

## **A KOHUTIAN APPROACH TO “A BIT OF SINGING AND DANCING” BY SUSAN HILL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Susan Hill is an English novelist, playwright and critic. Her novels and short stories generally focus on workings of the human psyche, particularly emotional breakdowns. This study focuses on her short story “A Bit of Singing and Dancing”, the protagonist of which is Esme Fanshaw. She spent her life as the unique caregiver to her bedridden mother. After her mother’s death, she inherits 6,000 pounds. She tries to enjoy newfound freedom, but it is difficult for her to live without the control of her tyrannical mother, so she is always haunted by an inner voice having substituted her mother. She meets Mr. Amos Curry, a salesman and her would be tenant in spite of the voice’s rejection. This man will change her life considerably.

In this study, Esme Fanshaw is treated through Kohutian psychoanalysis or self-psychology, where the self should be understood from an empathic standpoint. For Kohut, the self could not be properly defined, yet it can be the “whole person or, especially, the inner or subjective person accessible through empathic attunement and listening.” People have three kinds of selfobject needs: Mirroring Need, Idealizing Need, and the Need to be with like-minded souls. If a person has the empathic relations with his/her parents and friends with the acceptance of Idealization, these needs are met. Such a person develops self-integrity, self-esteem and maintains sound relationships with others. In “A Bit of Singing and Dancing” Esme’s self and her relation with her mother and Mr. Amos Curry will be analyzed through such Kohutian notions as “narcissism”, “selfobject”, and “empathy”. Empathy for Kohut is needed for personal integrity and tolerance. People such as Esme suffer rage, emptiness, humiliation due to the loss of empathy during their development.

**Keywords:** Heinz Kohut, psychoanalysis, self psychology, selfobject, Susan Hill.

## **A KOHUTIAN APPROACH TO “A BIT OF SINGING AND DANCING” BY SUSAN HILL**

“[P]sychoanalysis has hardly yet scratched the surface of the fascinating mystery of man... [I]t must turn from the study of Freud to the study of man” (Kohut 1984, p. 99).

“There are few figures in the psychoanalytic community since Freud’s time as personally alive, intellectually brilliant, and multifaceted as Heinz Kohut” says Charles B. Strozier (1997, p. 165). Heinz Kohut came from the Freudian psychoanalytical tradition, but later he challenged some main

doctrines of Freud by initiating his self psychology which is relatively new theory in psychoanalysis and gives attention to difficulties (not amenable to psychoanalysis) with self-esteem regulation and maintenance of a solid sense of self in time and space, referred to as self cohesion (Kelly).

Heinz Kohut (1913-1981) was born into a Jewish upper middle-class family in Vienna, graduated as a medical doctor in 1938 and left Europe for the US in 1940 (Ridgway). After taking some further training in medicine, Kohut had some residency in neurology and psychiatry at the University of Chicago during the 1940s. He began course work at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis in 1946. He graduated from the Institute in 1950 and joined the faculty. He remained a lecturer in psychiatry, and worked as a clinical psychoanalyst. In an essay on empathy first presented in 1956 and published in 1959, Kohut argued that the essential way of knowing in psychoanalysis was through empathy, which he defined as “vicarious introspection” and empathy became the centerpiece of his self psychology. Between 1964 and 1965, Kohut served one term as the President of the American Psychoanalytic Association. Till 1965, Kohut was regarded as “Mr. Psychoanalysis, the most eminent spokesman for classical Freudian thought.” But, soon after he was harshly criticized as he challenged the orthodox views (Strozier, 1985, p. 10-11). *The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Analysis of the Treatment of the Narcissistic Personality Disorders* was published in 1971. That book had a significant impact on the field by extending Freud’s theory of narcissism and introducing what Kohut called the “self-object transferences” of mirroring and idealization. Although he challenged the Freudian tenets in this book, Kohut still framed his findings within the standard Freudian discourse (Bouson, 1989, p. 12). His second book appeared in 1977: *The Restoration of the Self* that moved from a focus on narcissism to a discussion of the self, its development and vicissitudes. In 1978, the first two volumes of his papers, edited by Paul Ornstein, *Search for the Self*, appeared. He had contracted lymphoma in 1971. By the time of his death, his last book, *How Does Analysis Cure?* was largely complete, though it posthumously appeared in 1984 after being edited by Arnold Goldberg with the assistance of Paul Stepansky. *Self Psychology and the Humanities*, a volume of some new and republished essays appeared in 1985, edited by Charles B. Strozier and in 1990-1991 volumes three and four of Kohut's papers, *Search for the Self* appeared, and a selection of Kohut's correspondence, edited by Geoffrey Cocks, *The Curve of Life* appeared in 1994.

