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## A special kind of choice made by middle aged men : Erotology of noonday demon

Yorgos Dimitriadis

Pleasure completes the activity not as the corresponding permanent state does, by its immanence, but as an end which supervenes as the bloom of youth does on those in the flower of their age (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1174 b 32-34.)<sup>1</sup>.

### Introduction

Nowadays, according to Patrick de Neuter, the French expression “Démon de midi” (Noonday Demon) refers to the following erotic and sexual behaviours by middle-aged men<sup>2</sup>: “numerous erotic relationships, search of the so-called perverse satisfactions in and out of the couple. And most importantly, the fact that in order to form a relationship with a new partner, usually a young woman, sometimes even a girl who could be their daughter age-wise, they abandon their previous marital, family, even professional environment (de Neuter, 2007, p.228)”. According to Paul-Laurent Assoun (2008, p.13), author of a very interesting book on the Noonday Demon, the intention to examine those desires of the middle-aged man constitutes in a contribution to Freudian “love psychology I” (Freud, 1910h), and more specifically with regard to the choice of object in relation to the famous Freudian paper: “A Special Type of Choice of Object by Men” (Freud, 1910h). The origin of the term Noonday Demon is anecdotal. The expression *Démon du midi* originates from an interpretive translation of a Yiddish word that can be found on the sixth verse of the 91<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Book of Psalms, in the Old Testament (La Bible, 2007, p.398). The Jewish word is *yâšûd* and according to de Labriolle (1931) in his paper *le démon de midi*, it means “*ce qui dévaste*”, that which devastates<sup>3</sup>. The original idea behind this verse of the Bible, says de Labriolle (1931), concerns the dangers to which men are subject during midday and from which they are just protected with the aid of God. The term was translated into Greek as “*Δαιμόνιον μεσημβρινόν*”, and later on, “*Daemonio meridianum*” in Latin. These translations were a demonological deviation from the original biblical meaning. As Roger Caillois (1991, p.82) observes in his work *Les démons de midi*, the demonic dimension was inserted in those translations at a time when demonology was considerably popular<sup>4</sup>: Demonology argued that noon, the time of day when shadows (often considered to stand for the soul) were minimal, was the moment demons emerge. This was the case of the Sirens, the Pan divinity (*Πάνας*, from whose name originated the word “panic”), the Nymphs and other mythological creatures comprehensively listed by Caillois. In the XV<sup>th</sup> century, the expression “*daemonio meridianum*” meant for the Christian coenobite monks and ascetics the temptations which could possess them, in the middle of the day, due to their life’s lack of satisfaction. It was also about the guilty sorrow, the dullness, the so-called “*acedia*” (indifference) of the desert secluded monastic communities. In several languages, the term *Mittagsdämon*, or Noonday Demon relates to melancholia. As an example, Andrew Solomon’s (2001) voluminous, partially autobiographical book, about his depression bears the following title: *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*.

That Christian tradition led the French academic Paul Bourget (1914) to use the expression *Démon du midi* for the title of a book he published in 1914, thus conferring it its contemporary meaning in the French language. He states: “I give the same name to another kind of temptation. The one that arises in man during the middle, not of his day, but of his life, at that time when his vigour is at its peak (Bourget, 1914, p.9)”. The author, who had in 1891 published a psychological essay (Bourget, 1891), which comprised a chapter on the physiology of modern love, gave emphasis – being the catholic that he was – to the destructive and self-destructive consequences of that *pas très catholique*, that not so “catholic” behaviour. In his foreword, he wrote: “In a prominent man, the highest religious convictions coexist with the lowest temptations originating from his passions”<sup>5</sup>. Literature and the cinema have re-appropriated the subject – in a much more particular version – with Nabokov’s (1955) famous *Lolita*, which achieved a huge success, both as a novel and as a film (directed by Stanley Kubric in 1962 and Adrian Lyne in 1997). In France Jean Etaix’s film *The Great Love* (1969) was also related to this issue. More recently, in 1999, Sam Mendes’ film *American Beauty*, which won five Oscars, reintroduced the topic on the cinematographic scene<sup>6</sup>. As well as last year’s film, *Locke* (2013), written and directed by Steven Knight with Tom Hardy playing the hero of the movie named Locke<sup>7</sup>. These are a few elements concerning the origin of the term Noonday Demon, and the state the situation it refers to, has been depicted in literature and the cinema, without of course me presuming it to be an exhaustive list.

