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**SUPERSTITION, MYSTICISM, PSYCHOANALYSIS?  
(QUESTIONS ABOUT AN UNFINISHED KRÚDY NOVEL)**

Gyula Krúdy was an established writer by the time psychoanalysis became part of the intellectual culture of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy and of the entire Western World. Psychoanalysis might fairly be called Monarchy science since not only was it born in Professor Freud's Vienna, but also because the majority of the figures associated with it lived in the Monarchy as well: Adler whose lectures Dezső Kosztolányi frequented, Sándor Ferenczi Freud's student and Gyula Krúdy's friend – a friendship which included exchange of views and sharing experiences too before the first world war. Their conversations concerned border territories of psychoanalysis and literature. Sándor Ferenczi writes in his article *Love in Science* that for centuries literature has dealt with the same issues which now psychoanalysis devotes scientific attention to. Among these issues love is the most important. Ferenczi in his article warns poets against being piggish by turning away from conveying the emotional content, plot and theory of love, so as not to become boring. According to this thesis a psychoanalytic approach will find those of Gyula Krúdy's works most suitable for interpretation which do not refer to Freud's ideas directly but precede the psychoanalytic studies of their age. From this aspect Krúdy's novel fragment "Mit látott Vak Béla szerelemben és bánatban" seems indeed suitable for analysis. The first chapter of the first part could support the argument that it is another Monarchy-novel, one which is characterized by László Szörényi's statement as the "most important work after the fall" in which Gyula Krúdy presents Francis Joseph as a cultic but shrinking king who is unable to satisfy the grown lady, Budapest. László Szörényi's opinion might be supported by the fact that the story of Vak Béla (Béla the Blind) is a love-story, what's more an erotic story, and even if the emphasis is not on the love between the king and the city it is important to notice that in the short episode where the writer does describe that relationship symbolic meanings abound: handkerchief, hat, cap, millinery – representatives of the genitals in dreams according to Freud's work. It goes without saying that outfits and behavior drawing the attention of, and, attracting the other are present in the world of the animals too, but emphasizing secondary sex characteristics is only a part of their purpose. Their function as indicators of

power relations is just as important. Lust for power is indeed as relevant as sexual desire. Krúdy's description of the ageing king (the military hat getting bigger and the king smaller) can thus be interpreted as the hat being symbolic of the potential, ability which the king is supposed to have, but in reality does not longer possess. Let me refer here to Georges Bataille's work *Erotica* in which the author writes how the death of the community's leader is an event that might never happen for the leader's life is the guarantee for the existence of the cosmos, and if this event does happen, the most primitive instincts are let loose: lootings, killings, mandatory prostitution for women etc. Even if a historical parallel between the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy after Francis Joseph's death and the tribal communities of Bataille's example might be difficult to maintain I find his argument valid from a psychoanalytical perspective.

Krúdy does not simply write about blindness as an acquired or congenital property. He describes several aspects of vision impairment with a considerably greater emphasis on the emotional and ethical causes than on physiological ones. Vak Béla (Béla the Blind) gains his experiences about the world according to the laws of synesthesia and synecdoche. Voices are, however, often hostile and life threatening, like in a dream: they can transform into objects and obstacles for the blind. The Blind king's acquired vision impairment is a mystical and physiological blindness, which cannot be properly explained by the laws of physiology. Circumstances of his going blind might be called mystical too. Mystery and psychoanalysis can be connected by erotica. It is essentially erotic experiences through which the process of understanding the cosmos that is, the exploration of nature gains meaning. Mind translates this and turns it into useful tools by myth creation. Myth is the context in which a single experience might at the same time be a general fact and an example, a case. Thus the central importance of the eye-symbol in Gyula Krúdy's blind man novel might at the same time be a mystical and an erotic experience. It should not be overlooked that the two fundamental signs of Krúdy's love-stories are female sexual symbols: legs and the eyes. The eyes are perhaps symbols of female genitals. Georges Bataille's choice of words is more sophisticated than those of Freud's psychoanalysis when he suggests that erotica is not merely a sexual behavior, much more a physical phenomenon and is unrelated to the drive of multiplication and raising offspring. However, it is this drive which is seen by Freud as social, and, on the other hand cosmic in size. Erotica may be rooted in sexuality shamed, as its excess, as an attempt to overcome it, as a riot against it. This might be the very reason why the first manifestation of man's religious existence can be traced back to erotica, as the most direct and radical answer to

