



Mary in front of
her painted door

Photograph by John Haynes)

Mary Barnes' "Trip"

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In 1965, a community of about twenty people gather around R. D. Laing. They settle in the suburbs of London, at Kingsley Hall, an old building which for a long time was a stronghold of the British labor movement. For the next five years, the leaders of antipsychiatry and patients who, according to them, "make a career of schizophrenia," will explore collectively the world of madness. Not the madness of asylums, but the madness each of us carries within, a madness they intend to liberate in order to lift inhibitions and symptoms of every kind. At Kingsley Hall, they overlook, or rather, try hard to overlook, the distribution of roles among patients, psychiatrist, nurse, etc. No one is entitled to give or receive orders, to issue prescriptions. . . . Kingsley Hall is then a liberated piece of land, a base for the counter-culture movement.

The antipsychiatrists want to go beyond the experiments in community psychiatry; according to them, these experiments still represent only reformist enterprises, which fail to really question the repressive institutions and traditional framework of psychiatry. Maxwell Jones and David Cooper,¹ two of the main instigators of these attempts, will actively participate in the life of Kingsley Hall. Antipsychiatry, then, can make use of its own recording surface, a kind of body without organs, with each corner of the house—the cellar, the terrace, the kitchen, the chapel . . .—each part of the collective life functioning like the gears of a big collective machine, taking each individual away from his immediate self and from his petty problems, so that he either devotes himself to the service of others, or falls upon himself in the sometimes dizzying process of regression.

This liberated piece of land, Kingsley Hall, is besieged from all sides; the old world seeps in through all its cracks; the neighbors complain about its nocturnal life; the neighborhood children throw stones at the windows; on the slightest pretext, the cops are ready to ship the restless patients off to the *real* psychiatric hospital.²

However, the real threat against Kingsley Hall comes from within; the inhabitants freed themselves from recognizable constraints, but secretly the internalization of repression continues, and besides, they are left under the yoke of simplistic reductions to the hackneyed triangle of father, mother, and child, used to compress all cases not classified as "normal" behavior into the mold of Oedipal psychoanalysis.

Is it necessary to maintain a minimum of discipline at Kingsley Hall, or

This review of Two Accounts of a Journey Through Madness (1971) by Mary Barnes and Joseph Berke first appeared in Le Nouvel Observateur, May 28, 1973.

not? Internal struggles for power poison the atmosphere. Aaron Esterson, leader of the "hardcores" (Stalin under his arm, while Laing carries a book by Lenin) is finally eliminated, but nevertheless, it will always be difficult for the enterprise to find ways of self-regulation. In addition, the press, television, the "in" crowd are all involved; Kingsley Hall becomes the object of riotous publicity. Mary Barnes, one of the patients, becomes a kind of superstar of madness, at the cost of making herself the focal point of implacable jealousies.

From her experience at Kingsley Hall, Mary Barnes and her psychiatrist Joseph Berke wrote a book. It is a confession of disconcerting naiveté. It is at the same time both a model enterprise of the liberation of "mad desire" and a neo-behaviorist dogmatism,³ brilliant discoveries and an impenitent familialism akin to the most traditional Puritanism. The "mad" Mary Barnes elucidates in several chapters of confession what no other "anti-psychiatrist" has ever revealed: the hidden side of the Anglo-Saxon antipsychiatry.⁴

FREAKING OUT

Mary Barnes is a former nurse labelled schizophrenic. She might just as well have been classified among the hysterics. She takes Laing's advice on the "trip" literally. Her "regression into childhood" is achieved in the manner of a *kamikaze*. The "down" years several times lead her to the verge of death by starvation. Everyone around her panics; should she be hurried off to a hospital or not? This triggers off a "monumental crisis" in the community. Admittedly, during her "up" years, the problems of the group are no better: she will only relate to the few people whom she heavily endows with her familialism and mysticism, that is, first and foremost Ronnie (Laing), whom she idolizes like a god, and Joe (Berke), her simultaneous father, mother, and spiritual lover.

