

REMEMBERING ANDREW GORDON

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Editor's note: Andrew M. Gordon passed away on October 18, 2018 (the year prior to the publication of this volume). He was Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Florida and Vice-President of the PsyArt Foundation, for which he organized the annual International Conference on Psychology and the Arts. He taught in the University of Florida programs in Paris and Rome and was been a Fulbright Lecturer in American Literature in Spain, Portugal, and Serbia, a Visiting Professor in Russia, Hungary, and Argentina, and a keynote speaker at conferences in Japan, South Korea, and Egypt. Professor Gordon is the author of *An American Dreamer: A Psychoanalytic Study of the Fiction of Norman Mailer*; *Empire of Dreams: The Science Fiction and Fantasy Films of Steven Spielberg*; and, with Hernan Vera, of *Screen Saviors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness* and, with Peter Rudnytsky, he edited *Psychoanalyses/Feminisms*.

I FIRST MET ANDY GORDON at one of the annual International Conferences on Literature and Psychology nearly three decades ago. That year the conference was held in France at Aix-en-Provence. Andy helped his colleague, the well-known psychoanalytic critic Norman Holland, in organizing these conferences. Generally, Freudian psychoanalytic theory and practice were the dominant mode of the literary analyses and interpretations presented at these get-togethers. However, by no means were they entirely Freudian oriented. I remember Andy's witheringly humorous but cogent presentation on Jacques Lacan, "Trouble in River City or Lacan's 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious.'"

With the benefit of hindsight, I think Andy's critique of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory cleared the way for me to make my own eclectic and

somewhat more philosophical presentations on Lacan, André Green, Wilfred Bion, and others. So my long preoccupation with phenomenological interpretations of lived body experiences and Freudian psychoanalysis continued. With much cheerful banter from Andy, I was coming more or less to grips with my longstanding interdisciplinary interests and psychoanalysis. With him as editor, we were hoping to bring out a book on these various conceptual concerns. Much to my regret, it never came to pass.

Andy and I continued seeing each other annually and corresponding well into the late 1990s, and then meeting up more sporadically as we entered the 21st century. I considered it most fortunate when we would both present at Norman Mailer Conferences. It would cheer me up no end seeing his bearded smiling face and mischievous eyes. I knew I was going to learn something pertinent about our concerns with psychoanalysis while partaking of his unique sense of humor.

Looking back, I see a friendship of a certain kind developing between Andy and me, even though we did not see each other very often. When we did get together, we would initially talk about our immediate families and the bewildering experience of the loss of our parents. Yet I tend to think, however, our relationship finally became a thoughtful conversation as a particular mode of intellectual dialogic exchange. One of us would begin to talk and the other would listen and respond. Simultaneously a world of understanding would emerge from our talks and continually expand.

Today, with Andy gone, I think of it as *philia*, an open amicable eagerness to partake of how each of us independently comprehended and interpreted our experiential and conceptual world. I am further inclined to think of this *philia* as developing into an *epistemophilia*, as it often does among most academics and intellectuals. We were interested in the silent and invisible significations in the dialogic and interpretive psychiatric sessions as well as acts of writing, reading, and interpreting between the writer and reader. Andy came from a solid culture of Freudian psychoanalysis, based on the theory and practice. French philosopher Paul Ricoeur in his *Freud and Philosophy* referred to Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism as “hermeneutics of suspicion into texts.” I told Andy that for me it all amounted to an act of intellectual “breaking and entering.” Andy kindly sent me his treatise on Norman Mailer’s fiction, *Norman Mailer an American Dreamer: A Psychoanalytic Study of the Fiction of Norman Mailer*. It makes manifest his magis-

terial understanding application of Ricoeur's formulation of "hermeneutics of suspicion."

Andy's leaving us, so unexpectedly, creates a forlorn sense of absence for those of us who find our world deeply troubled and troubling without consequential dialogues among us to serve as so many guiding lights. Personally, I experience it as a void, deeply so.