the natural factuality of death. Both love and death are desirable for the soul. This desire is the essence of erotica, according to Bataille. The relation between love and death created by the eyes may be supported by a quotation from Krúdy's novel, which gives an accurate account of a childhood death experience. This fragment persuaded Sándor Ferenczi to consider analyzing writers' oeuvres from a psychological point of view. Krúdy connects a rough draft of a tale made up by Vak Béla (Béla the Blind) to the story of how death-consciousness develops in childhood. This melancholic mythic story reminds one of H. C. Andersen's tales – whose books were among Krúdy's favorites – and in which eye-symbols are of crucial importance. Love and erotica appear in their strangeness, almost like sorts of perversion in Krúdy's novel. Vak Béla's (Béla the Blind) love passion gradually turns from the living to necrophilia and death-cult. The afterlife of his guardian saint, the priest, with his second death and dirty descent to the grave brings about never ending scenes of horror and acts of perversion. Krúdy uses the figure of the priest to form the unholy saint, the decline of the sacred. Violence which is against morals, and violence in sexuality goes hand in hand with erotica. Violence comes with excitement which refers to the chance to gain freedom. Erotica aims at freedom too, at the freedom from moral obligations, in which existence is shown as it is in reality: endless. In the excitement of shamelessness identity is lost, which is the base of human community built on sexuality but lacking erotica. Ritual human sacrifices give the community an experience of death through which eternity is provided to the sacrificed even if for a minute. Death is seen as the direct cause of understanding existence in this case, just like the act of lovemaking. Despite the social ritual of sacrifice – which is intelligible only in the strangeness of the sacred – violence is against order.

Pleasure of death is "only a terrible sign for us meaning that death is not the end of our continuous existence, but rather a more evident truth than life is". A passionate love-making like that of Frimet and Vak Béla (Béla the Blind) is, according to Bataille a death-like experience. A drive for death is, however not the only form of this. Destruction, decay, killing and suicide are all possible desirable ends. It is more precise to talk about erotica than sexual drive, as this is a phenomenon that can hardly be called an instinct, and if it is an instinct, its appearance is naturally extreme, and is associated with events of homicide, suicide or the pride admission of the most desperate states of addiction.

Our deepest motivations and desires are for those things which endanger our lives and terminate it or bring it near to death. It seems that the unconscious is ruled not by socially accepted norms of self-support and race preservation.

It might be important to notice in the light of what has been mentioned earlier about hats that upon Vak Béla's (Béla the Blind) return to Budapest the four domes of the city have already been transformed into hats, those of the city. This metaphor supports the power-symbolic characteristics of hats. This is emphasized by the lyrical allegoric yet clear and intelligible description of secular and social power-relations through the metaphors of the dome. The relation of Francis Joseph and Budapest gives rise to a case of power-psychosis that generally characterized the centuries of Habsburg ruling in Hungary: the king is obsessively attached to the power over a country which he does not feel his own deep in his heart.

Krúdy connects the issue of power to that of erotica when he writes about how Francis Joseph preferred to stay in Austria because there he might have wondered at the strong feet of the women of Tyrol while hunting. However with the frequent use of the word "skirt" Krúdy suggests that these hunts are more in order to catch women than actual prey. The wish that the King would like to peep the women of Pest from behind the windows of the Buda Castle brings obscenity into the field of interpretation of the relation between power and sexuality. The meaning that Krúdy suggests here is "womanizer" as his play with the words reminds one of the practice Sándor Ferenczi writes about in his study: *Scientific Dream Analysis*. In his views dream abuses the ambiguity of words, sayings, quotations to make certain contents socially acceptable, which need to be expressed but, due to the hindering effects of the need for normality, they may not be expressed otherwise.