

A DIFFERENT STATE OF MIND: SUICIDE AND PARANOIA

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Summary: This article provides a theoretical discussion of a possible link between suicide and paranoia. Even though suicide is associated with different types of psychopathologies in the literature – specifically with narcissism in psychoanalytic works – the possibility of a link between paranoia and suicide is hardly mentioned. Nevertheless, a closer investigation of the Lacanian theory together with different case examples may provide an alternative perspective about this connection. Congruently, my aim is to describe how the *narcissistic suicidal aggression* may shelter a *paranoid overtone* which *blossoms* into suicide notes and into the functions of this act itself, by providing a closer look at the dynamics of the mirror stage and the connection between foreclosure and literary productions. Moreover, I shared some of the findings from my PhD thesis on suicide notes to highlight the link between paranoia and suicide.

Keywords: Suicide, paranoia, mirror stage, foreclosure, literary production

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The first attempts to understand suicide from a psychoanalytic perspective took place in the beginning of the 20th century. At the meeting organized by the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, theoreticians such as Freud, Adler, Sadger and Stekel came together and exchanged ideas about the phenomenon of suicide. However, this meeting organized in 1910 remained inconclusive (Canbolat & Gençöz, 2019). Consequently, at the end of the meeting, Freud claimed that more clinical observations were needed to develop a comprehensive suicide theory within the psychoanalytical perspective (Friedman, 1967). On the other hand, even though a distinctive and comprehensive suicide theory was not developed, the themes such as ‘guilt’ and ‘self-directed aggression’, which will underpin the perspective on suicide in the advancing stages of psychoanalysis, are said to be the results of this meeting (King, 2003). I believe that what

makes this meeting unique is Stekel's ideas, who claimed that "[n]o one kills himself who has never wanted to kill, or at least wished the death of another" (Friedman, 1967, p. 87). Stekel killed himself by taking an excessive dose of medication years after this meeting (Lester, 2005). I think that Stekel's sentences in this meeting may have shaped Freud's ideas associated with suicide; indeed, Freud defined suicide as a way to destroy an introjected object. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913 [2004]), he mentioned his ideas about the link between excessive love and excessive hate towards the lost object; in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1915 [1917]), he mentioned the ambivalence towards and identification with the lost object and he added that the aggression is displaced from the lost object towards the inner part object. By stating that "the shadow of the object falls on the ego", Freud (1915 [1917]) emphasized the importance of identification in terms of experiencing external objects as if they are the parts of self, which explains his idea about object loss may result in self-destruction in the case of narcissism. In other words, according to Freud, identification is the precursor of suicide. The aggression towards the idealized and identified person or institution is projected towards the part of self which is an introjected form of this particular person or institution. At the end, the subject kills himself/herself along with this inner part object.

If we make a metaphorical reading of Stekel's statements together with Freud's ideas on suicide, it is possible to mention a fusion between self and others, which might be a precursor of psychosis, in the case of suicide. Indeed, who is killing whom in which way is not clear in such an interpretation of the act. In other words, the main target of the aggression is someone else (as a lost object), but the subject kills himself along with the identified part of the object, which might be indicating some problems about the dynamics of identification (or rather, introjection) as well as the subject's sense of reality. Parallely, at the end of the act the subject makes the object suffer (or leads his/her psychological death) by putting himself into the position of the lost object at an imaginary level. According to Melman (1994), in the case of paranoia, the subject occupies the position of the Other by being excluded from the symbolic system and being the one who is spoken about. Congruently, suicide provides the subject with the position of the Other (as in the form of the lost object in the previous interpretation); additionally, by the act of suicide the subject is excluded from the symbolic even though other people may still talk about the subject. Furthermore, in the case of paranoia, the