### **The return of the repressed**

Middle-age crisis (Millet, 2002), in the case of both men and women is indubitably a much more general subject. This is plain to see just by considering the plethora of manifestations which constitute the so-called “*involutional*” *psychopathological episodes*: from involutional melancholia and paranoia to the quieter menopausal depressions, outbreaks of psychosomatic manifestations, hypochondriac incriminations, but also the shift towards religion, the excessive immersion into one’s work or even late-appearing homosexuality. The involution the body undergoes, the body’s decline whose first signs begin to become manifest around the age of forty, and even more around the age of fifty, could be considered the obvious reason for these various episodes. However, the fact that this narcissistic rift into one’s body image, as well as the fear of death has different repercussions on each person incited me to a closer scrutiny of the issue. More particularly, concerning the Noonday Demon, middle-age crisis is often (Mimoun & Chaussin, p.1995) related to both anxiety regarding sexual adequacy and anxiety with regard to the feeling of having only one life. The man subject to the Noonday Demon undergoes what everyone experiences at some point; which is that we have always known ourselves to be mortal, but now we suddenly start to feel it too. That feeling impels him to question his desire, as he feels that there is but one last opportunity for the desire to be realised. The Noonday Demon therefore questions, among other things, the dialectics of death in life and its relationship to desire discussed by Lacan (1959-1960/1986, pp.315-317) in his seminar on the ethics of psychoanalysis<sup>8</sup>.

This feeling of one’s own mortality can arise in many a way. Apart from the body’s usual signs of ageing, the feeling can manifest itself in a more explicit way. For example, an illness may suddenly become the triggering event for the revision of one’s calculation regarding desire. The word calculation, in relation to desire, does indeed point to some neurotic strategy. At some point in the life of this man, there is a moment when the repression concerning the desire subsides under the pressure of the waning remaining time. I will first mention the obsessive, which as we know has the tendency to offer to the Other. The reason for this preference is the fact that the masculine ideal of the “man provider” (Coontz, 2005) within marriage, popular until just recently, coincides with the obsessive’s propensity to give

(oblativity), rendering today the obsessive model closely related to the general masculine model within marriage. For that reason, I will mainly refer to the obsessive issue of desire<sup>9</sup>. According to Lacan (1953-1954/1978, p.315), the obsessive phantasizes that he will begin to live only after the death of the master, and that until then, he lives playacting the dead with regard to his desire. I will follow, on this issue, Assoun's argumentation. According to Assoun (2008, p. 83), that attitude of the obsessive may often suddenly recede in the eventuality of his father's death. His father's death may be the triggering event for the start of his revenge against the super-ego of debt, which thus transforms (Assoun, 2008, p. 91) itself in a super-ego of enjoyment (*jouissance*), thereby exhibiting its origin from the Freudian *Id*. According to Assoun (2008, p. 84) in the most obsessive situations, the mutiny against the father fails pitifully and, returning to his wife, the subject locks himself once again in the prison of his super-ego. The death of the father may be a real event, or it can very well be a phantasy. In a similar manner, for some persons, professional, or any other kind of social recognition, can mean surpassing the father in phantasy. The same can happen in the eventuality of a change in the ideal's direction. These situations are alternative symbolisations of the death of the father and signify the lift of some prohibitions, even if new ones may replace the lifted ones. Assoun (2008, p. 19) wonders how it could be that, to the man who becomes possessed by the demon, all these young women whose existence he did not ignore until then suddenly become a world of young women in flower which specifically concern him. It is as if he linked their blooming to his own blooming a second time<sup>10</sup>. More precisely, (Assoun, 2008, p.18) affirms that "it is when one's youth begins to fade that it starts becoming an object of desire for that person": Dialectics of the *Being* and the *Have* that become crystallised by the erotic choice which contains the "being young" inside its object. Assoun (2008, p.19 & p.50) adds that the phantasy Freud had pointed out as salvation phantasy can eventually be an additional one (as we know, Freud intended the salvation of a woman as phantasized by a man, in his previously mentioned paper on the special type of choice of object made by men). Given the delicate situation those young girls often find themselves regarding their femininity, the *demonised* enamoured saviours set out, if nothing else, to save them from their own seduced self. De Neuter (2007, p.230) notes that the phantasy of the defloration of the virgin is also occasionally added to the salvation phantasy: the former is as old as the world itself, if we only think of Virgin Mary's immaculate conception, or of Io and Europa, both virgins, and Zeus.