She thus carved for herself a small Oedipal territory that will resound with all the paranoiac tendencies of the institution. Her pleasure cristallizes into the painful realization, which tortures her relentlessly, of the *evil* she generates around her. She opposes Laing's project; and yet, this project is her most dear possession! The more guilty she feels, the more she punishes herself, the worse her condition gets, unleashing reactions of panic all around her. She reconstitutes the infernal circle of familialism by involving more than twenty people, which makes matters worse!

She acts like a baby; she has to be bottle-fed. She walks around naked, covered with shit, pissing in all the beds, breaking everything, or letting herself starve to death. She tyrannizes Joe Berke, forbids him to leave, persecutes his wife, to the point that, one day, unable to stand it any longer, he hits her. Irrepressable becomes the temptation to resort to the well known methods of the psychiatric hospital! Joe Berke asks himself how it could be that "a group of people devoted to demystifying the social transactions of disturbed families should revert to behaving like one of them"?

Fortunately, Mary Barnes is an extreme case. Not everyone behaves as she does at Kingsley Hall! Yet, isn't she presenting the real problems? Is it certain that understanding, love, and all the other Christian virtues, together with a method of mystical regression, suffice to exorcize the demons of the Oedipal madness?

TOO MUCH CHAOS

Laing is unquestionably among those most engaged in the attempt to destroy psychiatry. He passed the walls of the asylum, but it seems he remained the prisoner of other walls, those he carries with himself; he has not yet succeeded in ridding himself of the worst constraint, the most dangerous of the *double binds*,⁴ namely "psychoanalysis"—to repeat the apt expression of Robert Castel—with its signifying, interpretative delusion, its echoed representations, and its derivative abyss.

Laing believed it possible to elude neurotic alienation by focusing the analysis on the family, on its internal "knots." For him, everything begins with the family. He wouldn't mind, though, getting out of it. He would like to melt with the cosmos, to shatter the routine of everyday existence. But style of his explanation cannot free the subject from the familialist hold which he wanted only as a starting point and which catches up with him at every corner. He tries to resolve the difficulty by taking refuge in an Oriental type of meditation which however, cannot ward off indefinitely the intrusion of a capitalist subjectivity equipped with quite subtle means. You don't compromise with Oedipus; as long as you don't attack head-on this essential mechanism of capitalist repression, you won't be able to effect major changes in the economy of desire and consequently in the status of madness.

Throughout the book, there is a constant flow of either shit, piss, milk, or paint. However, it is significant to note that there is practically never mention of a flow of money. We do not exactly know what goes on from this angle. Who is in charge of money, who decides to buy what, who gets paid? The group seems to live out of thin air; Peter, Mary's brother, undoubtedly much more involved than she in the schizo process, cannot stand the bohemian style of Kingsley Hall. There is too much noise, too much chaos, and moreover, what he wants most is to keep up with his job.

But his sister harasses him; he must stay with her at Kingsley Hall. Relentless proselytism of regression: you will see, you will have your trip, you will be able to paint, you will go to the end of your madness... But Peter's madness is somewhat more disturbing. He is not very anxious to throw himself into this kind of venture! Perhaps here we can grasp the difference between a real schizo trip and the petty bourgeois style of familialist regression. A schizo is not very much interested in "human warmth." His concern lies elsewhere, on the side of the most deterritorialized flux; the flow of the "miraculating" cosmic signs, and also the

flow of monetary signs. The schizo does not overlook the reality of money (even if his use of it is out of the ordinary), any more than he overlooks any other reality. A schizo does not act like a child. For him, money is a point of reference like any other, and he needs to make use of as many systems of reference as possible, precisely to enable him to keep his distance. Exchange for him is a way to avoid mix-ups. In short, Peter cannot be bothered with all these stories about community, which only invade and threaten his singular relation to desire.

Mary's familialist neurosis is something altogether different; she does not stop establishing small familial grounds; it is a kind of vampirism of "human warmth." Mary hangs on to the image of the other; for example, she asked Anna Freud to be her analyst—but for her, this meant that she would settle at her place, with her brother, and that they would become her children. This is what she tried to do again with Ronnie and Joe.

