possible to assume that it is, once again, the all-encompassing balance that mirrors the functioning of reality that can lead to the most authentic experiences.

Indeed, all of the mentioned Eastern philosophical influences play a crucial role in the film and occupy the biggest part of its time. What is, however, more significant is that the ending denies the importance of all of them. In a documentary, entitled *The Jodorowsky Constellation*, Jodorowsky states that none of these practices matter and that enlightenment as such, or as it is represented in Eastern philosophies, does not exist.<sup>161</sup> In this respect, the effect that *The Holy Mountain* achieves can be compared to the one of the writing of Carlos Castaneda. The latter, at the dawn of his career as a writer, exploited the topics of mysticism and magic as well as the 1960s interest in psychoactive substances in order to lure readership.<sup>162</sup> Later, the focus of his writing shifted dramatically as the author concentrated on the perception of reality, the restrictive influence of the social and

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<sup>159</sup> Петр Успенский, *В поисках чудесного. Четвёртый путь Георгия Гурджиева* (Москва: АСТ, 2017).

<sup>160</sup> G.I. Gurdjieff, 'Chapter 40' in *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson: An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man* (Los Angeles: Penguin, 1999).

<sup>161</sup> Louis Mouchet, *The Jodorowsky Constellation* (Ars Magna, 1994).

<sup>162</sup> Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1985).

liberation from it.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, Jodorowsky attracts the general public with what is commonly marked as ‘hallucinatory imagery’, ‘exotic philosophy’, and shocking content only to shatter the expectations and to prove that in the end these aspects are not central for the final goal of the portrayed journey. In *The Jodorowsky Constellation*, the director says that all that matters is personal experience,<sup>164</sup> the idea of being alive itself contains a lot of mysteries that are worthy of the attention of those who seek knowledge. Thus, all of the answers can be obtained individually. The ideas employed in *The Holy Mountain* direct both the characters and the audience, however, none of the philosophies, especially if considered separately, are able to adequately reflect the ‘authentic experience of reality’.

The last scene of *The Holy Mountain* becomes decisive for the film. When the Alchemist’s group reaches the Lotus Island and then the Holy Mountain, they undergo two last challenges: first, the temptation to return to the previous life (at the Pantheon bar), and then, the complete parting with fears from their previous lives through intense hallucinations. This is the final stage of their metamorphosis — not only do they leave behind their desires and fears, they endure the crucial transformation of the role of the Symbolic that now in relation to the other functions, the Real and the Imaginary, acquires a well-balanced position. With the harmonious functioning of the R.S.I., the travellers proceed to the ultimate goal of their journey, which according to the words of the Alchemist, should lead them to enlightenment and the disclosure of the secret of immortality. However, when the table with the nine wise men appears in sight, the travellers discover that the figures of the Immortals are just cloaked puppets; under one of the cloaks hides the Alchemist himself who, having discarded his role as a spiritual leader, laughs together with his disciples. As they sit down, the Alchemist pronounces his speech:

I promised you the great secret and I will not disappoint you. Is this the end of our adventure? Nothing has the end. We came in search of the

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<sup>163</sup> It is unknown to what extent Jodorowsky might have been influenced by the example of Castaneda, however, it is known that Jodorowsky is familiar with Castaneda’s work and, according to the director, the two had a brief encounter. (Alejandro Jodorowsky, *Psychomagic. The Transformative Power of Shamanic Psychotherapy* (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2010) 118).

<sup>164</sup> Louis Mouchet, *The Jodorowsky Constellation* (Ars Magna, 1994).

secret of immortality. To be like gods. And here we are... mortals. More human than ever. If we have not obtained immortality, at least we have obtained reality. We began in a fairytale and we came to life. But is this life reality? No. It is a film. Zoom back camera. We are dreams, images, photographs. We must not stay here. Prisoners. We shall break the illusion. [...] Goodbye to the Holy Mountain. Real life awaits us.<sup>165</sup>

Attainable reality, thus, is not a complete absence of illusion — the seekers of the Holy Mountain discover that until the very moment of the discovery of the ‘great secret’ they were ‘images’, which adhered to the dominance of the imbalanced Symbolic. Their great discovery lies in the fact that life consists of individual human experiences and that is precisely what makes it valuable. Instead of living through the illusory ‘images’ of the self, unconscious of the atmosphere of dominant ideologies that operate by means of language, the Alchemist suggests knowledge — realization that reality presents itself as an illusion and there is no ‘beyond’. The only way of reaching control over what is perceived as ‘reality’ is conscious and balanced existence within the available conditions. The Alchemist finishes his speech amidst the film crew and cameras. He flips the table with the Enneagram on it, since the intricate combination of teachings and spiritual practices was only part of the road to the harmonious existence and has no use in further explorations. The Alchemist and his group leave the Holy Mountain in order to continue their adventure just as they have started it — mortal. They have reached the peak level of authentic perception and, as balanced and harmonious beings, they are ready to continue their journey, ‘more human than ever’.