I talked about the relationship between the "nympholeptic" and his father; now I would like to address the subject of his relationship to his wife, who often happens to also be the mother of his children. We might say that her status as a mother acts as a catalyst for the whole reaction. I refer to the frequent sexual aversion that some men suddenly experience towards their wife when she becomes the mother of their children: they no longer make love to their wife, but to a *mother*. Of course, this doesn't mean that this new feeling results only from their own neurosis; in their own way, women also play some role in the emergence of the aversion, e.g. with their attachment to the child, newly acquired phallus which they seize from their father in phantasy<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, walking out on a wife, who has now become a mother, for a younger woman, who doesn't evoke the mother (even if he often phantasizes that he will sometime make her his wife, and also a mother), might seem as a solution to the aversion he feels. De Neuter (2007, p.229) observes that the young woman does not have the signs of ageing of the older wife, her sexual desire is probably more ardent (compared to his wife's desire, of approximately the same-as him), and finally, probably does not have the professional success of his wife. Because the independence conferred to a woman by her profession is often another factor that may affect the way a man might phantasize about the lack in the woman. In the case of women who do not lack anything, man struggles with finding the means, e.g. the erection, to express the desire he feels towards them. Nevertheless,

the repressed can of course return for reasons other than the wife's maternity; one of the most frequent is the adolescence of the children, and more particularly of the daughter, which brings forth the father's own adolescence. The father, not so young anymore, may experience the prohibition of incest with the daughter as an inability to seduce; furthermore, given the frequent sexual dysfunctions at his age, he may also experience fear of castration. Competition with his adolescent son can also bring about similar results. There is a resurgence of the Oedipus complex, just as it happens during adolescence. Besides, several authors<sup>12</sup> compare middle age to adolescence both with regard to the issue of idealisation and the search for a genuine self, and to the vigour of the libido. Freud (1916-1917, p.253) himself observed that woman's libido increases during middle-age<sup>13</sup>.

### **The fetishist choice of object and the passion of ignorance in the "Noonday Demon"**

In the case of women, I would like to observe that *Roman Spring* occurs far less frequently than Noonday Demons. By *Roman Spring*, I refer to the famous Tennessee Williams (1950/1999) novel "The Roman Spring of Mrs Stone" in which the fifty-year-old actress Karen Stone falls in love with young Roman Paolo<sup>14</sup>. Previously, Colette's novel *Chéri* (1920)<sup>15</sup> had already "take an advantage" of this subject. These events are quite rare even after the sexual emancipation. Nevertheless, we may consider, the women's frequent attachment to the son as equivalent to the Noonday Demon, which Marie-Christine Laznik (2003, pp. 224-291) designates as the "Jocasta complex" in her doctorate thesis on menopause. This feminine version of the middle-age crisis is much more tolerated by society, and may even be particularly common in areas like the Mediterranean. The phallic dimension of motherly love may, in this manner, completely absorb a woman's sexual life, even if it is not usually considered sexual. The renowned actress Meryl Strip plays such a character in the film "The Manchurian Candidate"<sup>16</sup>: the mother's phallic dimension attains gigantic proportions when her son, via his mother's machinations, manages to become vice-president of the United States of America. In her son's brain had been implanted, on her own initiative, a microchip with fake memories of his made-up role as a Gulf War hero. The director Jonathan Demme clearly demonstrates the sexual dimension of the desire in the famous shower scene where Meryl Strip caresses and kisses her semi-naked son on the mouth. Freud would have said that this denotes the satisfaction of the masculine ideal a woman might have had for herself since her childhood, an ideal that she had to repress in order to become more feminine and which is later realized through the son

