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Crazy Love: 50 Therapy Lessons by Patricia Morris. London: Adam Rei Books, 2020.

Reviewed by Kurt Jacobsen

Crazy Love is a short, pithy, and very wise book - reissued and reedited since its original 2015 publication - that surely ought to be required reading for any apprehensive soul contemplating psychoanalytical psychotherapy. Here then is what to expect if your seemingly aloof analyst adheres, for the most part, to classical technique. The first rate therapist "is merely a quietly attentive and tentative trained facilitator," Morris writes, "a guide towards the opportunity for the patient to think for himself and about himself." (Freud, as Paul Roazen had fun revealing, did not always observe the rigid rules of his acolytes, such as humoring a Chow or two parked cozily on his consulting room rug during sessions.) Of course, there is nothing "merely" about it, as Morris amply explains to the uninitiated.

The lure for the lovesick or lovelorn fledgling client is a flotilla of eye-opening lessons on how to negotiate the tormented erotic battlefield within oneself as well with others, and indeed very sound guidance is amply provided, not least on how to deal with obscure objects of desire that a certain branch of psychoanalysis insists that we all inveterately chase. "Maturity means being able to distinguish between one's inner wishes and one's impulse to force others to fulfill them," she stresses, ". . . and learning to acknowledge that in a healthy society one cannot have everything one wants," which, glancing at 10 Downing Street (not to mention, The City), might not apply to heedless elites in charge of the rest of us, but that's grist for another kind of story.

Morris casts a cool analytical eye on the often clumsy and self-mystifying dance of would-be romance. The search for love, the lack of love and too damn many encounters with masquerades as love (usually manufactured by oneself) propels most willing recruits into analysis. Morris is splendidly clear-sighted in her view of the plights of women today for whom "women's intellectual liberation is ahead of their emotional liberation," especially when advising how one goes about handling - not outright physical assaults, of course - but myriad minor insults and idiocies stemming from "ordinary, stupid sexism." Her case studies are fine vignettes of everyday mating illogic, logically laid out and stripped of intoxicating mirages. It's hard to contest the observation that a person "who is besotted with someone is often unable to protect her self-respect", or that pursuit of the quarry without declaring one's intention is the dumbest thing of all - if you deep down really still want whoever they really are, which ignites a pesky horde of other underlying issues. The unrealistic hopes that drive one into analysis are usually part of the problem. How do we convert the proverbial frog into a prince or a princess into a real if flawed human being when actually we are doing all we can to keep barely at bay our "pursuing Furies; the old familiars, frustration, fear, self-doubt, self-hatred, anxiety, shame, guilt, despair, envy, rage, regret" ?

All pertinent psychoanalytic terms are rendered in thoroughly comprehensible ways: resistance, projection, therapeutic alliance, interpretation, compensation, Phantasy and fantasy, hidden or secondary gains, etc. Morris rightly emphasizes, above all, the need for curiosity and courage to see one through what can be quite frightening glimpses of one's turbulent inner world, the gliding wraiths and monsters beneath (and within) the hull of the *Pequod*. A good analyst will see that one overcomes the urge to “abrogate responsibility for our own role in our unhappiness” too.

While there are tips on how to right a listing relationship, romantic love and its attendant sexual attraction is depicted, unsparingly, as a “knowing surrender of one's rational faculties to the service of the libido”, “a starry eyed mixture of masochism and narcissism,” . . . ‘in brief a kind of madness.’ Fair enough. Absent kindness and reciprocity there is not much love in what we call romantic love, nor escape routes from the projection screens of the “imaginary, invented versions of each other.” Bulls-eye. I couldn't help thinking, in passing, that her description of the unconscious emotional dynamics of terrorists sounded uncannily what consciously goes in any military boot camp: the young chap “threatened with his own annihilation by the very figure of authority who also offers a means to transmute his desires from private self-persecution to public reward at some time in the future.” What that may mean is also thematic stuff for a different essay.

“Therapy sessions,” as Morris observes, “are often concerned with disentangling which elements of your aggression are directed against yourself and which against someone else.” If nothing else, an alert reader, after devouring this savvy volume, can smartly wend their way in a jiffy through, say, a daunting and emotionally topsy-turvy work such as *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* next time it appears on screen or stage. How often do reasonably sound and insightful people get attracted to each other and not soon be bored or dissatisfied with the arrangement? Thank goodness for good old lust or else most sane earthlings would never have the nerve to hook up. Nonetheless, Morris, as the trite but true saying goes, has done us a great and entertaining service. Ignore it at your peril.

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