To Bouson (1989), Kohut “was bothered by analysts’ overridealization of Freud and also by what he called the ‘tool-and-method pride’ of those Freudian analysts who, in their strict adherence to Freud’s doctrines, reduced their patients to a predictable set of symptoms. Kohut came to perceive classical analysis as a coercive, overly systematized scientific method that had all but lost touch with its human subjects” and Kohut questioned “some of the basic tenets of Freudian metapsychology: the theory of the primacy of the drives and drive discharge and the centrality of the Oedipus complex”. Kohut did not deal with man’s biological nature, “but he did contest Freud’s notion of the biological bedrock of the human psyche as he attempted to dislodge psychoanalysis from the matrix of the libido theory and from its view of the psychosexual constitution of the self” (p. 12). To Kohut, the self is not an entity but “a symbolic abstraction from the developmental process,” and “the uniqueness that separates the experiences of an individual from those of all others while at the same time conferring a sense of cohesion and continuity on the disparate experiences of that individual” (Basch, 1983, p. 15).

Moving away from “Freudian psychobiology”, Kohut (1984) give attention to self-experience. The individual’s “essence,” he asserts, “is defined when seen as a self” (p. 94). The desire for a sense of relationship with and responsiveness from others is fundamental to the self, not biological drives. In place of Freud’s conflict-ridden Guilty Man, Kohut offers narcissistically damaged Tragic Man. Guilty Man “lives within the pleasure principle” and tries to “satisfy his pleasure-seeking drives” (Bouson, 1989, p. 13). Humanity feels guilty because it has broken the law or not lived up to the ideals in the superego. On the other hand, Tragic Man’s “endeavors lie beyond the pleasure principle” (Kohut, 1977, p. 132-133; see also Ridgway). Tragic Man tries to fulfil goals, ambitions, and ideals of his core self, but he never succeeds fully. He wants to restore his self, tries to “repair his defective self, to discover, in an empathic, self-supportive, and self-enhancing milieu, the glue that mends, that binds into a cohesive whole, his broken self” (Bouson, 1989, p. 13). They experience despair, a sense of emptiness, a sense of having failed to reach their ideals. This condition particularly afflicts those in middle-age (Ridgway).

There is an archaic interior world where self and other meld. This is a world which comes before subject object differentiation which is central to the classical Freudian transference situation. Self experiences his selfobjects not separate or autonomous object, but as a self extension or a need-satisfying object to be controlled and used. From this standpoint, empathy is privileged. There are two aspects or poles of the self in the theory of the bipolar self. They emerge in the earliest stages of life: (i) the grandiose-exhibitionistic and (ii) the idealizing. The archaic grandiose self comes from the feelings of infant: She feels that she is the center of the world and all-powerful. The parents are there to meet all her needs and demands. Archaic idealization is based upon the infant’s experience of being nurtured, held and soothed by the parents. Feeling the calm strength of the caregiver who is the idealized parent imago, the all-powerful, the infant is free from the feelings of helplessness, diffuse depression and rage. Here, the caregiver is perceived not as a separate object but as a selfobject, namely a part of the self. Kohut asserts that “[I]t is not so much what the parents do that will influence the character of the child’s self, but what the parents *are*.” If the parents are self confident, “they will respond empathically to the child’s exhibitionistic displays”. “The parents’ proud smiles ‘will keep alive a bit’ of the child’s ‘original omnipotence’ which will consequently be ‘retained as the nucleus of the self-confidence’ that will sustain the individual throughout life” (Bouson, 1989, p. 14-15). And, the self-confidence of the idealized parents and their calmness and security when they soothe the anxious child will be retained as the nucleus of the inner strength the individual derives from internal ideals (Kohut, Wolf, 1978, p. 417).