With the opportunity of the Noonday Demon, I would like to say a few words on the difference between the choice of object of love made by men and the one made by women. In his paper "On Narcissism: An introduction", Freud (1914c, p.90) refers to the narcissistic choice of object as the choice made when the object of love is what we are ourselves, or what we once were, or even what we would like to be; lastly, also when we choose the person that has been a part of ourselves. In the case of the Noonday Demon, we might say that we are in the situation of the second (what we once were) or the third (what we would like to be) condition. However, in the relationship mother-son previously mentioned, it is through the fourth condition (i.e. what was once part of the self) that narcissism is satisfied. Still, is this narcissistic condition enough in order to explain the choice of object in the case of the Noonday Demon? If this explanation does indeed suffice, why then isn't it the same in the case of middle-age women? Why then middle-age women do not seek younger partners as frequently as men?<sup>17</sup> I believe that the fact that men can procreate even after attaining middle-age would constitute a superficial explanation at best. By the same token, it would only be superficial to attempt to explain it culturally. To try and explain it, for example, by the fact that, in our days at least, the prohibition is stronger in the case of women, probably

because the relationship with a younger man may evoke to them the physical attentions towards their children. I believe that, in addition to these superficial explanations, there are structural reasons explaining this difference between men and women.

Therefore, the next step will be referring to Jacques Lacan and his differentiation between the choice of object made by men according to the fetishist model and by women according to the erotomaniac model. Lacan had briefly suggested this differentiation in his 1960 text for the seminar on woman's sexuality (Lacan, 2006, p. 617), which in a way announced the ideas he would develop fourteen years later in his "Encore" seminar (Lacan, 1972-1973/1975). According to Lacan, in man's case, the object takes the aspect of a fetish<sup>18</sup>. Hence, Lacan identifies fetishism as a characteristic of love in man's case<sup>19</sup>. At this point, I would like to call to mind the world of "young girls in flower", in whose shadow dwells the demonised man. The attribute of youth is recurrent for the demonised man as a necessary condition, as a fetish, i.e. as the girl-phallus, (Assoun reminds us this, p.99) according to Otto Fenichel's expression (Fenichel, 1949, p. 303). Lacan, in his paper on the signification of the phallus, observed that:

If, indeed, man is able to satisfy his demand for love in his relationship with a woman, inasmuch as the phallic signifier clearly constitutes her as giving in love what she does not have, conversely, his own desire for the phallus will make its signifier emerge in its residual divergence towards "another woman" who make signify this phallus in various ways, either as a virgin or as a prostitute. There results from this a centrifugal tendency of the genital drive in the spare of love, which makes impotence much more harder for him to bear, while the *Verdrängung* inherent in his desire is greater (Lacan, 2006, p.583).

As a condition for love, erotomania, which Lacan (2006, p.583) regards as specific to women, is not characterised by being a collection of fetishistic objects. The element that would constitute wholeness is missing, a world of young men for example, or something equivalent. In this case, the boundary isn't dosed out but modulates through the encounter with the Other, the "contingency". It is this relation to the "not-all", the "not-whole" (*pas-toute*), which constitutes women's condition for love according to Lacan (1973-1974/1975). I will not go in depth into the characteristics of this difference, as it is not the subject of this paper. However, I believe that clinical experience, if not common experience, substantiates the "serial" character of the choice of object in man's case, as well as the importance of the desire for the Other in the case of women. I think that it is the prerequisite of the desire for the Other (and in that sense it is the Other's "initiative") which drove Lacan to talk about erotomania with regard to the way women seek an object of love: women seek to hear the man with regard to what he desires, "what he lacks", in order to desire him. This would be the axiom (de Clérambault's *postulat*) of erotomaniac (De Clérambault, 1987): "He is the one who loves me". Thus, there must be a condition for castration for man to be loved. That requirement makes her desire displaced from one man to the next with difficulty, in order to set up a sequence, apart from situations where she playacts the man, as, for instance, is sometimes the case with hysterical women. However, Lacan observes (2006, p.583), if there is a multiplicity of uniform objects in man's case, there are also the conditions for redoubling in women's case. Not only do women realise that their man looks at other women, but the man as well realises that his lover has "diplopia", as it is through this that she looks forward to the great Other, i.e. to the man's desire. The fact that man, in his relationship with the woman, offers what he lacks makes him feel that the woman, by loving him, also turns towards elsewhere. Lacan formulated it in his text on the signification of the phallus in the following way:

Still it should not be thought that the sort of infidelity that might appear to be constitutive of the masculine function is characteristic of him alone. For if one looks

closely, the same split can be found in women, with the proviso that the Loving Other (*l'Autre de l'Amour*) as such, that is, the Other insofar as he is deprived of what he gives – is difficult to see in the backcourt where he replaces the being of the very man whose attributes she cherishes (Lacan, 2006, p.583).

