

“LANGUAGE IS THERE TO BEWILDER ITSELF AND OTHERS”: THEORETICAL AND CLINICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF SABINA SPIELREIN

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There are many ways to begin this story. On August 18, 1904, a young Russian woman of nineteen is admitted to the Burghölzli Hospital. She is described as disturbed, hysterical, psychotic, volatile. She is Jung’s first patient and her transference to him was almost immediately passionate and highly erotized. After her release from the hospital that relationship is fatally compromised by Jung’s erotic involvement with her. Later she is caught up in the conflicts and breakdown of the relationship of Freud and Jung.

We know this version of Sabina Spielrein’s entrance into the medical and psychoanalytic worlds of Europe from films and some early biographies, from her letters and diaries written in the period 1906–1907, and even from her psychiatric records (Covington and Wharton 2003, pp. 79–108). Spielrein has been cast as a young madwoman, later involved

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in a boundary violation, precocious and brilliant, but sexually transgressive. In this version, she is often weighed down by a masochistic character that is used to explain her marriage, her relationships, her work choices, and indeed all the events right up to her doom in 1942 when Germans invade her hometown of Rostov-on-Don.

My commitment to writing about Spielrein's intellectual and clinical life, which for half a century had been entirely erased, began in the mix of distress and irritation I felt at this version of her story. In focusing on the more salacious accounts of the fought-over child/woman caught between the two big Others, Freud and Jung, Spielrein reappears but too much as a kind of pornographic caricature. Just as she resurfaces, we are in danger of losing this interesting thinker again.¹

So I am beginning the story another way. Sabina Spielrein, like many young Russian women of her class and generation (she was born in 1885), comes to Europe hungry for education. By all accounts, she is a particularly brilliant student. Switzerland was a kind of Mecca for young, often Jewish, Russian women, a place finally to grow and thrive intellectually and professionally.² Chaim Weizman, the first president of Israel, married a girl from Rostov. He and his wife were in Switzerland contemporaneously with Spielrein.

This group of girls from Rostov differed significantly from ordinary Jewish girls in university in Switzerland at that time—in their appearance, manners and views. They were much more attractive than girls of their age from the Pale of Settlement, who looked, for the most part, nervous, disillusioned, exhausted and hungry [Etkind 1997, p. 133].

Spielrein arrives in Switzerland in a state of breakdown and eventually becomes a patient at the Burghölzli. She is discharged after nine months and at the end of that period Eugen Bleuler, then the hospital's director, recommends that she begin medical school. John Launer's biography of Spielrein (2014) notes that by the second half of her stay at the

¹For many people, David Cronenberg's film *A Dangerous Method* (2011) was a particularly destructive intervention in understanding Spielrein. A recent biography (Launer 2014) restores a careful balance in recounting a long and productive, if very complex, life.

²"By 1910 there were 362 Russian students at Zurich University. The majority were women, and more than half were studying medicine" (Launer 2014, p. 54).

hospital, she is engaged in scientific studies, assisting in research, including some of Jung's work on word associations, and she seems markedly better.

Rightly, we see Spielrein (and her Russian contemporaries like Max Eitingon, Lou Andreas-Salomé, and Moshe Wulff) as grounded both in European and Russian philosophy and cultural thought and in the forefront of the analytic communities developing in Europe and later in Russia (Etkind 1997; Miller 1986, 1998). Throughout her working and writing life Spielrein was anchored in Freudian and Jungian theory. By the 1920s and after her medical training one sees her deep engagement with psychology, and with more specialized disciplines like physiology, linguistics, and child development.

Spielrein qualifies as a doctor, writes a dissertation on schizophrenia, considered the first psychoanalytic dissertation (Spielrein 1911c), and, late in 1911, gives a paper at the Wednesday night meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society (Spielrein 1912b). She is invited shortly afterwards to become a member. She would have been twenty-six years old and only the second woman admitted to the society. Her trajectory after Vienna is complex and includes marriage and a child, work in Berlin, Zurich, Lausanne, and finally Geneva for a period of productive writing and thinking. She has over thirty publications, many significant, all of them interesting.

A later move to Moscow in 1923 brings her to the Soviet Union during a period there in which psychoanalysis is very much on the ascendant. At that time and in that place, Spielrein would have been one of the most senior figures in Russian psychoanalysis, in its period of great creativity. It was a brief but optimistic historical moment, in which in many areas in the arts, sciences, and social theory there were great hopes for the integration of political thought, psychoanalysis, and social science. Spielrein is doomed finally, by the tragic, certainly vicious, destruction of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s. She returns to her husband in the context of moving from Moscow back to Rostov, and has another child. In 1942, in Rostov, she is murdered, with both her children, by advancing German troops.

Each of these stories carries something of her extraordinary and extraordinarily tragic history. The quote in this essay's title is one of Sabina Spielrein's many enigmatic statements, almost buried in her

powerful and difficult paper, “Destruction as Cause of Becoming³ (Spielrein 1912b, p. 100). By all accounts, this essay, presented at that Wednesday night meeting in 1911, had, from the beginning, a difficult reception.⁴ Nunberg and Federn’s notes on the presentation attest to challenges and incomprehension, along with fascination. In their report they note that Spielrein herself felt that the group had not understood, or she had not fully explained, her focus on transformation. Creation and destruction are entwined in the project of transformation and growth. This dialectic is one she is attuned to for the rest of her writing and working career.

However difficult and challenging that paper clearly can be, I would argue that it rightly belongs in the psychoanalytic canon. Yet, as we know, Spielrein herself, and much of her subsequent work vanished, disappearing for much of the rest of the century. We know of her paper on sexuality and destruction probably only because of Freud’s reference to it in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920, p. 55 n.2). The paper, published in German in 1912, was not available in English until the 1990s. But she has many publications scattered across several languages and collected only in German and Russian editions, though an English edition is under way.

She is linked to five of the most significant intellectual figures in the first half of the twentieth century: Freud, Jung, Piaget, Luria, and Vygotsky. In their time, the latter two were spoken of as, respectively, the Beethoven and the Mozart of Russian psychology. Spielrein is a few years younger than her Russian colleague Max Eitingon, ten years older than Vygotsky and Piaget, and twenty years older than Luria. That Spielrein appears only as a footnote in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud’s paper on the death instinct, and another footnote in his essay on Schreber (Freud 1911) seems almost incomprehensible.

In the two decades since the astonishing, almost random recovery of her letters, diaries, and papers, a devoted and increasingly active international

³The paper, translated into English in two different journals in the 1990s, was given two slightly different titles: “Destruction as Cause of Becoming” in *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought* (1995) and “Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being” in *Journal of Analytical Psychology* (1994).

⁴Minutes of that meeting record eighteen people present including Freud, Spielrein, Dattner, Feder, Friedjung, Hitschmann, Nepalok, Rank, Reinhold, Reitler, Reik, Rosenstein, Sachs, Sadger, Steiner, Stekel, and Tausk. We might wonder at the underground circuitry of these figures spreading different versions of Spielrein’s ideas beyond the perimeter of that meeting.

network of scholars working on Spielrein has been developing. I write this essay deeply indebted to this very interdisciplinary group.⁵

I am aware of the dangers in this reconstructive project. Seeing Spielrein's intellectual and professional life silenced both in its time and for decades afterwards, I run the risk of a repolarizing reversal making Spielrein the mother ship from which all interesting ideas, classical, postmodern, and relational, flow. I am hoping to restrain that impulse enough to help you encounter a deep and original thinker, contributing clinical and theoretical work in some very hot spots, key locations at a time of intellectual and cultural synergy in the period from roughly 1911 to 1928, an important period in the history of psychoanalysis and a seedbed for the study of child development.

My approach has been both to do historiography and to make speculative links across theory and practice, and across historical periods. I can locate Spielrein in her intellectual and cultural milieu and in the potent moments in psychoanalytic history in the 1920s. I have also felt free to associate Spielrein's ideas, her preoccupations, and her strategies and methods to other figures in psychoanalysis, spread across the past century. I can find echoes of and affinities with Spielrein in Loewald (1980), in Ferenczi (1924), in Matte Blanco (1973, 1975), in the new focus on reverie (Ferro 2005; Ogden 1997), and in the renewed attention to the complexities of representation and unrepresentable experience (Ferro 2005; Botella and Botella 2005, Levine and Reed 2013).⁶ She can also be seen in the context of the unfolding discourse on

⁵Carotenuto (1982) made the first crucial discovery, and this work led to biographies by Kerr (1994) and Richebächer (2012). Most crucially, work by Covington and Wharton (2003) and their colleagues, particularly Lothane and Cifali, widen our experience of Spielrein and her era and work. There is important scholarship within developmental psychology by Santiago-Delefosse and Delefosse (2002) and Vidal (2001). I am indebted to crucial archival excavation and contextualizing work by Etkind (1997) and Miller (1998). The continuing recovery and rehabilitation and widening scope of work on Vygotsky has also been crucial (van der Veer and Valsiner 1994; Frawley 1997) This large community of scholars scattered internationally is a joy to know of and encounter. For everyone engaged in working on Spielrein, this is all still so much a work in progress. Mistakes and misleading judgments will inevitably occur. There will be revisions, of course. For me, Alexander Etkind and John Launer have offered the deepest insights and guidance.