British writer Susan Hill’s novels and short stories having well-constructed narrative structures, mostly in the third person, generally focus on workings of the human psyche, particularly emotional breakdowns. Sometimes she is considered as “a writer intent on self-revelation: a psychologist ... of self” (Hofer). Her characters are emotionally freakish, suffering from a fundamental inability to express or explore themselves (M. L. Hill, 2002, p. 137). “A Bit of Singing and Dancing” takes place in *A Bit of Singing and Dancing* a short story collection appeared in 1973 dealing with familiar themes of isolation, ostensibly nurturing relationships and hidden secrets. The middle aged female protagonist Esme spent her life as the unique caregiver to her bedridden mother. After her mother’s death, she inherits 6,000 pounds. She tries to enjoy newfound freedom, but it is difficult for her to live without the control of her

tyrannical mother, as her psyche has been heavily affected by her tyranny, so she is always haunted by an inner voice having substituted her mother. Her mother like a “ghostly albatross” ... continues to “rattle almost audibly” for every step in her life (Hofer). She meets Mr. Amos Curry, a salesman and her would be tenant in spite of the voice’s rejection. This man will change her life considerably.

The story opens with Esme’s celebration of her newfound freedom. She is alone on the beach late in the afternoon and thinks “I can stay out here just as long as I like. I can do anything I choose, anything at all, for now I am answerable only to myself” (Hill, 1993, p. 119). This gives her a feeling of thrill as she spent the past eleven years with her bedridden mother. Now she has lived alone for two weeks. Throughout her 51-year life, she got used to harsh and dominating attitude of her mother. Her mother is blind to everybody or everything if she cannot control them. “She sees things she would otherwise quite unable to see” (Hill, 1993, p. 119). Even she is blind to Esme who “was most anxious to stay young” (Hill, 1993, p. 127). To Kohut, the grandiose self and the idealized parental imago are configurations within the Unconscious and these configurations constitute the core of the narcissistic sector of the personality. They are central structures within the psyche. The central mechanism can be formulated as ‘I am perfect’ = grandiose self; ‘You are perfect, but I am part of you’ = idealized parental imago (Siegel, 1996, p. 66-67). Therefore, “You” is the selfobject. If the object is experienced as part of the self, not separated from the self it is named selfobject. They exist as psychological functions and are not experienced as true distinct objects (Siegel, 1996, p. 72). “Selfobjects are neither self nor object; they are the subjective aspect of a function which is fulfilled by a relationship” (Suesske). By a sound self-selfobject relation the nuclear self which is “basis for our sense of being an independent center of initiative and perception, integrated with our most central ambitions and ideals and with our experience that our body and mind form a unit in space and a continuum in time” develops (Kohut, 1977, p. 177).

People have three kinds of selfobject needs which are not conscious: mirroring need is the need to be admired and to bask in the appreciation of the other, i.e. “the gleam in mother’s eye” (Kohut, 1971, p. 117-118). Idealizing Need is the need to idealize and feel close to and supported by the powerful, beautiful, all-knowing Other, and the Need to be with like-minded souls, namely alter Egos, buddies, sidekicks (Kelly). If a person has the empathic relations with his/her parents and friends with the acceptance of Idealization, these needs are met. It can be asserted that Esme’s mother did not establish an empathic relation with her daughter. She was a mother of tyrannical type, during her childhood Esme’s need for ‘the gleam in the mother’s eye’ was thwarted in the past. Her rigid domination she exerted on Esme did not allow her to develop self-integrity, self-esteem and maintain sound relationships with others as “she and her mother had always kept themselves to themselves” (Hill, 1993, p. 137).