I would like to come back to the specific reasons for which the fetishistic element of the desire of middle-aged “nympholeptics“ can be summed up in the attribute of youth. Moreover, it manifests itself in a considerably specific manner. By that, I mean that it is not only about desiring young women because as such it is rather frequent. In these particular cases, however, it becomes a matter of passion. Therefore, we are also dealing with the issue of passion. Octave Mannoni (1982, p.120) observes that whoever is governed by passion does not want to know anything about that which rules and determines his quest. Roland Gori (2003, p.223) notes that the impassioned person wants to occupy the other’s thoughts, just as the other occupies his own, and desperately seeks in the other signs that would confirm what he believes. Clinical cases of psychoses of passion give us excellent examples of the importance that random events may acquire, which are of course always uniformly interpreted, always according to the logic of passion. Furthermore, the issue of love at first sight provides us with abundant material regarding the importance of random events perceived as signs.<sup>20</sup> The ingenuity of the English language puts sight in a prominent place with regard to the “love at first sight” choice. Perhaps because sight possesses the property of eliminating the anxiety of castration, as observed in his XI<sup>th</sup> Seminar (1964/1973, p.70). As psychoanalysts, we are used to hearing about love at first sight situations happening at the exact moment the patient is close to confessing something concerning a certain repetition in his erotic relationships. The whole process is inscribed within the logic of acting out, of a “I don’t want to know anything”<sup>21</sup> (Czermak, 1998, p.43). Here, “I don’t want to know anything” concerns the loss of youth and the castration, with the latter having inevitably to do with the former. Something is granted to the subject, which, in a way, relieves it of the weight of castration. Thus, an accidental encounter (or rather a supposedly accidental one) with some young woman presents itself to the man involved as an event, that has always been anticipating and which finally has occurred. In fact however, all this time, the subject has been waiting for the deliverance from the weight of castration<sup>22</sup>!

I would also like to briefly discuss the young woman’s motives behind her desire to find herself in an erotic relationship with an older man, even if not as old as her father. Assoun (2008, p.10). believes that the young girl thereby hastens her evolution into a grown woman, in order to “expel her incestuous phantasy” : It is therefore usually about settling the score with the real father. Freud’s (Freud, 1920a) “young homosexual” is an example of such a settling of score that helps us comprehend the *acting* character of these situations intended for the father Acting while waiting for a possible reaction from the father, which in the case of Freud’s “young homosexual” leads to the *passage à l’acte*: When, during one of the patient’s strolls with the woman of easy virtue, her father casts upon them a glance of reproof, the walk ends with her jumping off a bridge. I believe that girls’ propensity to get together with older men is particularly likely in those cases where the father does not function symbolically with regard to prohibition. Possibly because prohibition is his attempt to conceal his own incestuous desire towards his daughter, in other words his jealousy. In the case of the daughter who pairs up with an older man, it is as if she was telling her father that his role is not only to forbid, but also to help towards the existence of her desire. Nevertheless, the pairing of a young woman with an older man may also be a sort of rivalry with the mother, a statement that “I, just like you, can be with a man of age”, or, in the situation where the father has left the household, that “I can succeed where you have failed”.