⁶I would link Spielrein's metapsychology, her discussion of undifferentiated and differentiated aspects of mental life (I-psyche and we-psyche) to Matte Blanco (1975) on infinite sets and the unconscious. He writes an interesting exploratory essay on the death instincts, coming close to but never aware of her ideas on creation and destruction. The complexities of representation were clearly on her mind in her clinical work and research, and the unconscious elements of speech preoccupied her clinically and theoretically. These themes will be unpacked in this essay.

sexuality, regression, and excess from the 1920s onward (Ferenczi 1924; Lampl-de Groot 1933; Muller 1932, Laplanche 1999; Stein 1998, Dimen 2003; Saketopoulou 2015).

It is not that Spielrein foresees these developments, only that the deep interests she pursued over her career take her into waters we are still exploring and into ways of thinking that we continue to evolve and practice. There is above all, and continuously, Spielrein's deep devotion and commitment to psychoanalytic ideas and practices, a devotion that by the end of her life would have become profoundly dangerous. There is her attention to bridging and transdisciplinary work. There is much evidence of her attunement to patients, her interest in clinical nuances and in forms of interpretation that remain subtle and deliberately unintrusive. There is her great talent for child observation, evidenced in research and in treatment. I am intrigued by her unfolding work on sexuality, on mind and mind's otherness, and on the unconscious underpinnings of thinking and speaking. I consider the placement of Spielrein in the genealogy of psychoanalysis, in its lineage (perhaps more simply, in the conversation), to be a matter of ethics, as well as of intellectual interest and utility.

Another danger in this pursuit of Spielrein is that in focusing on her theoretical and clinical contributions I might lose her voice and individuality and might minimize the questions that initiated this project. What happened? Is this a story about the fate of women or outliers more generally in psychoanalysis, the propensity for eclipse and erasure that "disappeared" a number of figures, Ferenczi perhaps most significantly? Is it the conforming and not the maverick woman who stays in view in this field? Do Spielrein's work and reputation continue to be filtered through the anxieties about her relationship with Jung, the hovering suspicions around boundary violations that so often impugn the reputation of the victim? There is also the effect of an often crushing triangulation as Spielrein is caught up in the conflict between Jung and Freud.

It is not always easy to locate Spielrein's character and sensibility, or even her idiom as a writer and thinker. Nicolle Kress-Rosen (2003) makes two important comments: that we have been "discovering [Spielrein] and inventing her at the same time" (p. 251) and, most tellingly, that reading Spielrein in her own language, in the texts as she constructed them, the affects that most emerge are "sadness" and "loneliness" (p. 252).

There are larger political issues that play a part as well. Regarding her work in Moscow, we could ask if Spielrein's life and work are collateral

damage when psychoanalysis, all its institutions, and many of its adherents are destroyed in the Soviet Union during the 1930s? The murder of Trotsky and the ascendancy of Stalin doomed many revolutionary projects, psychoanalysis among them. It is hard not to wonder whether her fate and the eclipse of her work were not inevitable casualties, on the one hand, of the ideological shifts in the Soviet Union and, on the other, of the severing of cognitive studies from clinical and psychoanalytic ideas in the post–World War I period.

Spielrein's psychoanalytic perspective, lifelong and unwavering, would have been dangerous in the Soviet Union but also unwelcome in the postwar West, where the cognitive revolution was under way, engendering experimental and theoretical work focused on logical thinking, mastery of language, symbolization, and abstraction. These postwar developments are periods of expansive power for Piaget (1923, 1926) and Vygotsky (1962, 1978, 1987). Along with all these changes, psychoanalysis lost its presence in these transdisciplinary ventures. Thus, Spielrein's work disappears as well. These losses, very much linked, are a central theme of this essay.

My project began with a quite general agenda: turning a ghost into an ancestor. Rather quickly and surprisingly, however, it morphed into something more: a focused exploration into two key moments involving psychoanalysis in transdisciplinary work. Here I am focusing on the interactive development of psychoanalysis, child analysis, and child development studies, at an interface at which, I believe, Spielrein is an important interlocutor. The two periods—one in Western Europe, most notably in Geneva between 1913 and 1923, the other in Moscow from 1923 to the early 1930s—launched theories and methods regarding both research and clinical treatment that remain very much alive in both psychoanalysis and developmental psychology.

For about eight months, Spielrein was Piaget's analyst. To a modern reader, this does not appear to have been a long treatment, though in that period its duration was perhaps more typical. Piaget certainly sought to distance himself from the treatment with Spielrein and from psychoanalysis more generally. But we might keep the question of transference (and countertransference) as a subtext of their collaborations and professional encounters. It appears that Piaget was present at the IPA Congress in 1920 at The Hague, where Spielrein presented a paper on the language and thought of the child, a paper that includes a model of stages in language

development, proceeding from what she termed “autistic” or private speech, through stages of magical speech and then social speech (Spielrein 1922).

A few years later Piaget published a book with a markedly similar title and a comparable model of speech development (Piaget 1926). These ideas appear in other publications (Piaget 1923, 1926, 1927, 1932). Similarly, only a few years later, between 1924 and 1926, Vygotsky published a series of articles on language and thought and on the relation of inner speech to social communication (Vygotsky 1987). There is much to be said and much already written about where these three theorists overlap and where they differ and part company (Santiago-DeleFosse and DeleFosse 2002; Vidal 2001), but I am addressing a particular moment when the emergence of shared ideas, models, and methodologies overlap and complement each other. It is a potent emergent moment for theory and practice, and one person goes missing.

It is this conundrum of distinction and erasure that pressures one to overwrite her story. So my effort here is to keep us attentive to her biography and to the question of what happened, even as we explore an increasingly mature, multiply skilled, always scholarly and rigorous thinker, practicing an imaginative and creative mixture of psychoanalytic work, theory building, research, and teaching.

When I began reading about Spielrein’s years in Geneva, a door blew open in my mind, and in an unexpected way two stages in my intellectual and professional life linked together (Harris 1976) As a developmental psychologist, I had read all these texts, immersed in Piaget, Vygotsky, and psycholinguistics without ever seeing the psychoanalytic ideas that undergird them. As I now reread early Piaget, Vygotsky, and Luria, the DNA of psychoanalysis, and therefore of Spielrein, is everywhere, hidden in plain sight.

Piaget (1926) speaks of child thought as “like a nest of tangled threads which may break at any moment” (p. vii). Spielrein (1923c) speaks of the “stickiness” of thought, the complex “crossings” and splitting of ideas and verbal associations and play. Children’s minds, Piaget (1926) says “are woven on two different looms, one above the other” (p. viii). The lower loom he assigns to Freud. Indeed, Spielrein was always attentive to the subconscious aspects of speech, the primitive cast of mind that will be bridged to symbolic language.

Both in Geneva and in Moscow, Spielrein would have been part of two projects Freud was very concerned with. First and most prominently, Freud was deeply engaged in the task of internationalizing psychoanalysis. Spielrein was certainly a participant in the efforts in Geneva to establish various centers of training. This was, for Freud and others, a project in which Russia, Russian patients, and Russian institutes were crucial. Spielrein is known to have been active at the Hague Congress in 1920, where discussions and planning for the development of psychoanalysis in Russia took place.

The second project involved Freud's interest in interdisciplinary efforts in the service of psychoanalysis as a branch of general psychology. Spielrein's work, spanning disciplines, research, and practice, could be viewed in the light of Freud's explicit agenda to embed psychoanalysis within a general theory of psychology, indebted to various disciplines including philosophical reflections on mind: "In an 1896 letter to Fliess, Freud wrote: 'I am continually occupied with psychology—really metapsychology; Taine's book *L'intelligence* suits me extraordinarily well.' . . . In August 1898 Freud wrote Fliess about another psychological philosopher [Lipps] who had caught his interest: 'I have set myself the task of building a bridge between my germinating metapsychology and that contained in the literature'" (Makari 1994, pp. 564–565).

Freud saw his metapsychology (which we should note he calls *metapsychology* not *metapsychoanalysis*) in a lineage from philosophy as well as experimental psychology. In looking at Spielrein's work and its influences, I think one can track movement from both philosophy and physiology but also in the opposite direction, that is, from psychoanalysis into psychology, particularly developmental psychology. At this historical juncture, Spielrein is the linchpin and central engine in this migration of psychoanalytic methods and ideas into child psychology, particularly the area of embodiedness and symbolization in the unfolding of speech and thought, and in the study of levels of consciousness. I am going to argue that the shattering of these collective moments of work severed cognitive studies from its important roots in psychoanalysis. The loss of these transdisciplinary possibilities—with their scientific, clinical, and aesthetic elements—is significant.