The peculiar position of the Symbolic, its hypertrophied functioning, in *The Holy Mountain* create a special, deformed, type of the Lacanian R.S.I. knot. In this specific knot, the function of the Symbolic occupies a dominating place and by that prevents the effective operation of the other functions. The Imaginary does not create images suitable for the expression of the Real, instead, it produces

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<sup>165</sup> Alejandro Jodorowsky, *The Holy Mountain* (ABKCO Films, 1973) 110 min.



a series of doubles and simulacra that interrupt the normal operation of the triad. Such a situation within the knot creates a state of imbalance. The characters of *The Holy Mountain* attempt to restore the normal functioning of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary, by means of reducing the activity of the Symbolic, whose operation relies on the creation of ideologies and support from language. Their enterprise, disguised as a quest for ‘immortality’ and ‘enlightenment’, is supported by a combination of various Eastern philosophies and spiritual practices that in the end prove to be just means for the achievement of realization that there is no way to transcend the perceived subjective reality in order to reach authenticity. The reality discovered by the Alchemist’s group in *The Holy Mountain* is itself an illusion that can be effectively perceived and understood with the help of balanced R.S.I. and knowledge gained through individual practical experience.

## Chapter 5 - Power

The discussion of Daumal's *Mount Analogue* and Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain* should not end with the extraction of the elements of action and balance. Although, these are undoubtedly important discoveries, there remains a topic that despite its omnipresence both in the discourses of language and ideology as well as in the two works in question, has remained largely in the shadows. The topic of power is among the most important elements that figures in the present theoretical discussion and in the analyzed text and film. The following chapter attempts to understand the role of authority and power in *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain*. It investigates the reasons why both works stress the importance of getting rid of absolute power represented by a leader or a spiritual teacher. Simultaneously, additional connections between power and the functioning of language are made. The second part of the present chapter deals with the concept of power itself as well as further emphasizes the central role of action and balance in the context of the possibilities of influence on ideological hegemony. While this is being conducted, the discussion touches upon the differences between dominance and hegemony as they are defined by Baudrillard; and, importantly, power is seen from the point of view of constructivism, that is to say, as it is endowed with the ability to construct social reality. The chapter ends with the final suggestion of six interconnected points that have the potential of influencing ideological hegemony through the comprehension of its inner structures and mechanisms.

## I.

Power is among the most important topics of both *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain*. Power in the unfinished novel and in the film appears to be divided into three main types that reinforce each other: instructive power (that comes directly from authorities), personal power (knowledge that leads to the state of enlightenment) and oppositional power (the one that works against the laws of language and ideology in order to achieve a different type of power, which is personal). In both works, power is primarily exercised through leaders that play temporary roles of spiritual teachers or guides. In *Mount Analogue*, it is Father Sogol in whose hands power is concentrated up until the moment the travellers reach the mountain they have been looking for; whereas in *The Holy Mountain*, it is the Alchemist who occupies the dominating position and has the undeniable power to influence his disciples. This is the case of instructive power that is the least valuable within the contexts of the two works in question as its role is limited to pointing the direction for the beginning of the journey. Although, Daumal writes that such a power is nevertheless necessary ('[e]xperience has proved [...] that a man cannot reach truth directly, nor all by himself. An intermediary has to be present, a force still human in certain respects, yet transcending humanity in others'),<sup>166</sup> instructive power does not exceed its particular limited purpose in *Mount Analogue*; the same is true for *The Holy Mountain*.

The final scene of the film exposes the Alchemist as an ordinary man, bereft of the elements of his appearance that used to connect him to his allegedly mystical occupation. The Alchemist announces that the journey is not over yet, in fact 'nothing has an end', he then leaves along with his disciples that are now his equals as all of them intend to continue their adventure in the 'real world'. A similar transformation befalls Father Sogol in *Mount Analogue*. The leader of the group of mountaineers is a prominent figure of authority that despite enjoying each group member's respect, nevertheless, clearly resorts to multiple instances of

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<sup>166</sup> René Daumal, *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 36.

manipulation during the initial gathering of the group.<sup>167</sup> Sogol demands almost fanatical devotion to the idea of the journey and its goals as he asks his companions to follow him, give up their lives, invest their time and money. Such distribution of power changes significantly when the travellers find themselves at the Port o' Monkeys. Daumal notes that 'all authority in this country is exercised by the mountain guides'<sup>168</sup> who are 'less subject to the harmful influences of degenerate cultures which flourish on our continents'.<sup>169</sup> Thus, Father Sogol gives up his authority and continues the ascent to the summit of Mount Analogue among his equal companions, while his action is rewarded by the discovery of the first peradam.