## Final remarks

I would like to make some observations concerning the “sociology” of the Noonday Demon. Based on experience, it could be said that it is only logical that, due to the increase in the number of divorces, that which until recently was prohibited by the taboo of divorce, has become a lot more frequent. Despite these empirical and somewhat psychologising speculations, there seem to be structural reasons also regarding the increase in the frequency of the phenomenon. Freud (1905b, p.149 – footnote added in 1910) affirmed that the ancients celebrated the drive even if to do so, they needed to elevate an object of inferior value. He observed that today’s lovers undervalue the drive and justify it only by the object’s merits. If Freud made these observations to denounce the puritanism of his time, today, as the puritanism he refers to has considerably abated, we may advance towards a different interpretation of the relation between drive and object. Today’s neoliberal consumerist society has consecrated the object, not to justify some drive, but, a priori, as an object of consumerism. Charles Melman (2003), in his book *The man without gravity (L’homme sans gravité)*, assesses the contemporary trend of modern psychical economy, more or less during the last forty years, as a headless, anonymous imperative towards unlimited enjoyment (*jouissance*). We might still say that modern erotology gives priority to a freedom of the consumerist type, in which anyone is in possession of his/her object, as attest the *gender studies*. We could say that “each type has its own enjoyment (*jouissance*)”, according to the new gender modernism. Hence, the oedipal issue of the Noonday Demon may seem as a particular case, or even as slightly *démodé*, compared to the theoretically infinite possibilities opened by the logic of consumerism. If the previous generation suffered from “lack”, nowadays, couples rather seem to be subject to a “lack of lack syndrome”. The interruption of a relationship characterised by this syndrome puts, in a way, the meter of the “lack of lack” back to zero, though without necessarily guaranteeing a different future after this new beginning.

As observes Assoun (2008, p. 92), the issue is not whether the Noonday Demon is a good thing or a bad one, since it is inscribed in a crisis of desire, which may be either “a neurotic impasse”, or the undoing of some established conventions. De Neuter (2007, p. 232) reminds us that grate men like Charles Aznavour, Charlie Chaplin, Anthony Quinn, Gustav Klimt, revitalised their life and their artistic creativity when, at an advanced age, they entered a relationship with a younger woman. He also reminds us that Picasso’s biographers observe a revolution in the painter’s style with each official new (and usually young) lover or wife. Concerning love’s revitalising and creative properties, I would like to make an observation with regard to transference-love. The love that manifests itself during the transference towards the analyst is a passion: it is of the same kind as the Noonday Demon as far as the passion of ignorance is concerned (to which I referred earlier). Lacan, in his I<sup>st</sup> seminar (1953-1954/1978, p.297-298), discussed that passion of ignorance, which concerns transference. In his seminar on transference Lacan (1960-1961/1991, p. 165) says that Alcibiades, when he addresses Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium*, uses a language of passion. Always according to Lacan (1960-1961/1991, p.167), Alcibiades’ language of passion reaches its culmination when he states that he is the “only one who” ever saw Socrates’ statues, i.e. what he conceals inside him and that may explain his power of fascination despite his unpleasant appearance. However, Socrates, acting as somewhat of a psychoanalyst, will direct Alcibiades towards Agathon. It as if he was telling him: “Whatever you did here, complimenting me about the statues I supposedly contain, you did it for Agathon”. That “only one who” should be put in relation to the unique object, the object-fetish. Alain Vanier (2004) claims that by turning ignorance into a passion in his I<sup>st</sup> seminar Lacan was doing more than renewing the traditional link that tells us that passion is a manifestation of ignorance. With the notion of knowledge “unbeknown”, psychoanalysis changes the status of ignorance and posits it as a passion of transference, aside to love and hate. But in his XX<sup>th</sup>



seminar raises ignorance to a basic structural fact that links it to the phallic enjoyment (*jouissance*). Vanier reminds us of Lacan's phrase "The unconscious is not the fact that being thinks...the unconscious is the fact that being, by thinking, enjoys, and, I will add, wants to know nothing about it at all" (Lacan, 1972-1973/1975, p.95). Nevertheless, if passion prompts towards the unity of the object-fetish, the psychoanalyst's function prompts towards the "subject's division", and that is why there is a kind of inverse process between love and psychoanalytic process. Still, psychoanalytic process cannot but contain love as an ingredient, that is to say as transference-love, a fact that Freud, as we well know, figured out only later on<sup>23</sup> (Freud, 1905e). Coming back to the Noonday Demon this time in relation to transference, I will quote a passage from Irène Diamantis' paper on the strategy of the encounter, be it erotic or related to some traumatic event:

An erotic event or a terrible one, just as a dream, partly supports the withdrawal of the secondary process. Thus, they also compose the chief pathway that leads to the unconscious. Whether it is the desperate adhesion to an erotic object or the supposed impossible mourning of a terrifying scene, these events may be re-elaborated through transference, that is to say through the lift of assurances or by re-entering the field of hypotheses. In the things of love and horror, there is something inside the subject that knows more than the subject itself (Diamantis, 1985, p.66).