I have characterized the periods, first in Geneva and then in Moscow, as moments of cultural synergy, two "hot spots" between which Spielrein is the common thread. What emerges in each of these cities is a unique

collaborative community that fosters the emergence of powerful new ideas for forms of work. The intellectual products of these hot spots are made from the interweaving of persons, ideas, philosophical underpinnings, and methodologies. There are perhaps many examples of this kind of synergy.⁷ I am thinking of the post–World War II collaboration of Klein, Bion, and Rosenfeld as they worked out issues of projection and of transference phenomena generally, leading to insights into projective identification and its role as a communication.⁸ Such collaborative work and the individual writings of those participating in it might best be thought of as a field in which the gestalt is more than the elements and where the intellectual outcome is emergent.

Throughout my intellectual and professional life I have found myself drawn to a place of work and theory development that is primarily trans-disciplinary. I am interested in a location where movements across intellectual worlds—psychology, psychoanalysis, epistemology, child development—find a moment of intersection and interaction. Spielrein’s work sits at just such an intersection. She bridges these worlds, a project and practice that marks her as very contemporary (Fonagy 2003). Chaos theory (Freeman 1990; Harris 2005) applies the term “strange attractor” to situations and structures where elements unpredictably interact such that new forms of thinking and working can emerge. One might certainly argue that this was Freud’s vision, one spoiled by various movements of sectarian exclusion.

After months of reading and of preparing this essay, I can summarize what I think Spielrein’s theoretical contributions are and how significant

⁷I was inspired to think about this process of synergy while reading an article on American blues music. A recent story in the *New York Times Magazine* (Sullivan 2014) describes the emergence of a blues tradition in the 1930s in the South. A cultural synergy combining the emergence of radio broadcasts, 78 rpm shellac records, gospel, and music and songs from the Southern post–Civil War traditions came together to produce astonishingly rich music. And intriguingly, this moment featured two women almost lost to history—who recorded a scant six songs as Elvie Thomas and Geeshie Wiley—whose voices contributed to this unique and deeply memorable musical style.

⁸Mawson, in an introduction to his edited collection *Bion Today* (2011), notes that “the degree of collaboration between Hannah Segal, Wilfred Bion and Herbert Rosenfeld in their work with psychotic patients during the late 1950s, and their discussions with Melanie Klein at the time, means that it is not always possible to distinguish their exact individual contributions . . .” (p. 3).

the loss of this person and her work is. I will then spend the rest of the essay exploring in greater detail the scope and reach of her ideas, while also keeping our attention on her life trajectory and forces in the field and in history.

I will start with my conclusions and then, in later sections, try to show you how I got there.

First, Spielrein brings to developmental psychology the method of observation, which she would have learned in the context of child analytic work. Hug-Hellmuth (1912), in her seminal *Mental Life of the Child*, which appeared in German in 1912 and in English in 1919, noted the origins of child psychoanalysis in analysts' observation of their own children. Hug-Hellmuth has suffered an eclipse not unlike Spielrein's.⁹ By 1913 Spielrein had published a paper on children's playful and erotic investment in speech games through observation of her first daughter, Renata (1913), and later a paper on a boy's phobic response to certain emotionally loaded words and symbols (1914a). These works, and Spielrein's work on child language, all antedate similar work by Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, yet most histories of child psychoanalysis start with those two figures.

Launer (2014) notes that Abraham, Klein, Anna Freud, and Ferenczi (as well as Piaget) were present at the Hague Congress when Spielrein delivered her paper on language and thought, complete with a stages theory, clinical data, and a focus on the unconscious in infantile life. With only forty attendees at the congress, it would seem very likely that all of these figures were exposed to Spielrein's ideas and work. Examining Klein's early papers on child analysis (1926, 1932), one sees she cites Abraham, Ferenczi, Gross, and Groddeck, along with Freud. Spielrein goes unmentioned.

Perhaps our field has built a canonical story, as many empires do, upon the disappearance of indigenous people, many but not all of them women. Why does this matter? Klein and Anna Freud are great creative

⁹Hug-Hellmuth herself cites several early sources of child observation, some going back to the 1880s, all of them producing powerful and subtle observations of infant life (Preyer 1882; Shinn 1900). One of them, Mildred Shinn, an American, was awarded a doctorate at Berkeley in 1900 for her dissertation, later published as a book, that detailed highly intricate and close observations of infant life, observations made on her young nephew from birth to about two years. Hug-Hellmuth and Shinn are little known today.

forces in psychoanalysis. As Isaac Newton famously remarked, “If I have seen a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” This notion dates back to the twelfth century and has found expression ever since. The idea reflects a feeling among many intellectual communities that lineage matters, that it is an ethical matter to acknowledge what comes before and also that this care with genealogy creates a richer, deeper account of ideas and concepts as they unfold.

Second, Spielrein holds a very dialectical theory of developmental change, of the transactions between internal and external worlds in which affect, social interaction, and evolving intention are all present. She was, from the outset of her working life, interested in transformation. She was engaged in a project, still unfolding in psychoanalysis today, to find ways of modeling mutative action and psychic change. These dialectical features are present in both psychoanalytic theory and developmental theory. These principles were carried forward in developmental psychology via Piaget and Vygotsky, but we need to remember that Spielrein was the senior psychoanalytic figure working and theorizing in the intellectual community in which each of them worked. It was clinical methodology that launched child experimental psychology, an endeavor quite different from the more experience-distant, structured experimental work of Claparède, in whose institute Spielrein and Piaget once worked.

Think of the dominant models of change in both these fields. From psychoanalysis there are the encircling transactions of projection and introjection. From Piaget (Flavell 1963; Piaget 1923) there is the conjoint activity of assimilation and accommodation, his account of genetic epistemology. From Vygotsky (1962) there is the concept of the zone of proximal development and the dialectic of thought and speech. In Vygotsky’s model change *emerges* from dialogue, the back-and-forth of conversation, the transformation of thinking and speaking that bounce between the social field and the internal world.

All these developmental models of mutative action share a common process: the transactions that transform internal experience through action/thought/fantasy that in turn is externalized to transform the external world. Change comes through disequilibrium and reintegration, through destruction and reformation. Spielrein, an early and powerful contributor to this model, thinks and writes about these ideas for the length of her visible professional career (1911–1928). For Spielrein, transformations arise in a dialectical process of creativity and destruction,

a format we encounter again in nonlinear dynamic systems (Freeman 1990; Harris 2005).

Third, she develops a model of language and speech in development that interweaves with both Piaget's and Vygotsky's. All three models have a two-function, three-stage model for the evolution of language and thought. As these three figures diverge in their interests over time, Spielrein continues to see the evolution of speaking and thinking through a psychoanalytic lens. What this means for her work is that levels of representation, the power of unconscious forces in speaking, and the role of affect and of relatedness in the evolution of speaking and thinking predominate. For Spielrein, there is an overriding function of verbal play that can be seen in the revelation of internal worlds, desires, and aggressions that appear disguised and displayed in wordplay. Her ideas, always rooted in psychoanalysis, also contain an unwavering commitment to the social and unconscious roots of the child's mind and speech. Given our contemporary interest in unrepresented experience, in figurability, mentalization, and the like (Botella and Botella 2005; Levine, Reed, and Scarfone 2013), Spielrein's papers on speech and thought, and on time and subliminal process, make fascinating reading. Her papers on speech and thought provide a window into the psychoanalytic base that informs developmental psychology and developmental psycholinguistics.

Fourth, Spielrein produced original and highly creative work on the development of consciousness and on the child's experience of space, temporality, and intentionality, concepts that were of significant interest to Piaget. In a format that Vygotsky would later use, Spielrein explored concepts of time, space, and causality at the levels of consciousness at which these concepts are expressed by children and aphasics. She is interested in the play of association and dissociation in wordplay, in the presence of temporality and intentionality, in unconscious experience, and in the evolution and dissolution of patterns of thought and speech in conditions of developmental difficulty or psychotic functioning. For Spielrein, unconscious thought is figurative, oddly patterned with adhesions and dissociations, but it is the bedrock on which all higher functions sit.

Finally, there is her contribution to the study of female sexuality. In her great early paper—the greatest we in the English-speaking West know of—she explores mind through exploring sexuality and vice versa. Transformation, she believed, was at the heart both of sexuality and mental life, with creation and destruction moving always in dialectical

tension. It is central to Spielrein's method and theoretical approach that immersion in bewilderment, destructiveness, and chaos can lead to new understanding.