The question of power in *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* is connected to the ultimate goal of the two journeys. Although it is unknown what the ending of Daumal's unfinished novel would have been like, it is clear from the development of the journey in *Mount Analogue* as well as from the conclusions one can make based on the author's thoughts expressed in his other written works, including essays, that the goal of the journey lies in the potential liberation from the constraints imposed by the Western cultural tradition. Analogously, it is the main achievement of the Alchemist's group in *The Holy Mountain*. The Alchemist tricks his disciples into believing that they pursue enlightenment and immortality; in the end it is revealed that their goal has been different all along and that their greatest achievement is 'humanity' with which they can proceed into the 'real world'. In such a way, it appears that both groups together with their leaders attempt to use oppositional power in order to discover the mechanisms of action of ideological laws and, as a consequence, to overcome limitations connected to the dominant position of Western ideology.

The power of ideology as it has been demonstrated before is based on language and plays an essential role in the formation of what is categorized as 'truth'; in other words, it is what is responsible for the formation of subjective 'reality'. The understanding of these particular laws of ideology is the central

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<sup>167</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 45-46, 51.

<sup>168</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 76.

<sup>169</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 80.

objective in *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain*. Simultaneously, the place from which the understanding of linguistic and ideological laws is possible becomes the source of personal power in the works in question. The destruction of inviolability of ideology is a gradual achievement of the two journeys to mysterious mountains. As the participants reject their worldly possessions, material attributes, the signs of their status, and their identities, they travel light to the revelation that concerns the nature of social reality. One can only judge the results of such a journey in the case of *The Holy Mountain*, where the journey comes to what can be at least deemed a logical conclusion even if in reality the journey has no end. The resulting achievement of the Alchemist's group of disciples is personal power that enables individuals to consciously exist in a state of balance within the dominant ideological environment. On the one hand, such power can be seen as esoteric or magical, or, on the other, as it is suggested in *The Holy Mountain*, it can be regarded as conscious and harmonious existence that does not transcend the borders of 'rational' universe and does not offer a fantasy; instead, it gives access to even clearer perception of reality that stems from the balanced psyche.

On a smaller scale, the functioning of linguistic and subsequently ideological elements are dependent on the operation of signifying chains. As the processes of signification are directly linked to the processes that govern the human psyche and can hardly be viewed as independent phenomena, the triad of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary, chosen to represent the psyche, effectively enhances the mechanisms of operation behind the film and the unfinished novel in question as well as sheds light on the aspect of power in the said works. Although *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* both deal with the topics of power and authority as well as with the acquisition of the so-called personal power, while applying the suggested psychoanalytical theory, one can conclude that the two works emphasize different aspects of the triad. The journey to *Mount Analogue* can be viewed as a 'symptomatic' journey that stems from a 'break' in the Real, while the journey to the *Holy Mountain* reflects the issues that rise from the distortion of the Symbolic. Issues and distortions in the knot are crucial for the understanding of the inner structure of the knot just like a disease

can be key to the understanding of the functioning of a certain organ of the physical body. This understanding is a basis for personal power in *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* as well as an important element for the conscious existence, which leads to the perception of reality that is not burdened with the question of ‘authenticity’ of what is perceived. Instead of obsession with attempts of the discovery of truth under the veil of illusion conditioned by the operation of signifying chains, the two journeys attempt to reveal that harmonious existence within the ‘illusion’ is the way to ‘enlightenment’.

The two distinct emphases on the different elements of the R.S.I. triad condition two distinct aspects, namely action and balance, that are highlighted in *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* respectively. Action is an underlining element in *Mount Analogue* as it not only sets in motion the pataphysical aspect of the text, but also becomes the force behind the development of the journey and the ultimate trigger of individual metamorphoses of the characters. Additionally, action indicates the emergence of the sinthome, which uncovers the entire dimension of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary in the text. At the same time, the focus of *The Holy Mountain* is on balance. The distortion in the Borromean knot, specifically in the part of the Symbolic, creates an advantageous environment, in which the importance of the harmonious co-existence of the three functions of the psyche can be demonstrated. It is balance that leads to the restoration of the harmonious functioning of the R.S.I. knot and it is through the balanced usage of various spiritual practices that the thieves are able to reach the summit of the Holy Mountain, where the final revelation awaits them. Both action and balance prove to be of great importance in the discussion of the possibilities of critique of ideology within the context of the two discussed works as they effectively connect the aspects that pertain to the psyche and the processes of perception to the possibility of existence within the available conditions that can be described as ‘illusory’. Thus, both action and balance lead to personal power that allows one to reach the final goal of the journeys in *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* that lies in the understanding of the mechanisms of function of Western ideology and subsequent conscious existence within the environment, or reality, which has no potential of becoming purely ‘authentic’.