In the text, there is no reference to her father. Her father is supposed to have been dead, got divorced or simply absent. In either way, his absence should have produced a feeling of loss or lack and a kind of trauma in Esme. The personalities of parents or caretakers “are essential in the formation of the child’s psychological structures and make their imprint on the child’s grandiosity through the process of ‘passage through the object.’ The grandiose self cannot be integrated into the fabric of the personality when its optimal development is interfered with, either through the unempathic personality of the child’s

caretaker or through trauma". The first case is related to Esme's mother and the latter one to her father. "In either situation, the grandiose self will persist in its archaic form, repressed or split off from the reality ego, uninfluenced by the world outside" (Siegel, 1996, p. 87-88). The traumatic loss of her father should have left her with an unsatisfied need for a stabilizing idealized selfobject. It is obvious that Esme's contact with the world outside is in the minimum level due to her mother's oppressive and unemphatic attitude to her. She cannot have friends of any gender. There is a kind of complete isolation in the house: "... the television had stayed off and there was silence to hear the ticking of the clock and the central heating pipes" (Hill, 1993, p. 119). She cannot choose anything, even the television programmes they watch are determined by her mother. She prefers to watch "some variety shows such as Morecambe and Wise and the Black and White Minstrels" light entertainment programmes (Hill, 1993, p. 119), but Esme "would have chosen BBC2 and something cultural or educational" (Hill, 1993, p. 119). So, her mother as a defective personality gives harm to Esme's self-development. Due to traumatically frustrating experiences and prohibitions caused by her parents, Esme spent all her life in a childish and unassertive manner. There is no room in their world for Esme to protest. Her mother's domination created a sense of total submission on Esme's part. It is implied that her mother saw her as an "enhancing appendage". She interfered with even her dressing and eating style: "She wanted to go back and toast scones and eat them with too much butter, of which her mother would have strongly disapproved" (Hill, 1993, p. 120). Even she imagines that what her mother would have say: "I'm surprised you don't pay attention to these things. I pay attention I don't believe in butter at every meal - butter on this, butter with that" (Hill, 1993, p. 120). There was no privacy for Esme.

In the new circumstance, she wants to enjoy her freedom: "I am free, I may go on or go back, or else stand here for an hour, I am mistress of myself" (Hill, 1993, p. 121). But, this is too much for her and she tries to delimit her freedom, finds herself "hopelessly caught within the psychic organization of the selfobject" (Siegel, 1996, p. 147), namely her mother: "She shivered, then, in a moment of fear and bewilderment at her new freedom, for there was nothing she had to do, she could please herself about everything, anything, and this she could not get used to" (Hill, 1993, p. 122). She thinks that she can determine her future, she "wanted to sing and dance." She can move to London, she can get a job there and have a flat. But, she feels "strange" (Hill, 1993, p. 123) as her relatives predict, and depressed and she thinks that she is "only half alive" just as the Park Walk, the district she lives in (Hill, 1993, p. 122). She is anxious about how to live and what to do.

To Allen M. Siegel (1996), "The central anxiety in the narcissistic disorders is not castration anxiety but a fear of the intrusion of the intense excitements associated with the narcissistic structures. People fear a loss of the self in the ecstasy of a merger with the idealized selfobject. They fear the permanent isolation that accompanies the experience of isolating grandiosity and they fear the frightening experiences of shame and self-consciousness associated with the intrusion of exhibitionistic wishes" (p. 95-96). Therefore, a narcissistically disordered Esme just as her mother tried to do her best for her mother's funeral. On the day of the funeral, "It had been blowing a gale, with sleet, she had looked round at all their lifeless, pinched faces under the black hats and thought, this is right, this is fitting, that we should all of us seem bowed an old and disconsolate. Her mother had a right to a proper grief, a proper mourning" (Hill, 1993, p. 120). Besides, during those days "she had been so calm and

self-possessed, she had made all the arrangements so neatly” that her relatives “were very surprised” (Hill, 1993, p. 123). They are all impressed by her well conduct.