SEXUALITY, CREATIVITY, DESTRUCTION: BODY AND MIND

Perhaps tellingly, in the paper "Destruction as Cause of Becoming" (1912b) Spielrein launches her idea about the proximity of desire and deathly preoccupations, the intertwining of disgust and ecstasy, with a quote from Jung: "The passionate yearning, i.e., the libido, has two sides: it is the power which beautifies everything and under certain circumstances destroys everything" (p. 86).

Then she finds her own voice: "From my experience of girls I can say that normally the feeling of anxiety steps into the foreground . . . when the possibility of the wish realization first occurs. . . . One feels the enemy in herself, it is her own love heat, which compels her with an iron necessity to do what she does not want; she feels the end, the passing away . . ., from which she might try in vain to escape into unknown distant lands" (p. 87).

Spielrein begins with an experience-near account of sexuality and a quite revolutionary account of female sexuality in particular. Her rendering of sexuality centers on extremes of action and excess while retaining a commitment to the elements of enigma and uncertainty inherent in sexual life. Drawing on biology and individual psychology, Spielrein notes the close links in sexuality of life and death, making and destroying, excitement and disgust, pleasure and pain: "the most profound uniting of two individuals occurs during the act of copulation; one pushing into the other. . . . It is not the entire individual that is absorbed, but only a part of it, which however in this moment represents the value of the entire organism. The male part dissolves itself . . . into the female part; the female part becoming restive develops a new form through the foreign intruder" (p. 88). For Spielrein, destruction and regeneration always commingle. Ecstasy, anxiety, and disgust coexist as elements of sexuality.

Here I want to introduce Etkind's idea (1997) that the work of Russian symbolism (late- nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writers and philosophers) was a powerful influence on Spielrein's generation. There are striking parallels between symbolist thought and psychoanalysis. Both

systems stress levels of reality, the power of hidden depths of feeling and sensibility, the uncanny force of unconscious life. Add Nietzsche to this mix and we are squarely in a world of ideas in which love and destructiveness are deeply intermingled, where death wishes and “gender mix” are in play. Etkind stresses the intense preoccupation within Russian symbolism of Dionysian ideas and forces, elements that appear in this paper and others throughout Spielrein’s writing career.

It is known, indeed acknowledged by Freud, that Spielrein’s paper on creativity and destruction was a significant force in Freud’s work in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud 1920).¹⁰ Despite the difficulty in its initial reception, I think one can track some points of influence or inspiration in addition to Freud’s. I see her ideas surfacing in Tausk’s paper on the influencing machine (1933). Otto Gross (1913) very explicitly draws on Spielrein in “On the Symbolism of Destruction.” He had noticed the violence and sexualized violence in the play of a psychotic boy and linked his observations to Spielrein’s ideas about the inherent presence of destructiveness in psychic life.

I want to trace a lineage in Spielrein’s work in relation to sexuality and activity as aspects of gender. Spielrein’s interest in activity as a source and support of desire might lead us to the 1920s and to some of the women who as immediate followers of Freud who were apparently supposed to follow his ideas regarding feminine passivity and ground femininity and female desire in internalization and receptivity. Significantly, Lampl-de Groot (1933), Muller (1932), and others follow another path. It is a path Spielrein had already trod. A dominant characteristic of this work in the 1920s is that incorporation was seen not simply as passive and receptive but as active and transformative. In this sense, work on sexuality and work on the mental activities of internalization are cast by Spielrein in quite similar terms.

What is interesting about these figures from the 1920s is that their ideas are much closer to Spielrein than to Freud, but closer also to Ferenczi’s *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality* (1924). In that book Ferenczi focuses on two phenomena: first, the evolution of sexuality as an experience of admixture not renunciation and rupture; second, the regressive nature of excitement, the longing for undoing, the mixture of states of

¹⁰There are conflicting views on the degree to which Freud diverged from Spielrein’s ideas on a death instinct and destructiveness.

being, excitation and terror, pain and pleasure (see Bonomi 2015). Like Ferenczi, Spielrein seems to have seen incorporation or internalization as a highly active and expansive process, a way of conceptualizing mental activity that we might note echoing again in Bion on the function of the container and in both Piaget and Vygotsky on the power of assimilation and the dialectical transformation of word and concept.

Of course, we need to question the line of influence. How much did Spielrein's ideas have an effect, subtle or overt, on the evolution of such concepts as destruction and the death drive? Was she merely picking up the zeitgeist or was she charting new ground? Or was it some of both? Did her ideas enter, in a subterranean way, people's ruminations on the phenomena of sexuality, female sexuality in particular?

In a certain moment in "Destruction as Cause of Becoming," as she is interpreting a passage from Faust, she says this: "The advancing into the dark sea corresponds to the pressing forward into the dark problem [sexuality]. The fusing of air and water, the blurring of above and below, might symbolize . . . that all times and all paces fuse together with each other, that there is no boundary between 'above' and 'below' . . ." (p. 90). She goes on to claim the power of infantile sexuality as an aspect of adult sexual life. "Freud takes our later, direct or sublimated love impulses [Liebesregungen] . . . back to the infantile period, in which we felt the first feelings of pleasure through the persons who cared for us. We always seek to experience these sensations of pleasure [Lustempfindungen] anew, and even when consciousness has long worked out for itself a normal sexual goal, the unconscious is occupied with mental images which were pleasurable to us in earliest childhood" (1912b, p. 92). These ideas dominate her thinking and are a deep part of how she thought of body, mind, and speech.

Loewald (1988) explores some of these ideas at the end of a short essay on metapsychology: "Sexuality and aggression, in this philosophical shift harking back to presocratic philosophy, are projected into nature—not a projection 'into the blue but the rediscovery of an original concordance and lasting affinity" (p. 54). He goes on to mention Jung as an originator of these ideas. Although Spielrein has again been disappeared, we know that these ideas passed between Jung and her in letters and appeared in diaries. It is necessary, I feel, to see that she is, at the very least, an interlocutor.

We might see that Spielrein is writing about what modern theorists like Bersani or Butler (2004) and psychoanalytic writers like Stein (1998),

Dimen (2003), and Saketopoulou (2015) might speak of as the shattering of the self in the experience of excitement. Spielrein is insistent that we see these phenomena—destruction, creativity, excitement, disgust—as aspects not of morality but of emergent and transformative psychic life. It is actually a curious hybrid concept, linked to Freud’s death instinct, as he suggested in his footnote, but linked also to modern nonlinear dynamic systems theories, including chaos theory. One can notice as well the presence in Laplanche’s model of sexuality as excess and his idea that it is in the transformation and retranscription of desires that arise intersubjectively, intrapsychically, and in the transformations that subjectivity and unconscious experience are constituted. My point is not to make Spielrein the Big Mother who dominates all creation but only to ask, and to ask very frequently, why she is not included in the lineage of these ideas. Why, for example, does Laplanche engage both critically and integratively with Ferenczi but not Spielrein, even as Laplanche (2002) is speaking of the “destructuring and ‘loosening’ aspects of sexuality itself” (p. 38).

To me, what is fascinating in “Destruction as Cause of Becoming” is the clear link Spielrein makes between the experience of sexual life and the experience of mental life. She moves from concerns about sexuality as an experience of bodies inside other bodies, from questions of pleasure and pain, of many different ways of having the experience of taking a part of another’s body into one’s own, and then applies this directly to mental experience.

“Pleasure is only the affirmative reaction of the I to these demands [of the unconscious drive] sprung from the deep, and we can directly have pleasure in unpleasure and pleasure in pain. . . . there is something in our depth which, as paradoxical as it may sound, wants this self-damaging, for the I reacts to it with pleasure” (1912b, p. 94). As she pursues these thoughts, she notes that they take her to an inevitable conclusion: the I, the individual, is always already divided. Differentiation is a feature of conscious life, merger and fusion a feature of the unconscious: “The closer we get to conscious thinking, the more differentiated become our mental images; the deeper we reach into the unconscious, the more general, more typical become the images” (p. 94). Later in the essay, she states that “Freud showed that every dream image means its opposite at the same time. . . . Bleuler with the ambivalence concept and Stekel with his concept of bipolarity say that next to the positive drive a negative drive is always present” (p. 116).

Differentiation, the idea that there is a dawning awareness of an other inside the self, is for Spielrein a parallel to having another's body inside one's own. Minds too can be penetrated, carrying what Spielrein came to call "I-psyche" and "we-psyche." Hers is a metapsychology in which "otherness," splits in the self, and multiplicity are core concepts, all functioning at different levels of consciousness. The awareness of an internal presence of the "other" is an aspect of constituting the self, but it arises first in embodiment.

Spielrein's dissertation drew on a case of schizophrenia, and that work in concert with this 1912 essay contains the genesis of her ideas about psychotic disturbances to mental life. When Freud references the dissertation (Spielrein 1911c) in his postscript to the Schreber case, he does so in proposing that more interpretive material would be gathered from considering the "symbolic content of the phantasies and delusions" (Freud 1911, p. 80), precisely Spielrein's focus. In the dissertation she outlines and draws from clinical material the linkages between dream states and psychotic process and productions. She is, in relation to the speech of the psychotic, always interested in the motor action, the sounds, and the collapse of symbolization.