The particular type of power that is called ‘personal’ here, in the context of *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain*, is gained by giving up the other types of power. Both in the film and in the unfinished novel, instructive and oppositional power are used in order to obtain personal power. In this case, less is more — as the authorities lose their power over their companions, they are rewarded with the same knowledge as the other members of the group. For the leaders, the step towards losing their power is an essential step towards gaining knowledge. As Father Sogol loses his role of the leader of the group, he, presumably like everybody else in *Mount Analogue*, clears the way to the understanding of how the social (that originates from the Symbolic and the Imaginary) occupies the place of reality. In a similar manner, the Alchemist gives up his role as the leader and spiritual teacher of his group of thieves in order to join his disciples on the way to knowledge; as he is leaving, he dismisses the Thief and orders him to occupy his place in the Tower. This is a common characteristic of leadership for both Daumal and Jodorowsky; for them it is necessary to exercise leadership and adhere to it with caution. ‘Be guided in your choice by people with experience,’ writes Daumal, ‘late by your own experience’.<sup>170</sup> The same thought is expressed by Jodorowsky in *Psychomagic*, where he stresses that healing can only be achieved by finding ‘inner God’<sup>171</sup> and that all sorts of gurus that aim to teach others the ways of obtaining knowledge are mere ‘clowns’ with excessive egos.<sup>172</sup> At the same time, leaders in both the works of Daumal and Jodorowsky, are responsible for those who will potentially follow their steps when the time for the leaders comes to give up their positions. Therefore, Daumal stresses that it is important to consciously leave behind such conditions that allow others to follow,<sup>173</sup> while Jodorowsky as the Alchemist ensures that those who seek knowledge will be able to follow his disciple, the Thief who has returned to the Tower, and that the chain of those willing to discover the truth does not break. All

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<sup>170</sup> Daumal, *Mount Analogue* 104.

<sup>171</sup> Alejandro Jodorowsky, *Psychomagic. The Transformative Power of Shamanic Psychotherapy* (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2010) 173.

<sup>172</sup> Jodorowsky, *Psychomagic* 222.

<sup>173</sup> René Daumal, *Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971) 101.

of this can be reduced to the fact that knowledge as power is an individual matter that does not allow the presence of neither blind following nor egocentrism. Therefore, if ideology can only be ‘criticized’ from the position within ideology, that is to say only from the position of conscious knowledge of what ideology is and what laws it issues, all power apart from the personal, analogously to what Baudrillard suggests concerning the opposition to hegemony, ‘must be abolished — and not solely in the refusal to be dominated, which is at the heart of all traditional struggles — but also, just as violently, in the refusal to dominate’.<sup>174</sup>

## II.

From the conducted discussion, the following questions arise: what are then the main characteristics of the power that fuels ideology and what is the role, which power plays in the process of acquisition of the position from which critique of ideology is possible (if it is possible)? Based on the principle represented with the help of the R.S.I. model, where reality is distanced from the perceived Real that is structured by means of the Symbolic and reflected in the Imaginary, in the same vein, one can effectively use the constructivist approach in order to discuss the power of ideology.

Power as such has always been associated with repression and control; in other words, it is frequently understood through the lens of its extreme and negative manifestations. Indeed, power creates a clear hierarchy that is reflected in the development of two strict categories: the one that consists of those who dominate and the one that represents those that are dominated. When it comes to the power of ideology, the law remains the same as ideology due to the functioning of power relations within its structures develops similar categories of those who benefit from ideological dominance and those who merely adhere to it. Thus, one of the most acknowledged theorists of ideology, Louis Althusser, wrote that Ideological State Apparatuses are supported by the state’s action of repression, whose repertoire includes such instruments as legal regulation,

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<sup>174</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Agony of Power* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010) 47.



physical force, and censorship among others.<sup>175</sup> This, in accordance with the theory, may also work in reverse: the state is able to acquire the position of power with the help of ideological instruments the functioning of which is conditioned by the process of active multi-front repression. At the same time, power is closely associated with control that in some cases is seen as a tool that possesses an ability to not only regulate but also construct ‘reality’. This tool differs from regime to regime and can be based both on control through oppression as well as pleasure (Baudrillard: “Take your desires for reality!’ can be understood as the ultimate slogan of power’).<sup>176</sup>

Power as a player in the construction of reality naturally emerges in the context of constructivism. Such a point of view is frequently criticized for its alleged estrangement from reality and total separation of the human understanding of the world from its ‘real’ conditions. However, it is not necessarily the case. Björn Kraus discusses two types of power: instructive power (‘means the chance to determine a human’s thinking or behaviour’, ‘instructive interaction is dependent on the instructed person’s own will, which ultimately can refuse instructive power’) and destructive power (‘means the chance to restrict a human’s possibilities’, ‘destructive interaction is independent of the instructed person’s own will, which can’t refuse destructive power’).<sup>177</sup> These types of power, according to Kraus, should not be considered as opposites as they both take part in the formation of ‘enforcement potential’. The enforcement potential of instructive and destructive types of power proves to be applicable to the mechanisms with the help of which ideology establishes its dominance. Thus, different types of ideological influence correspond to the first or the second type of power, depending on which type prevails in the particular way of ideological imposition (e.g. education as instructive power, legislation as destructive power). This, however, does not happen in separation from reality. Kraus emphasizes that ‘the construction of a cognitive ‘subjective reality’ needs a system environment

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<sup>175</sup> Louis Althusser, *On Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008) 24.

<sup>176</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2019) 21-22.