A PROFESSIONAL

Familialism consists of magically denying social reality, and avoiding all connections with the actual flux. The only remaining possibilities are the dream and the infernal closed-door of the conjugal-familial system, or better still, during the great moments of crisis, a small decrepit territory in which to isolate oneself. It was in this manner that Mary Barnes operated at Kingsley Hall; as a missionary of Laing's therapy, a militant of madness, as a professional.

We learn more through this confession than we would by reading a dozen theoretical writings on antipsychiatry. We can finally glimpse the repercussions of "psychoanalysis" in the methods of Laing and his friends.

COLLECTIVE DELUSION

From the Freud of *Studies on Hysteria* to the structuralist analysts who are the current rage, the whole psychoanalytic method consists of reducing any situation by means of three criteria:

—**Interpretation:** a thing will always *mean* but only obliquely through a game of signifying clues;

—**Familialism:** these signifying clues are essentially reducible to familial representations. To reach them, one proceeds by means of *regression*; the subject will be induced to "recapture" his childhood. It will be in fact a kind of "powerless" representation of childhood, a recollected, mythical, and sheltered childhood, negative of the present intensities and without any connection to the positive aspects of childhood;

—**Transfer:** in line with interpretative reduction and familialist regression, desire is restored onto a wilted space, a small, miserable world of identifications (namely the analyst's couch, the look, the assumed attention). The rule of the game is that everything that comes up is to be reduced in terms of interpretation and papa-mama images; one need only proceed to the ultimate

reduction of the signifying battery itself, which must henceforth function with a single term: the silence of the analyst, against which all sorts of questions are to lean. Psychoanalytical transfer, a churn used to cream the reality of desire, makes the subject sink in a dizziness of abolition, a narcissistic passion, which, though less dangerous than Russian roulette, doesn't lead him on any less (if it works) to an irreversible fixation of cheap subtleties which will end by expropriating him from all other social investment.

We have known for a long time that these three criteria work badly with the insane; their interpretations, their images are too removed from dominant social coordinates. Instead of giving up this method at Kingsley Hall, they try to improve these criteria to reinforce their effects. Thus, the silent interpretation of dual analysis is replaced with a collective, and loud, interpretation, a kind of collective interpretative delusion. It is true that the method becomes operational; no longer is it simply a mirror game between the words of the patient and the silence of the analyst, but rather it involves objects, gestures, and interaction of forces. Joe Berke, initiated in the big game of Mary Barnes's regression, grunts acts like a crocodile, bites and pinches her, rolls her in bed. . . things still not very common among typical psychoanalysts.

We are almost there! On the verge of penetrating another practice, another semiotic. The ropes will be broken with the sacred principles of significance and interpretation. Not so, each time the psychoanalyst recovers by reinstating the familialist coordinates. He is then caught at his own game; when Joe Berke needs to leave Kingsley Hall, Mary tries everything to stop him. Not only has the analysis become endless, but the session also! Only by losing his temper can Berke free himself from his "patient" for a few hours, to participate in a meeting on the Vietnam war.

A FAMOUS PAINTER

The interpretative contamination has become boundless. Paradoxically, Mary is the first one who breaks the cycle through her painting. In a few months she has become a famous painter.⁵ Even this is subject to interpretation; if Mary feels guilty taking drawing courses, it is because painting was her mother's hobby and she would be upset if she found out her daughter was a better painter. Paternally speaking, things are no better: "Now, with all these paintings, you have the penis, the power, and your father is threatened."

Mary tries to ingest all this psychoanalytical rubbish with touching diligence. Thus in the communal atmosphere of Kingsley Hall, Mary refuses to work with just anyone. She turns down others because she wants to make sure the person working with her is a firm discipline of Ronnie. "When I got the idea of the breast, a safe breast, Joe's breast, a breast I could suck, without being stolen from myself, there was no holding me back. . . . Joe

putting his finger in my mouth was to me saying, 'Look I can come into you but I'm not controlling you, possessing, stealing you.'