Finally, let us remember a quote from Lacan's seminar on anxiety which concerns the importance of erotology in psychoanalysis:

I am not developing a psychology, a discourse about this unreal reality, which is called the psyche, but about a praxis which deserves a name: erotology (Lacan, 1962-1963/2004, p. 24).

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Abstract: The French term 'noonday demon' demonstrate, among others, the tendency of some middle-aged men to seek a love mate among much younger women than themselves, occasionally abandoning their family life. This tendency has to do not only with the agony for the remaining living time but also with the castration anxiety - that the corporal decay while aging symbolises for them. Above all, though, this encounter of a mature man with the love passion for the youth of a woman (or women) is usually indicative of a narcissistic type object choice as well as man's fetishistic predisposition regarding their choice of love object. This 'nympholepsy' also often constitutes a renegotiation with the 'repressed', the outcome of which varies depending on the case

<sup>1</sup> Τελειοῖ δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἢ ἡδονὴ οὐχ ὡς ἡ ἕξις ἐνυπάρχουσα, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐπιγινόμενόν τι τέλος, οἷον τοῖς ἀκμαίοις ἢ ὄρα.

<sup>2</sup> Let it be reminded that "middle-age" is Jung's expression. See Carl Gustav Jung (1963), pp. 153-157.

<sup>3</sup> The french expression is "Dévastation qui sévit à l'heure du midi", in. P. de Labriolle (1931).

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<sup>4</sup> It is a projection of sorts, or in a more direct reference to Freud “the demons are bad and reprehensible wishes, derivatives of instinctual impulses that have been repudiated and repressed (Freud, 1923d, p.72)”.

<sup>5</sup> In his novel (Bourget, 1914), he relates the story of two forty-year-old men of the Parisian catholic bourgeoisie. The first is the abbot Justin Fauchon, who turns from orthodoxy to heresy by publishing a book of agnostic content and lives with a young girl, Thérèse, daughter of a rich solicitor, thus bringing about social disapprobation upon him. The second middle-aged man is Louis Savignan, a widowed pious catholic writer whose son is also in love with Thérèse. Savignan has a lover, Geneviève Calvières, who is the wife of the Aulnar sugar refinery’s manager. Savignan writes an article in which he condemns the sudden conversion having taken place in the abbot’s life, who in turn, in order to get back at him, plans to make public the romantic correspondence between Savignan and Geneviève Calvières, which had by then fallen into the cheated husband’s hands. The story ends in a dramatic way, with Savignan abandoning his project of running away with Geneviève after the death of his son and the abbot Fauchon returning to its former religious order.

<sup>6</sup> In the film, the forty-two-year-old Lester Burnham (played by Kevin Spacey) suddenly rethinks his life from the ground up: the past twenty years spent with his wife Caroline, a real-estate agent, and his daughter Jane, erected upon the model of the American way of life, seem to him as if having been spent in a coma. The first indications of the rebellion to come are the place in his life acquired by Angela, his daughter’s pretty adolescent schoolmate, as well as his blasting resignation from his job as an advertiser after a fifteen-year-old career. He starts working at a fast-food counter, just as he did in his youth, takes on body-building and starts smoking marijuana, sold to him by his daughter’s friend Ricky. His own daughter, aware of her father’s bedroom eyes towards her schoolmate, turns away from him and plans her upcoming getaway with her friend Ricky, while his wife gets a lover, a thing that comes rapidly to Lester’s knowledge. When Angela will sexually provoke Lester and they will find themselves on the brink of sexual intercourse, he will back down upon learning that the alleged Lolita is in fact a virgin. The film will end with Lester’s murder by Ricky’s father, a psychologically unstable colonel, at the same time his repenting wife is coming back home.