She cleans her mothers’s room as soon as possible. “Everything had gone. Her mother might never have been here. Esme had been very anxious not to hoard reminders and so, the very day after the funeral, she had cleared out and packed up clothes, linen, medicine, papers, spectacles, she had ruthlessly emptied the room of her mother (Hill, 1993, p. 124). But, this precipitancy to get rid of her mother caused a feeling of guilt in her: “...she felt ashamed, as though she wanted to be rid of all memory, as though she had wanted her mother to die. She said, but that is what I did want, to be rid of the person who bound me to her for fifty years. She spoke aloud into the bedroom, ‘I wanted you dead’” (Hill, 1993, p. 124). She is torn between the need of selfobject and to be free. As her mother could not meet her Mirroring and Idealizing Need, and as she did not have like-minded soul, Esme wants to take revenge on her by trying to get rid of her memory just after her death. But, again she suffers from the loss of her mother: “She felt her hands trembling and held them tightly together, she thought, I am a wicked woman” (Hill, 1993, p. 124). It is obvious that she experiences an emotional deterioration as her relatives Uncle Cecil and Cousin George Golightly warned her just after the funeral that “You will feel the real schock later. Shock is always delayed. [...] You are sure to feel strange” (Hill, 1993, p. 123). She really feels ‘strange’, ‘neurotic’ and ‘morbid’. She develops a life-sustaining illusion of his mother’s power on her. Therefore, she begins to speak to her mother. “Even the idea of spending made her feel guilty, as though her mother could hear now, what was going on inside her head, just as, in life, she had known her thoughts from the expression on her face” (Hill, 1993, p. 122). When she returns home from the outside, she shouts hello as before as if her mother had not died: “... her voice echoed softly up the dark stair well, when she heard it, it was a shock, for what kind of woman was it who talked to herself and was afraid of an empty house? What kind of woman?” (Hill, 1993, p. 123). She experiences an internal conflict with her mother that causes anxiety: “the shock of that death came to her again like a hand slapped across her face...my mother is not here, my mother is in a box in the earth, and she began to shiver violently, her mind crawling with images of corruption” (Hill, 1993, p. 122). Her life was exposed to chronically an overpowering parental attitude toward her demands, which resulted in her remarkable passivity and ineptness that might have protected her from an enfeebled and hidden self. “The central pathology resides in the developmental arrest of the narcissistic configurations which deprives the self of reliable, cohesive sources of narcissism and creates an inability to maintain and regulate self-esteem at normal levels” (Siegel 1996, p. 66). After her mother’s death, she is in a hysterical mood and cannot control her anxiety which is related to the self’s awareness of its vulnerability and tendency to fragmentation. On the one hand, she is stuck to her mother’s image as she has fear of being fragmented:

But, a thought went through her head, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, it was as though she were reading from a tape.

‘She is upstairs. She is still in her room. If you go upstairs, you will see her. Your mother. The words danced across the television screen, intermingling with

the limbs of dancers, issuing like spume out of the mouths of comedians and crooners, they took on the rhythm of the drums and the double basse.’

Upstairs. In her room. Upstairs. In her room.

Your mother. Your mother. Your mother.

Upstairs ... (Hill, 1993, p. 123-124)

On the other hand, as she tries to control the anxiety, her unconscious defenses are mobilized. The wish to have “a bit of singing and dancing” is such a defence: “... she wanted to shout and sing and dance” (Hill, 1993, p. 122). This cannot be acceptable to her mother’s standards for Esme. “How do you know where things will lead Esme?” (Hill, 1993, p. 134).

Bouson (1989) asserts that “narcissistically defective adults cannot provide themselves with sufficient self-approval or with a sense of strength through their own inner resources. They are always compelled to satisfy these essential needs through external sources: by extracting praise from or exercising unquestioned dominance over others [Esme’s mother’s case] or by merging with idealized figures [Esme’s case]. Lacking a stable cohesive self namely a stable sense of the self as a unitary agent, an initiator of action and a continuum in time”, Esme suffers from a “fundamental weakness and deficiency in the center of her personality” (p. 16-17). She is “prone to states of *understimulation*, a feeling of deadness and empty depression; *fragmentation*, a frightening loss of a sense of self-continuity and cohesiveness; and *overburdenedness*, a traumatic “spreading” of the emotions, in particular the “spreading of anxiety” (Kohut, Wolf, 1978, p. 418-420; Bouson, 1989, p. 17). And she will experience other person as archaic selfobjects: “as a part of the self or as merged with the self or as standing in the service of the self, i.e., as utilized for the maintenance of the stability and cohesion of the self” (Kohut 1978, p. 554). The last case happens with the coming of a man to Esme. He mistakenly knocks at her door. He wants to rent a room. The first impression of Mr Amos Curry is very effective on Esme: “... he is a very clean man, very neat and spruce, he has a gold incisor tooth and he wears gloves. Her mother had always approved of men who wore gloves” (Hill, 1993, p. 126). Even in this impression, she is directed by her late mother. And, for the first time Esme will decide not in accordance with her mother but she will “follow her instincts for once” (Hill, 1993, p. 134) as she realizes that this is her own life.