Even the psychoanalyst ends up being overwhelmed by the interpretative machine he helped start. He admits: "She interpreted everything that was done for her (or for anyone else for that matter) as therapy. If someone brought her a glass of water when she was thirsty, this was therapy. If the coal was not delivered when ordered, that was therapy. And so on, to the most absurd conclusions." This doesn't prevent Joe Berke from continuing to fight with his own interpretations, aimed only at making his relation with Mary part of the Oedipal triangle: "By 1966, however, I had a pretty good idea of what and who I was for her when we were together. 'Mama' took the lead when she was Mary the baby. 'Papa' and 'brother Peter' vied for second place. In order to protect my own sense of reality and to help Mary break through her web of illusion, I always took the trouble to point out when I thought Mary was using me as someone else." But it will be impossible for him to disentangle himself from this spider web. Mary trapped the whole house inside it.

A MORTAL SIN

Let us deal next with the technique of regression into childhood and with transfer; developed in a communal atmosphere, their "derealization" effects are accentuated. In the traditional analytical face-to-face situation, the dual relation, the artificial and limited character of the scenario form a kind of barricade against imaginary outbursts. At Kingsley Hall, it is with a real death that Mary Barnes is confronted at the end of each trip, and the whole of the institution is overcome by a kind of sadness and anxiety just as real. Aaron Esterson ends up having to resort to the old methods of authority and suggestion: Mary was brought close to death by her starvation; she is forcefully forbidden to continue fasting.

It is with the same brutality that a few years before a Catholic psychoanalyst forbade her to masturbate, telling her, as she recalls, that it was a worse sin than sleeping with a man without being married. It worked then also. In fact, isn't this return to authority and suggestion the inevitable correlative to the technique of regression in all directions? A sudden relapse close to death, a papa-cop creeps out of the shadows. The imaginary faculties, especially those of the psychoanalyst, do not form a defense against social repression; they secretly bring it on instead.

One of the richest lessons of this book is perhaps that it shows us to what extent it is foolish to hope to find raw desire, pure and sure, by heading off to look for knots, hidden in the unconscious, and secret keys of interpretation. Nothing can unravel, by the sheer magic of transfer, the real micropolitical conflicts that imprison the subject. No mystery, no inner world. There is nothing to discover in the unconscious. The unconscious needs to be created. If the Oedipus of transfer does not resolve the familial Oedipus, it is because he is deeply attached to the familialized individual.

CAPITALIST EROS

Whether alone on the couch or in the group, in an institutional regression the "normal-neurotic" (you and I) or the neurotic of the psychiatrist (the "insane") continues to ask again and again for Oedipus. Imbued with the reducing drug of interpretation through their training and practice, the psychoanalysts could only reinforce the policy which amounts to crushing desire; transfer is a way of detouring the cathexes of desire. Far from slowing down the race toward death, it seems instead to accelerate it, cumulating, as a cyclotron, "individuated" Oedipal energies in what Joe Berke calls "the vicious spiral of punishment-anger-guilt-punishment." It can only lead to castration, self-denial, and sublimation: a shoddy asceticism. The objects of the collective culpability follow one after the other, and accentuate the punitive and self-destructive impulses by doubling them with a real repression made of anger, jealousy, and fear.

Guilt becomes a specific form of the libido—a capitalist Eros—when it exists in conjunction with the deterritorialized flows of capitalism. It then finds a new way, an unedited solution, outside the framework of family, asylum, or psychoanalysis. I shouldn't have, what I did was bad, and the more I feel it's bad, the more I want to do it, because then I can exist within the realm of the intensity of guilt. Except that this realm, instead of being made "corporeal," attached to the body of the subject, to his ego, to his family, will take possession of the institution; actually, the real boss of Kingsley Hall was Mary Barnes. She knew it well. Everything centered around her. All she ever did was play Oedipus, while the others were indeed well caught in a collective Oedipus.

Once Joe Berke finds her covered with shit and shaking with cold, and his nerves crack. He then becomes aware of her extraordinary capacity for "conjuring up everyone's favourite nightmare and embodying it for them." Thus, transfer at Kingsley Hall is no longer "contained" by the analyst. It goes in all directions and threatens even the psychoanalyst. Everyone becomes a psychoanalyst! Yet they were so close to having none, to let the desiring intensities, the "partial objects," follow their own lines of force without being haunted by the systems of interpretation or duly codified by the social frame of "dominant reality."