<sup>177</sup> Björn Kraus, ‘Introducing a Model for Analyzing the Possibilities of Power, Help and Control’ in *Social Work and Society Vol.12* (2014).

(‘objective reality’); ‘on the one hand, a person’s *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld) is its own subjective construction. On the other hand, this construction is not arbitrary. In spite of all subjectivity — because of the human’s structural coupling to its environment, this construction is influenced and limited by this very environment’.<sup>178</sup> Similarly, ideology itself, the mechanisms of its power, and natural predispositions behind the possibility of its imposition do not exist as a mere illusion separated from reality. What is important, however, is the fact that this particular characteristic of ideology renders its discourses extremely effective and lasting. This characteristic, if considered from the perspective of R.S.I., possesses the potential of interfering with the product of R.S.I. that is based on objective reality but is itself a succession of signifying chains. This interference is not typically understood as something alien or threatening, since it is partly grounded in the same reality as the product of the system of R.S.I. itself.

Generally, the post-structuralist approach privileges the understanding of power as capable of the construction of ‘reality’. Thus, for example, Mark Haugaard and Stewart R. Clegg trace the development of the concept of power from its Machiavellian roots to Michel Foucault. They state that the concept of power went through a series of transformations: ‘from Machiavelli (‘domination and control which work in subtle way’ ‘the successful Prince manages society through the manipulation of flows and movements of power’) to Hobbes (‘power flows from society to the individual’) to Nietzsche (‘power is a capacity to define reality. If you can define the real and the moral, you create the conditions of legitimacy’)’ to Foucault, who ‘emerges as the prime rejuvenator of the Machiavellian and Nietzschean view of power as a systemic phenomenon which is constitutive of social reality’.<sup>179</sup> In such a way, power became not only a tool of disguised control and repression, but also a defining player in the construction of the social and power relations in what we call ‘reality’. The same point of view is expressed in Jacob Torfing’s essay on power and discourse: ‘power should be seen as a constitutive act of inclusion and exclusion that shapes and reshapes structure and agency and, thereby, constructs the conditions for how we make sense of the

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Stewart R. Clegg, and Mark Haugaard. *The SAGE Handbook of Power* (Trowbridge: Sage, 2009) 2.

world and act appropriately'.<sup>180</sup> Torfing also refers to Foucault, who claims that 'power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere',<sup>181</sup> which for Torfing means the following: 'power is not external to social relations, but immanent to all kinds of economic, organizational, scientific, and sexual relations that are shaped and re-shaped through power'.<sup>182</sup>

The characteristic of power as an innate underlying structure behind all of the spheres of the social connects it to both ideology and language. It is rather remarkable how in the context of post-structuralist thought among various obsessions language and power stand out as the most frequent subjects. Considering that on the one hand, there are direct connections between the functioning of ideological constructions and language, and on the other hand, there is a link between ideology and power, where the latter plays the role of an integral element in any relations of the social, it can be noted that it is through language that such power is exercised. Language provides the means for the existence of ideology that dictates its laws and by that consolidates its dominating position. The linguistic element in the power of ideology is the fundamental one as it is directly responsible for the mechanisms which are occupied with expression, definition, evaluation, re-evaluation, and, finally, construction of 'reality', all of which are employed for the benefit of the effectivity of the influence of ideology.

Taking into consideration that ideology partakes in the construction of subjective 'realities' within the dimension of the social, it is, as it has been mentioned before, extremely difficult to avoid. Ideology takes its roots in reality, which corresponds to the 'authentic' experiences of mental worlds that are products of perception of the same reality. Additionally, as ideology influences the social dimension, it exploits language and alters the ways in which language is used in order to occupy a dominating position. From the very beginning, at the very roots of ideological structures, these intrinsic characteristics of ideology

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<sup>180</sup> Jacob Torfing, 'Power and Discourse: Towards an Anti-Foundationalist Concept of Power' in *The SAGE Handbook of Power* (Trowbridge: Sage, 2009) 108.

<sup>181</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1976) 94.

<sup>182</sup> Jacob Torfing, 'Power and Discourse: Towards an Anti-Foundationalist Concept of Power' in *The SAGE Handbook of Power* (Trowbridge: Sage, 2009) 112.

make opposition to the power of ideology almost futile. However, these are not the only difficulties one can meet when endeavouring to occupy the place from which it is possible to conduct a critique of ideology and avoid the influence of its power. Ideological structures are not the most durable ones, they change with time as one dominant ideology is exchanged for its successor. Therborn warns about this; he writes that ideology is in constant flux, ‘it is a change *in* rather than *of* dominant discourse’.<sup>183</sup> This is what makes revolution in its traditional sense ineffective — revolutionary activity reinforces the change of ideologies, which only perpetuates the cycle, while the dominant discourse remains intact. Furthermore, the relevant question would be, if liberation from the power of ideology is possible within the present conditions, in the times when it seems nothing needs to be liberated? Baudrillard addresses this issue in *The Agony of Power* (in the book he discusses the differences between domination and hegemony, with the original evolving into the latter; hegemony, unlike domination, is almost impossible to oppose):