subject is in an excluded position. This provides him/her with the chance of not being castrated, and it leads to the feelings of grandiosity due to this exceptional position compared to the other group members (Melman, 1994). In fact, paranoia is a defense against castration (Melman, 1994). Castration, in Lacanian terms, is defined as a loss, constraint, or an understanding of being finitude (Boothby, 1991). In this sense, death may be the most noteworthy shape of castration. Suicide, on the other hand, is an act in which the subject takes the position of the castrating Other towards himself/herself. Moreover, death by suicide is forbidden symbolically; therefore, suicide might be evaluated as way to escape from the strains of the symbolic or from the Law. Parallely, in case of paranoia, the subject forecloses the Name-of-the-Father for the sake of becoming the mOther's desired object (Evans, 2006). I think that Lacan's resemblance of the burial processes after death to "a return to the mother's womb" (Lacan, 1938, p. 22) might be more meaningful when this idea is evaluated with possibility of a link between suicide and paranoia.

Suicide and different psychopathologies have been linked with each other in literature. Even though suicide is frequently associated with narcissism in the psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1917; Kernberg, 2014; Klein, 1957; Kohut, 1971; Lacan, 1966 [2006]; Rosenfeld, 1971) and in the literature in general (Canbolat & Gençöz, 2023; Gabbard, 2022; Harrop et al., 2017; Henseler, 2012; Ronningstam, & Weinberg, 2013), the link between paranoia and suicide is hardly mentioned in some of the case studies (Freud, 1914; Gunn & Lester, 2022). Besides, there are a limited number of studies underlining this association (Albornoz et al. 2022; Canbolat & Gençöz, 2023). On the other hand, schizophrenia is listed as one of the leading risk factors for suicide (Carlborg et al., 2014; Hawton et al., 2018; Siris, 2001). Besides, the literature indicates that there is a high risk of suicide after a first episode of psychosis (Dutta et al., 2010; Tarrier et al., 2007; Pompili et al., 2011). In this article, my main aim is to highlight the possibility of a link between paranoia and suicide from a Lacanian point of view; therefore, a closer look to Lacan's mirror stage may be helpful in the beginning, as the marker of this link at the imaginary level. Afterwards, I will provide information about the mechanism of foreclosure in the dynamics of psychosis and exemplify the outputs of foreclosure through the literary productions in case of paranoia as a transition to the discussion of the findings of my PhD thesis on suicide notes. I believe that this part will enhance the connection between suicide and paranoia by situating this link within the symbolic order.

Lastly, I will share the findings of my PhD thesis which gave basis to the idea of such a link. In this part, I will also integrate some examples associated with the body as an indicator from the realm of the real.

A closer look to Lacan's mirror stage and paranoia

Decades after the aforementioned psychoanalytic meeting, Lacan placed suicide into the mirror stage by making an analogy with the myth of Narcissus with his statement 'narcissistic suicidal aggression (*agression suicidaire narcissique*)' (Lacan, 1966 [2006]). In this sense, suicide is associated with aggression towards the other (the Specular *I*). By highlighting the importance of identification like Freud, Lacan claimed that identification with the mirror image encompasses both eroticism and aggression due to the previous gap and rivalry between the fragmented body and the coherent specular image; and he added that this identification with the specular image becomes the fundamental aspect in all subsequent forms of identification (Evans, 2006). Moreover, the shift from a fragmented body image to a unified or orthopedic body image during the mirror stage results in alienation (Lacan, 1966 [2006]). That is the reason Lacan states that ego (or self) is formed through a misrecognition; indeed, "subject becomes alienated from himself" (Evans, 2006, p. 118). I think that what Freud (1919) mentioned about abruptly and surprisingly encountering one's own reflection, in his article named *The Uncanny*, might help to understand this kind of alienation. Freud (1919) stated that:

"I was sitting alone in my wagon-lit compartment when a more than usually violent jerk of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown and a traveling cap came in. I assumed that he had been about to leave the washing-cabinet which divides the two compartments, and had taken the wrong direction and come into my compartment by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass of the open door. I can still recollect that I thoroughly disliked his appearance. [...] Is it not possible, though, that our dislike of them was a vestigial trace of that older reaction which feels the double to be something uncanny?" (p. 17).

