

Andouillette AAA!!!⁴⁶

A digest of the doctrine of the anal –

And an account of the relationship between art and shit

Georg Gröller

A tramp knocks at a monastery door to beg for something to eat. In the time he waits – the nuns must finish their prayer, before they turn to worldly things – the poor man is overcome by an inner need and he relieves himself beside the convent door. At this very moment a nun opens the door and sees the man crouching his offering and shouts angrily “That is a bit thick!” To which the tramp replies “and what about the length?”

Whenever psychoanalysis deals with a subject, it directs a gaze inevitably and with all the faithfulness of the metier to the ‘pre-Olympian world of the gods’ in which giants and titans, born as monsters, unmanned their father and ate their own children; in which a goddess grew from a penis adrift on the sea and where goddesses could still be changed into trees by a curse - in other words it turns to the fantastic imaginary world of the child at that time when it begins to constitute itself as a subject amid the heftiest psychic thrusts and agitation, until it finally submits to the symbolic order in the Oedipus complex adopting the laws of mathematics as the matrix of its being in this world.⁴⁷

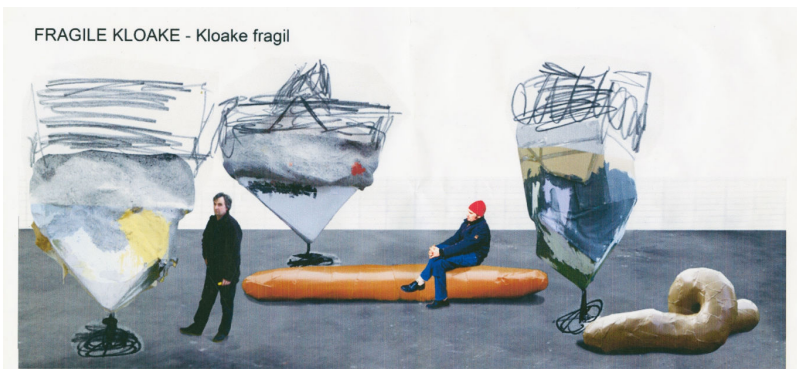
So even by broaching the subject of the relationship between art and shit the psychoanalyst under these premises does so, automatically and as a kind of preliminary spadework task, by examining the question of the position the sphere of the anal takes in the universe of the child. When we consider the disgust and contempt society has poured out on excrement and all those processes that have to do with it, (the simple appearance, but still more the smell and touch - with the exception albeit of a fascinated preoccupation with one’s own excrement, but this in closeted secret of course), we gain a first hint of those forces that are at work here – since none of this aversion is yet to be found in the small child. Quite the contrary: proceeding from the initial pleasurable or

⁴⁶ Andouillette, from Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia. Andouillette is a [French sausage](#), a specialty of [Lyon](#), [Troyes](#) and [Cambrai](#). Traditional andouillette is made from the [colon](#) and the [stomach](#) of pig. ...It ... is an [acquired taste](#) and can be an interesting challenge even for adventurous eaters. Many French eateries serve andouillette as a hot dish, and foreigners have been disgusted by the aroma, to the point where they find it inedible. While some find that hot andouillette smells of [faeces](#), food safety requires that all such matter is removed from the meat before cooking. Faeces-like aroma can be attributed to the common use of the pig’s colon in this sausage, and stems from the same compounds that give faeces some of its odours.

⁴⁷ This glimpse back to the “age before Oedipus” never reveals the true relationships as they are at this time, of course, since we perceive childhood only from the perspective of now, subsequently and as a portion of our present that we have created and lost through the ruling order. To this extent it regularly appears to us as either a lost paradise or as chaotic horror and death in the most vivid and lively terms.



painful devotion of the baby to his digestive processes to a general emergence of the capability to control the sphincter musculature, excrement advances the very first object that the child itself produces. The two to three year old invests it as both a part and a product of its own body with the greatest curiosity, with all its pride and tenderness, with feelings representing the notion it has of its own brilliance at this age – a warm and smelling pile with its deliciously pasty, mouldable consistency makes the act of shitting a first triumph of human creativity.