The high point of the struggle against domination was the historic movement of liberation, be it political, sexual, or otherwise — a continuous movement, with guiding ideas and visible actors. But liberation occurred with exchanges and markets, which brings us to this terrifying paradox: all of the liberation fights against domination only paved the way for hegemony, the reign of general exchange — against which there is no possible revolution, since everything is already liberated.<sup>184</sup>

Paradoxically, power itself plays a crucial role in the possibility of undermining the influence of ideology. When it is exercised intentionally and visibly, and especially when it originates from a dominant group that benefits from the establishment of dominating ideology, power becomes the key to the possibility of avoidance of ideological influence. Here, an important distinction between two types of ideology has to be made. With a reference to Baudrillard’s notions of domination and hegemony, there exist two types of ideological influence: the first

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<sup>183</sup> Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1999) 124.

<sup>184</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Agony of Power* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010) 76.

that occupies a dominating position and openly exploits its power in order to control and repress, and the second one, which transcends the state of domination and undergoes a transformation into hegemony. Both types take part in the construction of 'reality'; the distinction primarily refers to different levels of ideological influence as well as strikingly different ways of its avoidance. Baudrillard notes:

Domination can be overturned from the outside. Hegemony can only be inverted or reversed from the inside. Two different, almost contrary paradigms: the paradigm of revolution, transgression, subversion (domination) and the paradigm of inversion, reversion, auto-liquidation (hegemony). They are almost exclusive of each other, because the mechanisms of revolution, of anti-dominance, as history demonstrated, can become the impetus or the vector for hegemony.<sup>185</sup>

Ideological domination can be understood as an isolated stream of power, where the mechanisms of functioning of the said power is visible and, therefore, can be opposed. Such domination, in accordance with Baudrillard's words, can be overcome by revolutionary action directed at the destruction or alteration of ideological influence. In this case, the power of ideological dominance can play against those who exercise it, since the visible force of ideological action serves as the source from which counter-action can be developed. In such a way, ideological domination yields to the power of external threats; the result of effective interactions of opposing powers can be either the destruction of dominant ideology, or its transformation into ideological hegemony.

Ideological hegemony, in its turn, cannot be opposed directly as it does not openly manifest the mechanisms of its power. In the conditions of ideological hegemony, those who exercise power become even more entangled with ideological constructions. It is at this point, when ideology ceases to be seen as an 'illusion' and becomes a constitutive part of perceived reality. In case of ideological hegemony, there is no 'outside of ideology' that can be occupied in order to obtain critical distance that would allow one to dismantle ideological constructions. In accordance with Žižek's opinion that has been discussed earlier,

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<sup>185</sup> Baudrillard, *The Agony of Power* 34.

Torfining concludes: '[t]here is no extra-ideological reality against which we can measure and finally unmask the ideological misrepresentations, since the world is always-already ideological'.<sup>186</sup> With no critical distance that can be obtained in order to avoid the influence of ideological hegemony, one can adjust to the conditions of ideology and use its very own characteristics for the understanding and subsequent potential altering of ideological structures in the state of hegemony.

Torfining notices that Derrida 'frequently refers to the 'violent inscription' of binary textual hierarchies, which under the spell of the Western metaphysics of presence tend to privilege presence over absence, unity over dispersion, continuity over discontinuity, homogeneity over heterogeneity, etc. The binary hierarchies, which help to render the world intelligible, are constructed through the inclusion and exclusion of meaning and identity'.<sup>187</sup> These are the rules according to which ideological power contributes to the construction of 'reality'. Such rules function according to the natural predispositions of the human mind and it is yet another point that discloses why ideological hegemony proves to be effective and with that difficult to avoid. Therefore, Torfining continues: '[t]he social world might appear to us as decided and unambiguous, but this is merely due to the naturalization of a set of binary hierarchies that are constructed through an impossible decision made in the context of an undecidable terrain in which the choice between determinate possibilities cannot be subjected to any higher-order rule, principle, or logic'.<sup>188</sup> The understanding of this basic principle of the formation of 'reality' conditioned by the concealed power of ideological hegemony helps to find a possibility to exist within the sphere of ideological influence in such a way that allows conscious participation in the operation of ideological structures and consequent potential implementation of changes in the regime.

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<sup>186</sup> Jacob Torfining, 'Power and Discourse: Towards an Anti-Foundationalist Concept of Power' in *The SAGE Handbook of Power* (Trowbridge: Sage, 2009) 121.

<sup>187</sup> Torfining, 'Power and Discourse: Towards an Anti-Foundationalist Concept of Power' in *The SAGE Handbook of Power* 113.

<sup>188</sup> Torfining, 'Power and Discourse: Towards an Anti-Foundationalist Concept of Power' in *The SAGE Handbook of Power* 115-116.