Even though the mirror stage and the dynamics of identification are directly linked with narcissism, an investigation of the underlying elements of this mechanism, such as aggressivity, jealousy, love and hate, may bring us to a more concrete discussion about the roots of the act of suicide. In Freud's example above, it is possible to observe that the reflection of himself is perceived as a stranger in the form of an 'elderly' 'intruder' who is obviously 'disliked'. Besides, this reflection makes Freud feel 'uncanny'. This incident may be interpreted as a paranoid projection of the unliked parts of self to the image on the glass-reflection, in a Freudian sense.

According to Lacan, as an outcome of the mirror stage, narcissism contains a "self-referential aspect", that harbors "paranoid overtones" (Filou, 2009, p. 67). In the same vein, the formation of the ego shelters narcissism as well as a paranoiac structure from the Lacanian point of view. In *Écrits*, Lacan (1966 [2006]) establishes this connection through the case of Alceste by mentioning his "delusion of passion"; indeed, Lacan (1966 [2006]) states that Alceste's love for a woman shelters an expectation of being loved back by her. However, Lacan (1966 [2006]) remarks that it is not just an ordinary expectation of being loved because it takes the shape of a delusion when Alceste says "Heavens, Yes! I wouldn't love her did I not think so." as an answer to the question "You think then that she loves you?" (p. 142). Lacan (1966 [2006]) evaluates this delusional style of love as the paranoid overtones of narcissism as the products of the mirror stage. Interestingly, as one of the addressees of her husband Kurt Cobain's suicide note, Courtney Love (2006) resembles the language of love letters to the language of suicide notes. It is impossible to know whether she considered the delusional link in the background while making this connection; nevertheless, Kurt Cobain's suicide note starts with a correspondence to his childhood imaginary friend *Boddah* and continues as: "Speaking from the tongue of an experienced simpleton who obviously would rather be an emasculated, infantile complain-ee." (Cobain, 1994). I think that this sentence can also be read as '[s]peaking from the tongue of [somebody else in the form of a mirror I]', who has some negative characteristics – just as in Freud's case in his encounter with his own reflection- such as being 'an experienced simpleton', 'emasculated', 'infantile complain-ee'. Since the ego emerges due to a misunderstanding as a product of the mirror stage, it leads to the development of both a narcissistic and paranoid structure (Evans, 2006). Therefore, those characteristics of the other (the mirror *I* or ego) bring about a certain type of alienation for the

subject. This type of an alienation may also be seen in the last statement of Budd Dwyer, who killed himself in front of the cameras during an alive press conference. While people around him were trying to convince Budd Dwyer not to kill himself, his last sentence with a gun in his hand was “Don’t, don’t, don’t, this will hurt someone” (Dwyer, 1987 as cited in Bjelić, 1990). After that, he shot himself; therefore, the gun really hurt *someone* at the end. I think it is interesting that Dwyer picked the word *someone* instead of the word *you* or *someone among you*. Indeed, the ambiguity in this sentence due to this word preference may lead us back to the question of ‘who is killing whom’. Another case example might be Christine, written by Gunn and Lester (2022). In their article named as ‘Announcing Suicide on the Internet: A Case Report’, the authors state that the case named Christine left a video as well as written suicide notes. In the case description part, they wrote: “She described herself as suffering from paranoia, delusions and hallucinations (hearing voices that were trying to kill her).” (Gunn, & Lester, 2022, p. 1). Besides, the authors shared Christine’s posts in this article. As an example to the aforementioned alienation and the disruption associated with the sense of identity, this post belongs to Christine might be interesting: “I guess my name is Liv and I guess that I look like your normal happy teenager.” (Gunn, & Lester, 2022, p. 2). This sentence might be a good illustration for the destabilization of the experience of identity in the case of suicide.