Spielrein's ideas about psychosis are intriguing: "it is a battle between the two antagonistic streams of type-psyche and I-psyche. . . . the insight imposes itself: 'I am a complete stranger to myself.' The thoughts become depersonalized: to the patients they become made. Since they come precisely from the depths outside the 'I,' they make 'we' or rather 'they' out of the 'I'" (Spielrein 1912b, p. 97).

What is in character for Spielrein in this perspective is her interest in the place of the individual and of the social in mental phenomena: the I-type and the we-type, the place of otherness in mental experience, the divisions of self in that metapsychology. And she tracks the movement of not-I and many I's and I-ness in the verbal play of a mother and child.

The psychotic, she notes, has become alienated from his own mind, with the transposition of personal and unconsciously driven material—I-psyche—into the more collective "we-psyche" of the individual. These terms are designed to describe two (for Spielrein distinct) aspects of mental life. The I-psyche reflected the more indigenous aspects of subjectivity, the part of self that we might term intrapsychic, and here she is always encompassing unconscious phenomena. In the we-psyche, she theorizes those aspects of mental life that feel internalized, from elsewhere, the

presence of the other in the mind and being of any individual. This is the part of subjectivity that feels forcing, alien, implanted, split from the aspects of psyche that feel more individual and emergent. These distinctions about mental and personal and bodily life, the presence of splits and divisions in the self, are central to Spielrein's view of psychotic process. There is, she felt, urgency in this alienation of personally meaningful experience into collective symbols. The problem is that the mind becomes littered with alien objects: "we" or "they": "thoughts become depersonalized" (Spielrein 1912b, p. 97). Desire emerges from the experience of I. In the "we-psyche" state, the person lives as a spectator, observing self and other in some degree of alienation. In describing the patient in her dissertation, Spielrein notes the woman's lack of interest in her own internal world, the collapsing of the I-psyche. She is close here, I would say, to an account of dissociative states.

The dissertation contains some interesting speculations about the distortions of temporality in psychotic thought. "The unconscious dissolves the present into the past" (1911c; translation by J. Cezeller). The unconscious will also immerse the future in the past. Throughout her writing and clinical life, she sees the power of regression and unconscious atemporality not only in sexual life but in primitive forms of mental life and higher forms of representation as well. Again, I want to note the early date (1911–1912) at which Spielrein's ideas about psychosis and primitive states appear in the psychoanalytic literature.

Using words carries one away from self and individuality. But staying in the world of I-ness threatens dissolution and death. There is the famous beautiful sentence: "Language is there to bewilder itself and others" (Spielrein 1912b, p. 100). From there it is not a great leap to her focus on symbolization and meaning in children's thought processes. These preoccupations and the papers she wrote after leaving Vienna led her by 1920 to the mature phase of her career, the work in Geneva.

GENEVA: MIND AND WORDS

After a period of change and movement (Lausanne, Zurich, Berlin), Spielrein settles in Geneva. Her period there begins in 1920 and lasts until she moves to Moscow in 1923. As in so many of the vicissitudes or turns in her life, personal and professional interests intersect. By now she has married and has a child. Perhaps she needed some distance from the

burgeoning conflicts between Freud and Jung. Perhaps she wanted a place to have an adult function; perhaps then she wanted freedom from the place of sexualized child figure in Jung's history and her reputation. Perhaps this was a bid for freedom, not an endlessly masochistic cycling through worlds. Perhaps these are my wishes and projections for her. This period of turmoil and productivity continues the enduring puzzle of how to situate Spielrein both in her own life and in the context of the professional fields in which she functioned.

In the period before Geneva, from 1912 to 1920, a period of frequent moves and transitions, Spielrein produces a number of short papers, clinical communications or research studies in which she hones her ideas about speech and pleasure, and speech, thought, and unconscious process. There is a short clinical account bearing on the question of sexuality in which the chief subject is the matter of envy and regression. This intrigued me, as I think envy is a deep dynamic issue, particularly for women (Harris 1997), one not often taken up theoretically outside the Kleinian tradition. The paper is wittily titled "The Mother-in-Law" (Spielrein 1913a).

In this short contribution, Spielrein examines a dynamic triangle that reverses oedipal life and convention. Turning the tables, and perhaps following a Ferenczian interest in early traumatic object relations, Spielrein puts into play the muddle between the wife's mother's attachment to her daughter and the competitive envy that surfaces in relation to her daughter's husband. Most particularly, she sees in the power and projection of mother into daughter signs of envy (of youthfulness, of sexuality). In a modern context, what we might call intersubjectivity lives in the mix of power and destructiveness in this early dyad. What is intriguing in this paper is Spielrein's argument that women's actual constrictions and limits in the world, particularly regarding opportunities for achievement, made identifications much more significant. Annie Reich (1953) explores a similar train of thought in looking at object choice in women. So projection and an inhabiting of the life and psyche of powerful figures might be said to operate with great intensity for many women, providing an intergenerational space in which to manage and sublimate envy.

Many of these shorter papers pursue her ideas about sexuality, female sexuality in particular (Spielrein 1911a, 1913a, 1914a, 1920a, b, c, 1923d, e). The themes echo her creativity/destruction paper and her dissertation, reflecting on the place and range of female sexuality (the place

of culture and sanctions but also of the destructiveness inherent in all creative and libidinous life). In 1911 she contributes to a series of discussions on masturbation held at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society (Spielrein 1911a), in which she has a number of interesting things to say about the transformation of guilt into excitement and destructive feelings, the cycling of arousal and guilt and masochism and from there a return to arousal. Focused particularly on masturbation in women, she notes the power of the maternal erotic, the mother's erotic links to her child.

When, in Geneva after 1920, she turns more directly to development, you see that she conceives of the emergence of symbolization from embodied, kinesthetic, vocal, and motoric experience, which are inherent to both unconscious and preconscious life. Representation, for Spielrein, is on a continuum.

As seems often the case with Spielrein, reports about her impact were very mixed (timid and tumultuous . . .). The encounter of psychoanalysis and developmental psychology, fraught with politics and paranoia in all directions, was not easy, but there is a consensus that Spielrein's teaching was illuminating. We might reexamine Piagetian theory for its two-person-ness, its use of introjection and projection as basic models of mental action. And as in Ferenczi's theoretical innovations on this topic, internalization and introjection are seen as an expansion of functioning and less a passive receptive movement.

Spielrein worked in Claparède's Institute Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which he had formed in 1912. There she treated children, worked on psychoanalytic culture and institutions in the emerging Swiss analytic communities, and engaged in both pedagogy and research. The years of overlap with Piaget are approximately 1920–1923, years of productivity for Spielrein and an explosive beginning for Piaget, her analysand for about eight months during this time. This only deepens the complexity of their shared projects, the quite symmetrical interests and often shared terminology set against the asymmetry of their fates and reputations. Piaget speaks of Spielrein in *The Language and Thought of the Child* (1926, p. 2) but diminishes her importance, placing her interests in early childhood, a placement with a decided gender twist. In their overlapping lives and careers in Geneva one can see reciprocal influences. Spielrein's interest in egocentrism is both similar and different vis-à-vis Piaget's. She was perhaps more interested in individuality, in the unique character of children's thinking, its links to the body and to unconscious reverie. Exploring

many of the topics Piaget was to take up in great detail, she was interested in the evolution in development of the child's experiences of temporality, causality, and space and a gradual mental orientation and relation to reality.

Her interests, both psychoanalytic and developmental, led her to look at the links between speech and shame (Spielrein 1920a,b). She examined the gender differences in presentations of shame regarding the body and regarding desire in the communications of two four-year-olds, noting the diffuseness of the girl's shame.¹¹ Given the age range (two to four or five) of many of her research and clinical subjects, we would be talking about toddler shame, a subject explored in depth by Alan Schore (2003). I found myself trying to think through this process via Spielrein's ideas of speech as the carrier of pleasure and reality, and of shame induction being a moment when pleasure is met by reality and the system crashes. It looks like a conversation, but two extremely conflictual states mismatch. Expecting *jouissance*, the child/patient/analyst is met with prohibition, limit. Spielrein is interested in how these complex rivers of feeling and regulation intersect in conversation, in acts of misrecognition, as well as in acts of linking.

Several of Spielrein's papers from this period focus on language and thought in the child, with interesting speculations on temporality and spatiality as these support speech and thought (Spielrein 1921, 1922b; 1923c,e). It is all very phenomenological, in that complex mental life grows out of embodiment, out of the erotic body handled and reacted to, with vocalization, speech, and its music carrying unconscious process as a substrate of advanced mental function.