AROUND THE FAMILY

What is the reason for this desperate attempt on the part of Joe Berke to glue together the scattered multiplicity by which Mary "experiments" with the dissolution of her ego and seeks to explode her neurosis? Why this return to familial poles, to the unity of the person, which prevents Mary from opening up to the outside world, after all potentially quite rich? "The initial process of her coming together was akin to my trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle without having all the pieces. Of those pieces at hand, many

had had their tabs cut off and their slots stuffed. So it was almost impossible to tell what went where. This puzzle, of course, was Mary's emotional life. The pieces were her thoughts, her actions, her associations, her dreams, etc."

What proof do we have that the solution for Mary Barnes lies within infantile regression? What proof do we have that the origin of her problems lies in the disturbances, the blocked intrafamilial communication system of her childhood? Why not consider instead what went on around the family? We note, in fact, that all the doors leading outside were forcefully closed upon her when she tried to open them; this is surely how she came upon an even more repressive familialism around the family than the one she knew in childhood. And what if the poor father and mother Barnes were only the pitiful and peripheral connections to the repressive tempest raging outside? Mary was not *fixated* in childhood: she just did not find the exit! Her desire to leave was too strong and too demanding to adapt itself to compromises of the outside world.

The first crisis strikes in school. "School was dangerous." She sat in her chair, paralyzed, terrorized; she fought with the teacher. "Most things at school worried me." She pretended to read, sing, draw... What she always wanted, however, was to be a writer, a journalist, a painter, a doctor! All this, she will be told, meant that she wanted to become a man. "I was ashamed of wanting to be a doctor. I know that this shame was bound up... [and here goes the interpretation] with the enormous guilt I had in connection with my desire to be a boy. Anything masculine in myself must be hidden, buried in secret, hardly admitted."

THE FAVORITE GAME

Priests and cops of all types tried to make her feel guilty, about anything and mainly about masturbation. When she resigns herself to being a nurse and enlists into the army, she finds herself in another dead-end. Once, she wanted to go to Russia because she heard that over there "women with babies and no husbands were quite acceptable." When she decides to enter a convent, her religious faith is questioned: "What brought you into the Church?"

Priests are probably right; her wish for saintliness smells fishy! It finally all leads to the asylum. Even there, she is ready to do something, give herself to others. She once brings flowers to a nurse to be told: "Get out! You should not be here!" It is impossible to recount all the social traumas and tortures she has gone through. As a nurse, her right to go into higher education is challenged. At the beginning, Mary Barnes was not interested in the family, but in society! But everything brought her back to the family. And (this is hard to say), this holds true even for her stay at Kingsley Hall! Since familialist interpretation was the favorite game of the place, and since she adored everyone there, she also got into it. And with what gusto!

She is, at bottom, the real analyst of Kingsley Hall. She played to the full all the neurotic mainsprings of the enterprise, the underlying paranoia of the fathers and mothers of Kingsley Hall. Has Mary-the-missionary at least helped the antipsychiatrists clarify the reactionary implications of their psychoanalytical assumptions?

Translated by Ruth Ohayon

NOTES

1. David Cooper, *Psychiatry and Anti-psychiatry*, Travistock Pub. Ltd., 1967.
2. Not to be compared, however, with the Italian repression, which destroyed less "provoking" attempts, and above all the German repression, truly barbaric, presently inflicted against members of the SPK in Heidelberg.
3. 'Behaviorism': turn of the century theory which reduces psychology to the study of behavior, defined as the interaction between outside *stimuli* and the subject responses. Present neo-behaviorism tends to reduce all human problems to those of communication, putting aside socio-political problems of power at all levels.
4. Contradictory double constraint established on the level of the communications between a subject and his family, which perturbs him completely.
5. Her exhibitions in Great Britain and abroad guaranteed her a certain reputation. A lot could be said about this kind of recuperation, in the style of "art brut," which amounts to promoting a mad artist... like a music hall star, for the good of the producers [of this kind of show]. The essence of mad art is to be above and beyond the notions of *oeuvre* or the authorial function.