<sup>7</sup> The day before he must supervise a large concrete pour in Birmingham, construction foreman Ivan Locke learns that Bethan, a colleague with whom he had a seven months previously, has gone into premature labour. Despite his job responsibilities and although his wife and sons are eagerly awaiting his arrival at home to watch an important football match, he decides to drive to London to be with Bethan during childbirth. Locke's attitude is revealed to be a reaction to his own father, who abandoned him as a child.

<sup>8</sup> See on this issue also our paper (author 2014) on Cotard’s syndrome.

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<sup>9</sup> For obsessives, the avoidance of desire, i.e. the impossible desire, is expressed through the “adoration of the father” (*le culte du père*). See Charles Melman (1999).

<sup>10</sup> By young women in flower, he clearly refers to Proust’s (1919/1954) famous novel “In the shadow of young girls in flower” (Assoun, 2008, p.93).

<sup>11</sup> Gérard Pommier observes that, “when a child is born in a couple, these incestuous desires are the general rule and not some misunderstanding. The two lovers love each other in accordance to this truth of incestuous nature, which is that ‘whatever unites them is also what separates them’. It separates them already from the beginning of their relation. Nevertheless, this doesn’t mean that they are bound to split up, but that they will need to overcome a violent stretch in order to meet up again. If they do not get through that stretch, they will live with the revengefulness which expresses nothing but their own desire. They will remain connected by what they hate both in themselves and in their partner: the dissimilarity of their own desire (Pommier, 1994, p.184)”.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. “The menopause” in Deutsch (1991).

<sup>13</sup> An author even gets as far as giving it the name of *maturescence*. See C. Attias-Donfut (1988).

<sup>14</sup> Adapted into a film by José Quintero in 1961 and by Robert Allan Ackerman in 2003.

<sup>15</sup> The novel has been adapted to the screen by Pierre Billon in 1950 and by Stephen Frears in 2009.

<sup>16</sup> There is an older film under that title, based upon the same book by Richard Condon, directed by John Frankenheimer in 1962 and featuring Frank Sinatra. In 2004, Jonathan Demme filmed the remake, with Denzel Washington, Liev Schreiber, Meryl Streep and Jon Voight.

<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, it should be noted here that the continuous decrease of role differentiation between man and woman tends to reduce the difference in frequency with which each one seeks for a younger partner.

<sup>18</sup> Alfred Binet, with his book “Fetishism in Love” published in 1887, is the pioneer of fetishism regarding love (and not only sexual excitement). In his book, he makes a distinction between small fetishism, which he considers to be present, at least in some measure, in ordinary love, and greater fetishism, which is when fetishism becomes a condition *sine qua non* for the sexual act (Binet, 1887/2001, p. 32).

<sup>19</sup> Man’s “specificity” regarding fetishism was already commented by De Clérambault (1991, p.58&63), who, in his work on women’s erotic passion for fabric, distinguishes this *passion* from *fetishism*, which he regards as a specificity of man’s psychology. With regard to women with passion for fabric, he prefers the use of the term *tactilophile*. Patrick Suskind’s (1985/1986) best-seller *Le parfum* is the story of a baby abandoned in a garbage bin immediately after his birth, who, growing up, will develop such a fetishism regarding odours that he will

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start murdering young women in order to distil perfumes from their fragrance. The novel became a film from Tom Tykwer in 2006.

<sup>20</sup> See Mladen Dolar, «At first sight» in R. Saleci & S. Zizek (Eds.) (1996). The author mentions several literary references concerning the subject of love at first sight.

<sup>21</sup> See “Symptôme, acting out et passage à l’acte” in Czermak (1998).

<sup>22</sup> Lacan (1953/1979) in his essay on the neurotic’s individual myth notes the following about neurotic’s idealized passion: ‘‘What is truly striking in the psychology of the neurotic—all we need do is enter, no longer into the fantasy, but into the subject’s real life to put our finger on it—is the aura of abrogation which most commonly surrounds the sexual partner who is the most real to him, the nearest to him, with whom he generally has the most legitimate ties, whether in a love affair or in a marriage. On the other hand, a figure appears who is a double of the first and who is the object of a more or less idealized passion which is pursued in a more or less phantasmatic way, in a style analogous to that of romantic love, and which grows, moreover, into an identification of a fatal kind’’.

<sup>23</sup> In Dora’s case.