Spielrein was quite explicit about the importance of listening and holding with a light hand and with interpretations that are subtle and not invasive. This is of course good clinical listening, but it is also a crucial principle in conducting research. Spielrein's training in psychoanalysis produced a deep encounter with the nature of thought and language, a

¹¹Spielrein's work here sits in an anomalous and difficult spot. Psychoanalysis might be said to have a century-long concern, low-grade but insistent nonetheless, with the danger posed by the mother. Managing maternal envy may require a masquerade (Riviere 1929); the impact of maternal envy may require strict regulation (Bernstein 1990). See also Elise (1997) on the female oedipal situation and Harris (1997) on envy's excitements and terrors, the fear of being the object of envy that constricts ambition and excitement.

training she used creatively and productively in research. Spielrein, as in all her work, remained committed to the interpenetration of motor bodily experience and symbolization or word use. In looking at aphasia, speech, and a sample of child speech, she came to an astonishing and quite modern conclusion: “What allows a group of ideas to persist in spontaneous thought is the movement of emotion” (Spielrein 1923c, p. 315; translation mine). Follow the affect if you want to understand the child/patient, an idea continuously being developed by psychoanalysts.

Spielrein pursued a kind of metapsychology in which the mind is characterized in relation to temporality and splitting (divided self states, multiplicity). So from questions of sexuality to mind and symbolization, Spielrein traverses some interesting ideas, which in part she credits to Jung. Multiplicity and multiple states are characteristic of minds. Internal divisions in the self and splitting are usual form of mental action. These are ideas Spielrein often returned to; they dominate her thinking in the destruction paper. Again I wish to point out that these ideas were emerging in her thought in 1912.

Spielrein was interested in mental life as lived often on the edge between differentiation and union, difference and merger. In a way now familiar from the formalist thinkers in Italian psychoanalysis (influences on figures like Ferro), as the levels deepen to increasingly unconscious forms of mental being, states of regression and merger come to predominate. One finds this spelled out in a highly formal theory by the Italian Ignacio Matte Blanco (1975), Segal (1957), and others (e.g., Fonagy 1995); they write of a state of psychic equivalence where fantasy and reality are not differentiated in the unconscious. Thinking of differentiation as an aspect of conscious and preconscious mind takes Spielrein to the question of words as the site of otherness. The I-psyche and the type-psyche. Bewilderment by language. Using words carries one away from self and individuality. But staying in the world of I-ness threatens dissolution and death. Interestingly, desire emerges from the experience of I. From the “we” state, the person lives as a spectator, observing self and other in some degree of alienation.

In a paper on dream images of shooting stars, (Spielrein 1923a) she identifies the interplay of memory and desire, what she terms the “crossing” of desire and disappointment in the mix of starry explosion and dark, watery fading. In 1913, in a short paper published originally in *Imago* (Spielrein 1913b), she analyzes an element in a Russian short story where

a young man's anxiety arises in response to a triggering event (a train whistle). In the paper Spielrein clearly talks about this event as trauma-driven and as the piercing of conscious reflection with split-off unconscious material, evolving into a state of pervasive disquiet in the patient.

Spielrein (1922b) viewed time as a property of space and saw mind and consciousness as always constructed through the reverberations of temporality. Meaning made in the present on the basis of the past. In this we can hear Loewald's preoccupations with time. And we can think also of Freud's idea of *Nachträglichkeit*, the activity whereby work in the present reworks the past, which then dialectically reworks the present. Loewald is perhaps a most intriguing person to evoke in this context. I think of his work on primal density and on the primary and secondary process in symbolization. He was attentive to the regressive element in primary process and thus in certain archaic aspects of speech. These ideas are at the heart of Spielrein's work on speech and embodiment.

In her work on language development, she consistently wedds the disciplines of psychoanalysis and developmental psychology in a fascinating analysis of the potency and meaning of sound making, the music of language, intonation, mouth movement, babbling as it cascades into symbol use, and the development of semantic and syntactic aspects of speech. Using both case material and developmental observation, Spielrein (1922a) works in a conjoined way of theorizing, seeing the onset of speech as carrying the regressive oral experience of feeding, nursing, and babbling. Speech arises in the embodied and intentional motive to link and find another, which then become routed through the forms of language (rules, meanings, etc.). We may see the evolution and appearance of these ideas in Loewald's work on primary and secondary process in language and symbolization (Loewald 1978).

In her 1922 paper on the origin of a child's words "Papa" and "Mama" (Spielrein 1922a), she anticipated by some years Klein's papers on weaning and orality. Some version of her ideas in this work was included in her 1920 presentation at the IPA Congress in The Hague, a congress both Klein and Anna Freud attended. Interestingly, Klein in her paper on infant analysis (1923) cites Spielrein only in a somewhat enigmatic footnote, meanwhile drawing explicitly on her work on the words *Mama* and *Papa*.

Spielrein begins always with the premise that all aspects of speech carry unconscious or, as she comes to term it, subconscious meaning. The melodic, rhythmic, gestural, and timbral elements in early wordplay, which can be

inflected in various ways by the child's mother tongue, carry desire, anxiety, shame, aggression, and other affect states. In this paper, she begins her analysis of stages of speech and thought development, seeing in the early world-play and naming a magical formation, or an even earlier "autistic" stage, a term she adopts from Bleuler. Wharton (2003) has called the links to Winnicott in this paper "uncanny" (p. 287), noting the early forms of ideas about play and its interactional effects that Winnicott would develop in his ideas about transitional objects and transitional spaces. Words are actions, feeling states, carrying both links to the parent and processes of separation. The early magical properties of words allow the child to attempt to manage loss or absence in conjuring speaking as a form of action.

Speech and conscious and unconscious levels of thought interpenetrate. Spielrein gives a set of clinical examples in which *Mama* and *Papa*, in different languages and different family constellations, mean different things: sadness, dismay, contentment. The words she links to suckling and orality are endowed with magical properties. Speech is designed to make pleasure last. Fort-da? At one point in the essay, Spielrein notes some indebtedness to William James, to his ideas about the role of speech in the generation of affect.

In listening to a mother and child, Spielrein (1914b) speculates on the nicknames and playful speech of mother to child and child to mother, noting that from each side there is a muddling of identifications, a slippage of gender from parent to child, projections and introjections, with speech signaling the deep somatic and affective ties. In a theoretical move she will use later in exploring mother/daughter envy, she notes how much love and threat live in the speech practices of child and parent. Her little patient develops a phobia of monkeys, and Spielrein speculates on the impact of the boy's calling his mother "marmoset" (Harris 2014).

Her conclusion, and it resonates with her thinking generally about psychic life, is that speaking partakes equally of the pleasure principle and the reality principle, toggles between these two spheres of psychic reality. What is Loewaldian here is the consideration of the primary process in words and language, his ideas of nonlinear, often ambiguous development between oedipal and preoedipal levels and between levels of mental functioning. It is important not to declare these ideas her property but rather to enter her claim to a place in an unfolding genealogy of ideas, her contribution to questions that many of us in psychoanalysis continue to grapple with.

The clinical implications of this are fascinating. The gratification and erotics of speech within analytic process, the conflicts between reality and pleasure as might appear in distortions of speaking, the hypnotic effects of speech. Spielrein is asking us to attend to something quite obvious and usually unremarked, the link between speech and the mouth. But Spielrein is always a particularly interesting corrective to the modern tendency to airbrush sexuality from early dyadic life.

In a paper based on her work with children in the clinic in Geneva (Spielrein 1923d) we can see Spielrein's capacities, both clinical and intellectual, in full flower. She begins with an interesting theoretical commitment to the instability of the lines between conscious and unconscious thought and the importance of clinical judgment in regard to the subtle interplay of the unconscious and conscious aspects of words. She makes a point of the play of "free association" in the language of children and then turns her attention to a transcript of phrases and the "babbling" or word play of a two-and-a-half-year-old. She draws on dream work, condensation, and displacement as a way of seeing the play of the unconscious in the child's language and the linked experiences of conscious and unconscious forms in this simple verbal output. This is of course good clinical listening, but it is also a deep encounter with the nature of thought and language. As her work matured and deepened she continued to find strong parallels between the analysis of dreams and the analysis of speech. I think here of how the idea of reverie has entered our considerations of analytic listening (e.g., Ogden, Bion, Ferro). There are Loewaldian notes here as well, as preoccupations familiar to any of the psychoanalysts drawing on field theory (Baranger and Baranger 2009).

In the 1960s, in an appreciation of Piaget's work, the American developmental psychologist John Flavell (1963) described Piaget's first five books in English, which appeared in the period 1923–1932, as galvanizing the field of child development with regard to both content and methodology. It is in this period that Piaget crystalized a form of close observation, the naturalistic observation of children's activities alone and with others. Original yes, in some sense, but derived also, in another. The method of clinical listening is at the point of origin in Freud, and it is taken up explicitly as a mode of child analysis by Hug-Hellmuth. Given Spielrein's formation in child clinical work, we can see that what Piaget adapted rather than invented is the clinical method of listening to children talk and play that is at the heart of child psychoanalysis. In Piaget's early

writing, his work often centered on observations of his own children. Every feature of his working method is first or simultaneously present in Spielrein's; she is the portal from child psychoanalysis to child development.