Copyright: Franz West's *Fragile Cloaca*, Venice 2007

Play with the excitation of the mucous membranes, which the child itself can either delay or accelerate and intensify, gives the process of defecation an additional erotic dimension that is not only in morphological terms a neighbour of the genital allure: In their first concepts of the sexual act children often imagine this as anal penetration (see Freud's 'wolf man'), and in this process the excrement becomes both penis and also the child that is pressed out of the mother's belly – comparable to the primitive cloaca, where the anus and the reproductive organs have not yet been separated. In the mind of a child the lust zones have not yet been clearly differentiated one from the other, nor can they in any way be placed in categories of their own yet, whether morally or aesthetically. Hand in hand with the still marginal inducement to differentiate more clearly between the sexes or indeed to establish a primacy of heterosexual relationships, the entire ensemble of the polymorphic perversity results from this, a situation characterising the sexuality of the child in its totality. The almost exclusive and seemingly self-evident representation of genital lust by the anal is shown later not only in the anal pleasures of the compulsive neurotic, but also makes a return appearance in the regressive processes of old age, when with the laming of the power of the loins lust often rather turns again ever more to eating, drinking – and by inference, to shitting.

All of this would possibly not have such a great and sustained significance, when the gradual development of the child's ability to control the anal processes at will was not also predestined to be the first systematic point of approach to satisfying the demands of the Other. Auto-erotic lust is directed into the field of the inter-subjective by this means and it undergoes a conversion to a decisive medium of social regulation of the child.

The demands of adults – whether these begin to be made at an earlier or later stage, in a rigid or tolerant form –, their praise for the correct and rebuke for wrong giving and retaining in potty training, constantly turn the anal processes, as we all know from the nursery, into a battleground of power, subjugation and resistance, turn excrement into the first tender gift of love offered by the child, or equally into a weapon with which it literally seeks to throw shit at another person. It is through this process that the child first learns what it means to relinquish its own lust as a means of gaining the devotion of the Other. As a result of the regulation in this exchange procedure of *faeces for love*, excrement assumes a natural position as the first universal currency of mankind, the little pile becoming the first heap of gold, the first possession and it is no surprise at all when money and all the economic procedures that are linked with it can be understood with entire freedom in terms of the logic of anal processes. Producing to sell, earning to save, to buy, to possess and be powerful, all of these lusts and coercions of business show us that any talk of shit capitalism bears more than a quantum of truth albeit unintentionally and quite apart from any indignation the phrase may provoke.

That the field of the anal becomes a true precedence case for the effect of the forbidden explains the powerful barriers of disgust, which the child begins to erect against the anal starting from this early age – showing us what drastic measures the child must resort to, in order to enforce on its own this prohibition imposed from without in its own inner life and consciousness. And once again compulsive neurosis can show us impressively in this context to what point of life-stupor the ambivalences of love and of hate that derive from these conflicts can bring us.

Space is not available here to describe the extraordinary richness of significance contained in the anal and all its many variations. But the experience that the Oedipus complex retrospectively structures the field of the anal, and the way it does that, should not go unmentioned. The irrevocable fixation on the difference between the sexes in the Oedipus complex and the incisively radical experience of castration now permit excrement to appear as something that really separates itself from the body and thus becomes a true bodily model of a loss, stamping the soul with the seal of lack. In the dread of this existential experience we are unwilling to relinquish anything more – or put literally we shit ourselves, while triumphing over this experience it is exactly the thing that is lost that becomes the object of desire and the motor of that which we describe as “giving a form to existence”.

Confronted with this fantastic wealth, which, covered over as it may be by public contempt, links human experience with excrement, it will be no surprise that the anal is not only quite plainly a secret driving force behind all social life, but also that it is encountered in art in every possible form of disguise or undress.

Only a few of these should be considered here in order to provide ourselves with a notion of what varied mechanisms art employs in fulfilling its real task, that of bringing into articulation that portion of living reality that is socially frowned upon – in our case the anal.