Behind the overt behavior and inner feelings of Esme suffering from the narcissistic disorder—her radical shifts in self-perception and self-esteem, her disavowed rage, her intense loneliness and subjective emptiness—lies an urgent need to reconstitute the self (Kohut, 1977, p. 104-105). She attempts to repair her self by using Mr Amos as archaic selfobject, namely a substitute of her ideal parent imago or the idealized other: “I always keep an open mind, Miss Fanshaw, I believe in the principle of tolerance, live and let live. Nation shall speak peace unto nation .... I have seen the world and its ways. I have no prejudices. The customs of others may be quite different from our own but human beings are human beings the world over. We learn from one another every day. By keeping an open mind” (Hill, 1993, p. 127). Mr Curry grew up in orphanage. But, he is very satisfied with his upbringing: “But it was a more than adequate start, Miss Fanshaw, we were all happy together. I do not think memory deceives me. We were one big family. ... I see how lucky I am. ... I count myself

fortunate” (Hill, 1993, p. 127-28). From his statements and manners, it is asserted that Mr Curry was well supported by the caretakers’ exultant response “at the appropriate phase, the development from autoerotism to narcissism—from the stage of the fragmented self (the stage of self nuclei) to the stage of the cohesive self” (Kohut, 1971, p. 118). He is a very active and healthy man. Esme is very happy to have this man as a tenant as “his presence took the edge off the emptiness and silence which lately had seemed to fill up every corner of the house” (Hill, 1993, p. 131). She thinks “how nice it was to hear that the house was alive, a home for someone else” (Hill, 1993, p. 136). So, she begins to criticize her past life as: “... it is a very bad thing for a woman such as myself to live alone and become entirely selfish” (Hill, 1993, p. 135).

But, her mother always echoes in the back of her mind scolding her. “You should have consulted me, Esme, you take far too much on trust. You never think. You should have consulted me” (Hill, 1993, p. 131). She is in a great dilemma as she feels guilty. “... her eyes filled up with tears of guilt” (Hill, 1993, p. 130). She even hears her mother warning about this man: “You should always take particular notice of the eyes, Esme, never trust anyone with eyes set too closely together .... Or else too widely apart. That indicates idleness.” (Hill, 1993, p. 131). The above mentioned selfobject needs, essential to the development, survival and vitality of the developing self, the need for an object to idealize, the need to be affirmed, valued and echoed by an object and the need to feel an likeness and kinship with another (Siegel, 1996, p. 194) are met by Mr Curry. She wants to share her thought about this man, Mr Curry, with her woman friends but she does not have any friends except Mr Curry: “How nice is it to have a man about the house, really, I had no idea what a difference it could make” (Hill, 1993, p. 137). With the coming of this man, she “fringes lampshades and helps him in his accounting, these are skills “she had acquired easily” (Hill, 1993, p. 137) and “planned to ... do a little voluntary work for old people” and go to evening institute for “lampshade-making classes” (Hill, 1993, p. 135). Therefore, she strongly defences him against her mother: “He has impeccable manners mother, quite old-fashioned ones, and a most genteel way of speaking.’ She remembered the gloves and the raised hat, the little bow, and also the way he had quietly and confidently done the washing up, as though he were already living here” (Hill, 1993, p. 134). And, Esme compares the personality of the man with her mother’s. His presence gives her a kind of comfort as he is “a very sensitive man, he can read between the lines: and she wanted to laugh with relief for there was no need to go into details about how dominating her mother had been and how taxing were the last years of her illness – he knew, he understood” (Hill, 1993, p. 132). What she feels here is empathy. “Vicarious introspection”, Kohut’s definition of empathy, is the way one can learn about the inner experiences of another (Siegel, 1996, p. 49). Now she feels younger and “it is all thanks to Mr Curry. I see now that I was only half-alive” (Hill, 1993, p. 137) and now her “life was full” (Hill, 1993, p. 135).