In other words, Piaget's early work, rightly considered both creative and revolutionary, is built on ideas Spielrein was teaching and researching. We will see a similar line of influence with Vygotsky a scant few years later. What is important to remember in thinking of the direction of influence is that Spielrein's method as imported into child study draws a great deal from psychoanalytic ideas, from the history of thinking about clinical listening, of finding the structure and meaning in the everyday processes of engagement, play, and narrative. Spielrein did not of course inaugurate this method, it was central to Freud's thinking and was already embedded in the clinical ideas regarding child analysis in the work of Hug-Hellmuth. Spielrein was a transmitter, a conduit of these traditions, and she must be considered in large part responsible for the rootedness of these perspectives in Geneva and later in Moscow.

Ironically, but perhaps characterologically, Spielrein, so unremarked and underrepresented in the work of others, was herself good at citations. It gives us a sense of the breadth of her reading: William James, Hughlings Jackson, Flournoy, the Swiss linguist Charles Bally, initially Jung, and always Freud. If the style of the paper on destruction and creativity is intense, charged, wildly evocative, and associative, the writing Spielrein was doing by 1913 was increasingly sober, carefully argued, and grounded in the science and philosophy emerging in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

MOSCOW AND ROSTOV-ON-DON

In reflecting on the evolution of psychoanalytic thinking and the coordinates of psychoanalysis and developmental psychology in the Soviet Union, and in trying to reestablish Spielrein's central place in this incandescent but brief period, we are hampered by much missing information, due to the chaos of the Soviet period, World War II, and the postwar Stalinist period. We do know that psychoanalysis took hold in the USSR in the early twenties and was flowering most powerfully in the years 1920–1924 (Spielrein was there at the high-water mark, but she had also given an influential talk in Russia much earlier, in 1912). Miller (1986),

Etkind (1997), and Wharton and Ovcharenko (1999) have provided important documentation and analysis of this period. Political suppression was under way by the mid-1920s, and by 1928 psychoanalysis had been broken and forced underground. Institutional life and analytic publishing were curtailed, while the Children's School, in which Spielrein was actively involved, closed down, as psychoanalysis became the devilish marker of bourgeois mentality. Spielrein's departure from Moscow to Rostov, probably to continue practice in reduced circumstances and in secret, seems in retrospect both prudent and tragic.

Reading Wharton and Ovcharenko's brief history of the periodization of Russian psychoanalysis (1999), one understands the place of ambition, along with nostalgia for home and family, in Spielrein's return to Moscow and Rostov-on-Don in 1923. Russian psychoanalysis was flourishing, and in a transdisciplinary way in which Spielrein would have thrived and felt at home.

Reviewing what is known of Spielrein's arrival and work life in Russia in 1923 is to encounter again and immediately the enigma of her erasure. In moving back to Russia, she was reconciling with her estranged husband, with whom she had another child, a second daughter born in 1926. She was returning to a difficult person and a difficult situation: her husband had started a new family with another woman. But as so frequently seems to have happened, from the early biographies and certainly the Cronenberg film, a masochistic story line trumps a narrative in which ambition, professional interests, and family alliances are stressed.

As one of only two IPA-sanctioned training analysts in the Soviet Union, Spielrein would have been a person of great stature in the psychoanalytic community. Coming from the West, she would have been an exciting and sophisticated intellectual figure. In her role in several organizations, including the Russian Psychoanalytic Institute, she had administrative responsibilities, as she did at the State Psychoanalytic Institute and the State Children's House-Laboratory, a fascinating and apparently quite radical experiment in treatment and pedagogy operating along psychoanalytic lines (Spielrein 1929). She would have been a teacher providing a highly sophisticated psychoanalytic education on such topics as child analysis, language, and symbolization, as well as the study of consciousness and unconscious phenomena. Her course on child development had the largest enrollment at the institute, with over thirty candidates. If you were to be exposed to psychoanalysis in Russia at that time, you

would have passed through her classroom, and that experience would surely have included Vygotsky and Luria, both significantly her juniors in age and experience. One can imagine that Spielrein was a complex figure there, perhaps intimidating, perhaps the object of some competitive envy, perhaps also fragile. What is harder to imagine is how she disappeared.

I am indebted to many scholars writing about the Soviet period and psychoanalysis, most particularly Alexander Etkind.¹² John Launer's book (2014) finally moves Spielrein's story in a more expansive direction. Many of the early Spielrein biographers minimize the periods in Geneva and Moscow in favor of the years with Freud and Jung, just as many Vygotsky scholars minimize psychoanalysis to the point of erasure. Spielrein's work and reputation in both Geneva and Moscow, and the links between those worlds, are therefore slighted in both literatures. Modern cognitive psychologists working on Vygotsky stress instead the importance of Kurt Lewin and field theory and of Gestalt psychology, while Spielrein's writing on dialectics and pattern becomes obscured. One of the more irritating tendencies in the assessment of Spielrein, Piaget, and Vygotsky is to see her pictured as empirical and clinical, interested only in early development, while the two men are lionized for having built formal models. To my ear, there are deprecating and misogynist tones to that judgment.

Vygotsky's first important lecture series, in 1924, was an attempt to move beyond Pavlovian reflexology to more complex ideas about consciousness. Oddly, he cites Jung but not Spielrein or Freud. He goes on to talk about the "hidden somatic stimuli" in reflex systems and chains of associations with complex unconscious roots, an idea surely emerging from psychoanalysis. He sees self-consciousness as arising always from consciousness of others: "we are another to ourselves." These are ideas that appear to be lifted right from Spielrein's 1912 essay. What makes this odd is that these lectures were delivered at the highwater mark of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union, a time when institutes, training programs, journals, and Russian editions of Freud's work were flourishing. Spielrein and her link to Freud would have given the writings of Luria and Vygotsky considerable cachet.

¹²Others include Miller, Ovcharenko, Launer, van der Veer and Valsiner, Frawley, and Wertsch.

Vygotsky might be said to have centered his theoretical concerns on the ways language and speech are “perched on the world-mind boundary” (Frawley 1997, p. 1). In ways reminiscent of yet different from the approaches of Spielrein and Piaget, he focuses on the problem, indeed the necessity, of creating a developmental theory. Like Piaget and before him Spielrein, Vygotsky delineated a three-stage model of the unfolding of thought and speech. The terminologies differ, with Vygotsky’s focus on the constitutive role of the social and with Piaget’s on the evolution of structured thought. These differences increased over time and with subsequent interpreters. But at this epicenter of discovery in the early 1920s, all three are tracking language and thought through the close observation of children, a method drawn I believe from Spielrein’s use of psychoanalytic inquiry and attunement. The developmental models indebted to her mode of thinking put the emphasis on transformation and nonlinearity.

Vygotsky developed a number of other ideas that seem deeply tied to Spielrein’s projects: the tie between intellect and affect, the intermingling of thinking and wanting, a link at the heart of Spielrein’s attention to embodiedness as also constitutive of thought and word, the presence of otherness as an aspect of personal consciousness, the emergence of speech as a splitting of the subject (see Spielrein 1931).

In all of these figures (Piaget, Spielrein, Vygotsky, Luria), one tracks the struggle to sort out external and internal forces feeding development. In subtle ways, all of these thinkers are interested in tracking how intentionality emerges as an individual process from a dialogic one. One hears Laplanchian and relational notes here: the process of recoding and transposing the move from inter- to intrapsychic experience, the “internalizing of the external” and “in-growing of lived experience into personal meaning” (Frawley 1997, pp. 21, 95), the assymetric unevenness and “revolutionary” aspects (Vygotsky’s term but Spielrein’s concept) of developmental change.

Vygotsky read and was influenced by Lewinian field theory (development as a spiral process; Lewin 1947). He knew Lewin personally, and subsequent commentators on Vygotsky’s work have tended to give him credit for the Russian’s interest in nonlinearity and transformation, the tie of thought and affect. Doubtless Lewin is a powerful vector in the intellectual climate in which Vygotsky was working, but I think too much is attributed to this influence, while Spielrein’s contributions and projects are eclipsed. Again.

One can find, for example, the psychoanalytic features of Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development. This concept refers to a process whereby social interaction is transformative and dialogue is the wellspring of transformation. Transference and countertransference phenomena, even ideas like the effect of container on contained, are ways of looking at what Vygotsky built as the site of emerging understanding and mastery. Knowledge was not a matter of what you can produce on a test but what you can master with help, that is, in an intersubjective space with others. One needs two minds to understand one. We have no trouble hearing Bion in these ideas, but it is important to notice that this concept appears first in Spielrein and as early as 1911.