What characterises the material aspect in the traditional work of the fine arts more than the kneading of clay, pasting and plastering, the pressing of pigment sausages out of the

tube and the pleasure of applying this to surfaces and bodies? These are no more than the classic sublimatory satisfactions that are already offered to the child as a comfort and a substitute for its relinquishment of the anal. And in times like ours, when the aesthetic is allowed to drift away under pressure of circumstance and the emphasis on an increasingly urgent and direct approach to the point at issue, the painting of a Jackson Pollock or a Jean Fautrier shows how this act of sublimation of the anal is transformed into an explicit joy to create – owing much of its effect on the observer also to this experience of joy.

At the opposite pole of the possibilities of human expression, beyond any sublimated translation, we find exemplarily in Artaud's *Abject* a delirious state of collapse by means of which the organs of the body and their functions emerge in a state beyond any *representation* in the real, bringing about a catastrophic transfiguration of the world, in which perhaps Artaud himself with Christ is finally transformed into that heap of shit that the Virgin Mary squeezes out, in Artaud's Anus sitting, as the childish imagination may have *conceived* the process of birth.

The assumption of this outrageous radicalisation of expression in public discourse is also quite possibly to be thanked that a very direct and unveiled preoccupation with excrement, partially under the collective term *abject art*, assumed an important position in the art of the second half of the last century. This appears as a revolt against the demand of society for cleanliness and order, under the cloak of disguise, or indeed as its essential *despised supplement* (Žižek) as we can understand the wars, such as the battlefields of the Second World War or the practices of the industrial revolution from the mid 19th century up to this day: one gigantic anal scenario. Public outcry and the demand for order are also to be understood in terms of this kind when artists such as the Viennese actionists reveal the aggressiveness of these processes that derives from the fixation of its anal origins in the subconscious – whereas precisely by giving a *gestalt* to these processes, they alloy them once again with its original libidinous portions.

But the scene has changed. Not that preoccupation with the sphere of the anal has disappeared from art today. But it would appear to have changed in character. This is shown generally neither as a delirious scream nor as revolt, and even the process of sublimation frequently loses at least one of its most significant characteristics: the adaptation by means of which the desired object is hidden as though by a veil. When we observe an installation such as Franz West's *Fragile Cloaca* we find ourselves almost in a garden in which two out-sized lengths of excrement (in metal) invite us to linger in an almost friendly and inviting manner. It is a fact that scarcely any city would wish to display these sculptures in public, but in the context of cultural activities it no longer appears to have the effect of a provocation – and even more important, it does not appear to be aiming at this objective. Far more it conveys us to a fairy tale or dream world in which like Gulliver in the country of the giants, and thus very like a child, we pause in astonishment before these enormous lumps of excrement and try to imagine how huge and how powerful the beings must be who have produced them. It would be entirely senseless, of course, to make use of real excrement in this concept with all its odorous and tactile qualities as a means of artistic expression, although seen from the

perspective of *imagination* it now seems that we can dare to do anything, in a world without prohibitions. Better perhaps in a world either before or after the prohibitions.

Since art is always a messenger of our hidden present, one in which we do indeed live, but which we still perceive and comprehend in terms of the past, art clearly shows us all that we owe to an ideology of globalised liberalism: - a world in which once again everything is possible as it was before the oedipal disillusionment with our omnipotence: one in which we joyfully shit enormous heaps of excrement, available to us simultaneously in the form of penises and children, love tokens and weapons, and of the currency of our wealth and by means of which the world lies at our feet once more. And moreover in which we forget how we ourselves, like King Ubu in this gigantic manner, can also abruptly become powerless weaklings._

How fortunate that in art this is all only a matter of the imagination. Its function in this respect is like that of an andouillette sausage - the delight of the taste of this speciality deriving exactly from the taste being so strikingly *like* that of faeces, although we know well enough that these are not among the real ingredients. The hope here is that the delight we obtain from the playful in this process will save us from ending in the maelstrom of a much less sublime libidinous scenario – and thus truly landing in the shit.

English translation by Joseph Lancaster / Y plus

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Dr Georg Gröller is a psychoanalyst based in Vienna. Member of the Wiener Arbeitskreis für Psychoanalyse (WAP/IPA), of the Neuer Wiener Gruppe/Lacan Schule and of the research group stuzzicadenti. www.lacan.at