Because of the lack of empathy throughout her life, especially in her early childhood Esme’s self is vulnerable to fracturing and disintegrating. Her self is fragile and damaged (Ridgway) because it did not develop properly. But here, Esme’s depression has diminished and elements of vitality begins to appear as Mr Curry behaves her empathically as if he were a therapist. Growing understanding of the psychotic nature of her mother’s personality is accompanied by resistance. She could no longer idealize her as Mr Curry becomes a selfobject experience which Esme uses to enhance and mend her self. This is



foreshadowed by the fact that Esme is eager to give her mother’s room to Mr. Curry (Hill, 1993, p. 134). Even if bad experiences occur with him, these can become growth experiences. Mr. Curry has two professions. He travels in “cleaning utensils” (Hill, 1993, p. 128) during winter but he does not give any clue about his work in summer time except being “self-employed” (Hill, 1993, p. 137). “There was no doubt that her mother would have disapproved, and not only because he was ‘stranger off the streets’ but also ‘He is a salesman, Esme, a doorstep pedlar, and you do not know what his employment in the summer months may turn out to be’” (Hill, 1993, p. 134). At first, Esme does not mind but as the summer approaches, she begins to worry about it. When she tries to ask about it, Curry changes the subject. In winter time, he comes home in between five thirty and six every evening (Hill, 1993, p. 136), but when summer comes it changes to half past nine or ten o’clock at night (Hill, 1993, p. 138). She thinks she should follow him, but changes her mind. One evening, she wants to explore the acquaintances of Mr. Curry. First, she goes to the promenade which she almost never did when her mother was alive and walks for a while. Then, she hears the “music. After a moment, she recognizes it. The tune had come quite often through the closed door of Mr Curry’s bedroom” (Hill, 1993, p. 139). She is surprised when she sees him “on a corner opposite the hotel and the putting green [...] The black case contained a portable gramophone, the old-fashioned kind, with a horn, and this was set on the pavement. Beside it was Mr Curry, straw hat tipped a little to one side, cane beneath his arm, buttonhole in place. He was singing, in a tuneful, but rather cracked voice, and doing an elaborate little tap dance on the spot, his rather small feet moving swiftly and daintily in time with music” (Hill, 1993, p. 139). And, Esme is shocked. First, she feels deceived: “She had been humiliated, taken in” (Hill, 1993, p. 140). He is just a busker. Here Esme lives a kind of regression in response to the disruption of an idealizing transference. This can be thought as “reactive mobilization of the grandiose self.” Here, “The wholeness achieved through merger with a perfect other is shattered and a retreat to the lonely self as the only source of perfection, and safety ensues (Siegel, 1996, p. 90). After seeing Mr Curry in the street singing and dancing, she feels “a little faint and giddy, her heart pounding. She thought of her mother, and what she would have said, she thought of how foolish she had been made to look, for surely someone knew, surely half the town had seen Mr. Curry?” (Hill, 1993, p. 140). This is a scandalous thing for Esme. He is “quite common” in her mother’s word used to describe “summer crowds”. First, she believes that he is a beach photographer, which is very appropriate to her social statues. But, he turns to be a man like a beggar: “... as Mr Curry danced, a fixed smile on his elderly face. At his feet was an upturned bowler hat, into which people dropped coins, and when the record ended, he bent down, turned it over neatly, and began to dance again” (Hill, 1993, p. 139-140). As “Righteous indignation, marked by an air of hostility, cold aloofness, arrogance, sarcasm and silence, surrounds this position” (Siegel, 1996, p. 90), she wants to go home, collect his belongings, throw them to the pavement, call the police or to leave her house not to meet Mr Curry any more (Hill, 1993, p. 140). Here, Esme psychologically turns to her mother to be scolded: “She thought of her mother, and what she would have said” (Hill, 1993, p. 140). She “had been disgraced, and almost wept for the shame of it” (Hill, 1993, p. 140). But, to Kohut, “These regressive swings are neither avoidable, since the therapist’s empathy, like the mother’s, cannot be perfect, nor are they undesirable” (Siegel, 1996, p. 90). They have therapeutic impact on the self as she can “grasp of the deeper meaning of her present condition as well as of its genetic roots” (Kohut,