In order to enhance the effectivity of this crucial comprehension and increase the chance of implementation of changes, one needs to act within the sphere of ideological influence. The actions that are directed at the augmentation of the points of instability, as well as proliferation of multiplicities, indeterminacy and diversity allow one to destabilize the functioning of the most basic structures of ideological hegemony.<sup>189</sup>

These actions are necessarily accompanied by a sufficient level of balance. Since ideological regimes possess the ability to exclude the disruptive elements from the sphere of their influence and by that limit communication with the elements that remain under the influence of ideology, it is important to maintain balance that allows one to proceed with the destabilization of the regime and simultaneously allows one to stay within the frame of the sphere of ideology.

Thus, in order to sum up the discussion of the possibility of affecting ideological regimes through the comprehension of how they exercise their power, the following can be said: 1. the understanding of ideology and its power should start with the identification of its basic elements that take roots in language and the processes of signification, 2. according to these basic characteristics, power in the context of ideology can be seen as possessing the ability to structure social reality of its subjects, 3. it is important to distinguish between ideological dominance and ideological hegemony in order to identify the possibility and effectivity of the usage of counter-actions, 4. ideological hegemony cannot be transcended, it can only be understood in terms of the mechanisms of its actions, 5. ideological hegemony can be influenced by the proliferation of multiplicities, diversity and indeterminacy that prove to be effective in the potential destabilization of the regime, and finally, 6. both action and balance are indispensable if one is to obtain a position from which ideology can be comprehended and potentially altered.

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<sup>189</sup> Interestingly enough, pataphysics possesses all of the described qualities that make it suitable for the questioning of ideological hegemony.

The conducted discussion expanded on the topics of action and balance that figured in Daumal's *Mount Analogue* and Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain*. The topic of power in the discourses of language and ideology as well as in the works in question that till this moment remained unaddressed was investigated in accordance with the previously acquired theoretical knowledge and subsequent results of the analysis of the film and the novel. As the first part of the present chapter dealt with the representation of authority and power in *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain*, the second part explored the constructivist approach to power with an emphasis on its most basic, innate elements that connect power to language and the processes of signification. The discussion connects to the first chapter and then explores the role of power in dominant ideologies and ideological hegemony. Simultaneously, the role of action and balance is highlighted once again as it figures in the suggestion according to which ideological hegemony can be understood 'from the inside' in order to be influenced and potentially altered. Thus, the works and ideas of René Daumal and Alejandro Jodorowsky disclose an important dimension, in which the concepts of language, ideology and power enter in such a relation, which upon closer inspection yields a number of crucial conclusions that can be used in order to understand their interplay.



## Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this thesis acquires a number of new perspectives on the works of René Daumal and Alejandro Jodorowsky. The investigation into the nature of Daumal's unfinished novel *Mount Analogue* and Jodorowsky's film *The Holy Mountain* aims at offering a series of insights on such fundamental topics as the ones of language, ideology, and power.

Instead of conducting a comparative analysis of the two works in question based on the alleged adaptation of Daumal's novel by Jodorowsky, the thesis analyzes the two cultural works separately in order to disclose the connections between the essential aspects of language and ideology. Only then *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* are seen side by side in order to discuss the common denominator, which is the topic of power, that not only governs the content of the two discussed works, but also plays a crucial role in the discussed theoretical interplay of the said aspects.

Daumal's *Mount Analogue* is considered from the point of view that takes into account its pataphysical roots; however, the thesis also attempts to highlight further steps taken by Daumal with the help of which he transformed the traditional notion of pataphysics and adapted it in order to convey his own philosophy that originated from a variety of sources that combine the Western perspective and Eastern spiritualism.

In its turn, Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain* is seen as a film that is able to offer more than a peculiar demonstration of the implementation and results of Eastern spiritual practices. It is seen more than just a visually astounding entertainment with 'exotic' and 'violent' imagery that usually plays the central

role in the analysis of the film. The thesis, instead of following these paths, analyzes the film from the perspective of Jodorowsky's eclectic philosophy that aims at the demonstration of the possibilities of 'ordinary' life that does not attempt to uncover the truth behind the illusion of perceived reality.

The method of the analysis of the two works is grounded in the theory of psychoanalysis, specifically, it is based on Lacan's theory of the Borromean knot that is represented by the triad of the functions of the human psyche, or R.S.I.: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. However, while the theoretical background of the thesis functions in accordance with Lacanian psychoanalysis, the chosen method of analysis discards the traditional psychoanalytical approach to (both its patients and) cultural subjects. As the thesis juxtaposes the 'scientific' approach of psychoanalysis to the 'unscientific' philosophy of pataphysics, it tailors an approach that is suitable for the specific case, which is the analysis of *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain*.