In Vygotsky and Luria's introduction (1925) to a new Russian translation of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*—the very work in which Freud mentions Spielrein's influence—Spielrein is absent in their text yet present in their ideas. Wherever psychoanalysis was headed in the Soviet Union (particularly after the death of Trotsky), the level of interest and involvement in psychoanalytic work was still quite high in the Soviet Union. Why then leave out the name and work of a senior Russian analyst who is mentioned in the Freudian text they are presenting? I have been a psychoanalyst long enough to know that she must have had a role in this omission, but I have been a feminist long enough to know that something is wrong here. Did she become for these brilliant men the “environmental mother” who does not have to be named or noticed because she is the water in which they swim? Where does gender factor in here?

I am left in a paradox. It does matter how ownership of all these ideas and concepts gets parsed out. What is irrefutable is that these historical moments in Geneva and Moscow are powerful sites of transdisciplinary creation. Child observation, philosophy of mind, gestalt psychology, field theory, ideas about development, revolutionary ideas, ideas about consciousness all intermingle here, creating the bedrock of arguably the most powerful ideas we have regarding child development and the growth of thought and language. If you don't add psychoanalysis to that mix, you miss powerful elements in the picture (affect, embodiment, splits in subjectivity, otherness, unconscious projects of pleasure and destruction). And if you do add the force of psychoanalytic thoughts and methods, Spielrein is one of the key portals of transmission. I wish simultaneously to restore her individuality and brilliance and engage her as a member of several extraordinary groups.

It is interesting to note that the intersection between psychoanalysis and cognitive psychology has waxed and waned, mostly waned. The period in which Spielrein worked in interaction with Piaget, Vygostky, and Luria is one in which these two bodies of thought interpenetrated. Many factors—personal and political—forced the separation. Perhaps the renewed interest in mentalization, in models of representation, and in Bion's focus on the conscious and unconscious function of thought constitute new beginnings. These beginnings would be aided by the refinding of Spielrein's history and work.

CONCLUSIONS

I became interested in the meaning for Spielrein of two myths: that of Laocoön and the mythic figure of Siegfried. Laocoön is the priest who raised doubt and gave voice to suspicions about the Trojan horse after it was taken inside the city. He and his two sons are eaten by two sea serpents and so in effect are returned to the sea as punishment from some god whose bet was on the Trojans. Punishment for insight: that is how the myth is often interpreted, and one encounters that idea very often in Spielrein's letters and diaries.

I think that rescue from various seas and swamps and fires and inter-necine battles must be deep in my agenda in this essay. I can see this trope in my professional life going back to work with Lewis Aron on the revival of Ferenczi (Aron and Harris 1993). In some ways Spielrein's fate is all too familiar. It is against this tendency in our field to erase conflict and difference that I am speaking.

A persisting thought about the restoration of Spielrein's reputation that has surfaced for me is generational and cultural. For my generation, which Chodorow (2002) has described as a generation born into war and coming into consciousness in the chain of liberatory movements in America (civil rights, anti-war, feminism, through to identity politics and gay liberation), the period between the wars (from grandparents to parents), still represents an extreme challenge. My/our generation imagined a fresh start, a break with the past, in the so-called New Left, the anti-war movements of the 1960s, and the unfolding identity politics involving race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. I think that what has been required is to recover the unexpected continuities and so to be able to place into a genealogy lost figures and lost history from the first half of the twentieth

century. In thinking intergenerationally and psychoanalytically, we are all infused with forms and forces outside our full conscious awareness. As a discipline, we are not yet consciously placed in the moving histories that formed us, though there are important moves in that direction (e.g., Makari 1994; Kuriloff 2014). This essay is part of that project.

In the diaries, and in several autobiographical essays (see Lothane 2003), Spielrein writes of her longing for a son, Siegfried, to be born of an incestuous bond. The struggle to be and to be punished as an oedipal winner, to vanquish the disdained mother/wife dominates most of the writing about Spielrein's preoccupations with Siegfried—as myth and dream. Recruited to a heteronormative scene, the woman is fulfilled by a son, born of oedipal victory and incest.

Why is the passion for Siegfried so fiercely recruited to these transgressions, but nonetheless to transgressions within a system of order and hierarchy and heterosexuality? Why cannot Siegfried, through the creative offspring born of various exciting and creative unions/couplings producing unique new forms of thought and creativity, be a strange attractor? Why isn't Siegfried standing for Spielrein's ambition, her hope for productivity, fecundity that would belong to her? Perhaps we might ask whether Spielrein was the object of envy from many sides, as well as being an object of censure or disdain. It is this determination to recruit Spielrein's story as a cautionary tale about female sexuality that I want to object to. Our reading of Spielrein's preoccupation with Siegfried might also be our cultural trope to write a cautionary tale about female ambition; perhaps both ambition and sexuality can seem too costly. There are certainly punishments for imagined oedipal victory and ambitious striving in many narratives about Spielrein.

I have been unable to resist the thought that Piaget and Vygotsky are Siegfrieds and that the maternal subject is, as so often, sacrificed to male offspring. Was Spielrein for these younger, ambitious men, simply the environmental mother, her individuality and power seamlessly airbrushed out. There is one very telling shift in Piaget's acknowledgment of Spielrein's work on child thought and child speech. In the English edition of his first book, he differentiates their projects, consigning her to the study of very young children and empirical work. In the earlier French edition of his first paper on child thought (Piaget 1923) he notes the closeness of their work and the intention to interweave and bring together their hypotheses (“nous esperons reprendre ensemble ces hypotheses,” [p. 286]).

In the more biographical and fictional treatments of Spielrein, the stress is on her masochism, sacrifice, and destructiveness. My Siegfried associations take me there as well. The voiceover of a documentary film reads a diary entry that predicts death in burning fields. We shudder knowing her actual fate in 1942.

Why does the biographical trump history and politics? Looking at the fate of the Russian psychoanalytic movement, one sees the terrible pattern. There is a scattering of survivors, summary executions or more protracted deaths in the gulags, and along with that a few migrations. One of Spielrein's chief colleagues, the other IPA-sanctioned psychoanalyst in the USSR, Moische Wulff, goes to Berlin in 1927 and Palestine in 1933. What kept Spielrein from that path? Again, the narratives of this period in her life vacillate between masochism and family duties. All three brothers and her husband perished in the late 1930s, victims of Stalin's purges. Perhaps she stayed too long; perhaps it was unthinkable to leave again. Let us stay, though it is difficult and anxiety-producing, with enigma. But we might be less obsessed with self-destructiveness or idealizations of masochism. Rather there is the heavy hand of history.

Spielrein and her daughters were murdered in 1942 in the company of hundreds of Jewish citizens who had been rounded up in Rostov, taken to a ravine at the edge of the town, shot, and buried in unmarked graves. In a series of massacres over a three-month period, 27,000 Jews were murdered. Once you know of Spielrein's and her family's fate in Rostov, that image never leaves you. But I want to offer you another image to hold alongside it. Alexander Etkind, interviewed Spielrein's stepdaughter about Spielrein's last years in Rostov. Etkind tries to describe to a sixty-something Soviet citizen of the 1990s what psychoanalysis was. Lying on couches. Talking. "Oh yes," Nina answers. "In that old stable"—she is referring to Spielrein's workroom in the ramshackle quarters to which she and her family had been assigned—"there was a room that was totally empty except for a huge, lonely sofa" (Etkind 1997, p. 176).

Etkind imagines that Spielrein must have seen patients there somewhere in that long expanse from 1923 to 1942, a practice that would have been dangerous and determined. My association was to the work of scholars like Judit Mészáros and Martin Mahler, who track the intense and courageous need to preserve psychoanalysis in Budapest and Prague, even as an underground practice across half a century of oppression from Hitler to Stalin. They were compelled. Maurice Apprey (2015) might call

this an “errand.” My thought is that Spielrein too carried that project, that errand. She was compelled. In an employee questionnaire during a period in the 1920s in which Spielrein held positions in three central psychoanalytic institutions, she writes: “I think that I was born for this job, that it is my calling. My life would have no meaning without it” (Etkind 1997, p. 172).

Psychoanalysis in the 1920s needed a thinker able to link it to related disciplines and to advance ideas. The loss of Spielrein, someone who was actually performing this function at a quite crucial juncture in psychoanalytic history, is significant. It has taken decades for this kind of project to reappear and flourish (Mayes, Fonagy, and Target 2003). We are in such a moment now in imagining the intersection of infancy research, neuroscience, clinical theory, and a renewed interest in the body and materiality. It is fascinating to me that these interests were clearly Spielrein’s interests as well. We often think of what she lost, of how she was lost and eclipsed. But I ask us to think of the loss to psychoanalysis, and therefore of the loss to us.

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