1971, p. 137). So, again she defends Mr Curry, substitute of her archaic selfobject against her archaic selfobject, her mother, who was defective. "...she wondered what it was she had meant by 'shame'. Mr. Curry was not dishonest. He had not told her what he did in the summer months, he had not lied. ... He paid his rent. He was neat and tidy and a pleasant companion. What was there to fear?" (Hill, 1993, p. 140). She questions her values shaped by her mother. The grandiose-exhibitionistic and idealizing aspects of her self mature, the mirroring, soothing, and stabilizing functions of the selfobject, Mr Curry, are internalized through a structure-building process Kohut calls *transmuting internalization* (Bouson, 1989, p. 14-15). So, she approaches Mr Curry empathically: "...she felt sorry for him, and at the same time, he became a romantic figure in her eyes, for he had danced well and his singing had not been without a certain style, perhaps he had a fascinating past as a music hall performer, and who was she, Esme Fanshaw, to despise him, what talent had she? Did she earn her living by giving entertainment to others?" (Hill, 1993, p. 140). So, as Kohut believes empathy values are higher than truth values (Siegel, 1996, p. 16), Esme rejects to talk to her mother and silences her.

'I told you so, Esme. What did I tell you?'

'Told me what, mother? What is it you have to say to me? Why do you not leave me alone?'

Her mother was silent. (Hill, 1993, p. 141)

So, breaking the deep merger ties with her mother, her self is united with the idealized object searched for after her mother's death. In self psychology this can be considered as "selfobject transference" (using classic terminology, "narcissistic transference") meaning that a patient who was never able to make certain necessary developmental steps in the formation of his self-concept now wants to use the therapist and the treatment situation to complete the task (Basch, 1980, p. 16). Here, Esme cannot develop her personality and Mr Curry helps her unintentionally functioning as a therapist. The curative power of empathy provided by Mr Curry gives way to Esme's self development. She feels "useful", "enjoys herself" (Hill, 1993, p. 136). This means that Esme breaks out of the confinement of her enclosure by realizing that the rigid, uncompromising structure of her life has little to offer her; the parameters of her life are completely changed by Curry's, the selfobject's, empathic attitude to her (Hofer). Experiencing the exhilarating bliss of growing self-determination and independence, at their first meeting at home after her discovery, Esme invites him to kitchen to "have a little snack with" her (Hill, 1993, p. 141). Her attempts, at communication with Mr Curry, "have been successful enough to form a cohesive self—a psychic structure firm enough that its unity is not threatened even under stress—which makes the individual able to turn to explore the world and to cope with change with some anticipation of gratification" (Basch, 1980, p. 123). What Kohut (1990) says in a different context is apt to her new situation: Esme experiences her ambitions, ideals, skills and talents as her own, and she pursues her life goals not in masochistic compliance, which was the case before she meets Mr Curry, but joyfully, as the activities of an independent self (p. 443-444).

Consequently, she follows "her instincts for once" (Hill, 1993, p. 134). She realizes "from his face that he knew that she knew" (Hill, 1993, p. 141). To understand each other, they do not need words,

so there are likeminded souls. Some weeks later, while Mr Curry "was sitting opposite her...reading from the volume COW to DIN" what Esme says proves her new self determination and independence: "My mother used to say, Mr Curry, 'I always like a bit of singing and dancing, some variety. It takes you out of yourself, singing and dancing'" (Hill, 1993, 141). Although this statement uttered by defective parent at the beginning of the text seems to have a negative implication, the phrase "a bit of singing and dancing" is repeated by Esme several times in the text every time changing and enhancing its meaning to the positive. Singing and dancing, in fact, epitomizes Mr. Curry's personality: he shows empathy to Esme, which makes her fully developed, makes her flush with pleasure and excitement. As a selfobject, he fulfills his function.

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