The result is a detailed discussion of the role of language, ideology, and power in *Mount Analogue* and *The Holy Mountain* as well as in the general intellectual environment of post-structuralism. As the novel and the film are analyzed, the topics of action (in *Mount Analogue*, through the discussion of the role of the sinthome in the novel) and balance (in *The Holy Mountain*, through the discussion of the condensed Symbolic in the film) are extracted in order to continue the investigation into the nature of interconnections between language, ideology, and finally power. The latter is then regarded from the constructivist perspective that allows one to deepen the understanding of the role of language in the formation of ideologies and the comprehension of the functioning of ideological regimes; the thesis then proceeds to the analysis of the role that power plays in the comprehension of the mechanisms of ideology as well as contemplates the potentialities of the implementation of changes in ideological regimes.

## Appendix

p. 40 ‘Aucun mécanisme verbal ne peut créer de vérité. Aucune pensée réelle ne peut s'exprimer en mots si elle n'a pas été vécue. Mais l'emploi constant du langage parlé dans les relations humaines engendre l'illusion que le langage peut contenir en lui-même une connaissance.’

No verbal mechanism can create truth. No real thought can be expressed in words if it has not been lived. But the constant use of spoken language in human relationships creates the illusion that language itself can contain knowledge.

p. 41 ‘[...] on risque, à coups de ‘vérités’ verbales, de tuer toute recherche réelle.’

[...] we risk, with verbal ‘truths’, to kill all real research.

p. 49 ‘[I]a philosophie verbale n'est qu'une étape nécessaire de ce voyage’

Verbal philosophy is just a necessary step of this journey.

p. 51 ‘[I]’homme de la caverne dont parle Platon doit en sortir, contempler la lumière du soleil et, muni de cette lumière qu’il garde dans sa mémoire, rentre dans la caverne.’

The caveman of which Plato speaks must come out, contemplate the light of the sun and, provided with this light that he keeps in his memory, return to the cave.

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## Abstract in English

The thesis departs from the undetermined relation between René Daumal's unfinished novel *Mount Analogue: A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing* (1952) and its alleged adaptation, Alejandro Jodorowsky's 1973 film *The Holy Mountain*. The thesis discusses the two works from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis, specifically, through the lens of the so-called Borromean knot that represents the three functions of the psyche: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. The structure of the thesis supposes the following: the first chapter concentrates on the relevant terminology and aims to define such concepts as language and ideology for the purposes of the present thesis; the second chapter discusses the method of analysis that will be applied to Daumal's *Mount Analogue* and Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain*, namely, it explores the possibilities of psychoanalysis and considers the 'unscientific' approach of pataphysics that favours the particular over the general; through the concept of the *sinthome* the aspect of action is emphasized in the analysis of *Mount Analogue*, while the fourth chapter analyses *The Holy Mountain* from the perspective of the 'hypertrophied' Symbolic and simultaneously stresses the importance of the element of balance in the film; the final chapter, then, concentrates on the concept of power, its relation to ideology and the possibility of its understanding as well as potential altering. Such an approach, contrary to the traditional comparative study of the works in question, uncovers an important dimension, where the concepts of language, ideology, and power can be regarded as crucial elements that possess the ability of constructing social and subjective reality. Additionally, the thesis introduces a corresponding perspective on the methods used in literary criticism and explores the notions of pataphysics and psychoanalysis within the same context.

## Abstract in Czech

Tato práce vychází z doposud neurčeného vztahu mezi nedokončeným románem *Hora analogie – román příběhů alpských, neeuklidovských a symbolicky autentických* (1952) spisovatele Réného Daumala a jeho údajnou filmovou adaptací *Svatá hora* (1973) režiséra Alejandra Jodorowského. Práce nahlíží na obě díla z perspektivy lacanovské psychoanalýzy, přesněji skrze optiku tzv. boromejského uzlu představujícího tři funkce lidské psychiky: reálnou, symbolickou a imaginární. Svou strukturou předpokládá následující: první kapitola artikuluje relevantní terminologii a snaží se pro účely této práce definovat pojmy jako jazyk a ideologie; druhá kapitola pojednává o metodách užitých při analýze Daumalovy *Hory analogie* a Jodorowského *Svaté hory*, zkoumá pak především možnosti psychoanalýzy a zvažuje „nevědecký“ přístup patafyziky, který upřednostňuje konkrétní nad obecným; ve třetí kapitole prostřednictvím konceptu sinthomu je v analýze *Hory analogie* zdůrazněn aspekt akce; čtvrtá kapitola analyzuje *Svatou horu* z pohledu „hypertrofovaného“ symbolického a současně zdůrazňuje význam prvku rovnováhy ve filmu; závěrečná kapitola se pak zaměřuje na pojem moci, jeho vztah k ideologii a různé možnosti jejího porozumění, zároveň se zabývá možnými změnami ideologie. Tento přístup, na rozdíl od tradičních srovnávacích studií daných děl, odhaluje důležitou dimenzi, ve které lze pojmy jazyka, ideologie a moci vnímat jako klíčové prvky schopné vytvářet sociální a subjektivní realitu. Práce dále představuje s tím související pohled na literárně-kritické metody a ve stejném kontextu zkoumá pojmy patafyziky a psychoanalýzy.