According to Melman (1994), paranoia is characterized by the feeling of being encroached upon by an other. By linking this feature of the paranoia with the mirror stage, Melman (1994) states that each additional reflection in the mirror poses a potential threat to the infant; therefore, everything other than the *Gestalt* image as a reflection of the baby’s body is devalued in this process. By this way, the infant projects the bad qualities to the outside; however, those bad qualities create a threat for the baby. On the other hand, Melman (1994) adds that the identified specular image also becomes menacing due to the fact that this image is also an unfamiliar entity, a stranger, or an other. Hence, the inclination to destruct the other is, in a sense, the inclination to destruct the ego, in the case of suicide.

I think that it may be beneficiary to mention Lacan’s doctoral thesis, which was about a paranoid case, in order to see how aggression towards the ego might be projected outwards. Lacan (1932) wrote about Aimée with a diagnosis of self-punishing paranoia (*paranoïa d’autopunition*), as a new clinical category put forward by Lacan in

his dissertation. Aimée attacked an actress with a knife due to her delusion that the actress wanted to kill her child (Lacan, 1932). During this knife attack, Aimée was a 38-year-old woman who was separated from her husband. Her son was living with her husband in another city, and Aimée's sister, who was a young widow, was taking care of him (Vanheule, 2011). Even though Aimée was aware of her sister's help and contributions, she was still feeling humiliated because her place as a mother was occupied by her sister. Moreover, for Aimée, her sister was an ideal image who had the characteristics that Aimée lacked (Lacan, 1932). According to Lacan (1932), Aimée's delusion about her child to be taken away from her takes its roots in her confusion about her sister's position. As a result of her ambivalent feelings about her sister, Aimée believed that she was being targeted by the women with whom she was identified as her maleficent ideals characterized by "vanity, coldness, and abandonment of one's natural duties" (Lacan, 1966 [2006], p. 138). Even though Aimée was picturing herself as a woman with "ideal purity and devotion" she had those maleficent characteristics in her behavior without noticing them (Lacan, 1966 [2006], p. 138). Therefore, Aimée's knife attack to the actress is evaluated as a way for self-punishment (Lo, 2008); in other words, Aimée directs her aggression to a projected facet of her own self with this attack (Vanheule, 2011). Indeed, her imprisonment as a result of her act may be evaluated as the concrete form of her persecution (Lacan, 1966 [2006]). Even though Aimée's intention appears to be a murder plan, it is, in reality, a tendency towards suicide, as Aimée attacks her idealized self-image (Roudinesco, 1990).

Although there is a lack in the literature in terms of highlighting the possibility of a link between paranoia and suicide, an association between paranoia and narcissism has already been made both by Lacan (1966 [2006]) and Freud (1914). Lacan's contribution to this link has already been mentioned above. Besides, Freud (1914) made this association in his analysis of Schreber, a paranoid case with suicidal ideation. Indeed, Schreber attempted suicide by trying to suffocate himself in the bathroom more than once (Freud, 1914). Freud (1914) states that Schreber's hallucinations associated with transforming into a woman and being God's wife for saving the world might be evaluated as the signs of his autoerotism, narcissism, and homosexuality. With this evaluation, Freud (1914) emphasizes the importance of megalomania which is an important element in the case of paranoia. Congruently, he states that megalomania might be observed among most of the paranoid cases; indeed, it might be the

starting point for paranoia because the ego is the libidinal object of the paranoid, which signals a fixation in the narcissistic period of life (Freud, 1914).

According to Lacan, the Oedipal triangulation might not be provided in the Schreber's case due to the punitive, boundless and monstrous father figure who was in the position of a rival; indeed, the father figure in this case is the imaginary father who places his son into a feminine position (Fink, 1997). Parallely, Lacan's interpretation of Schreber's hallucination is about foreclosure which is the main mechanism in psychosis. He states that with his hallucination, Schreber creates a "pseudo-triangular scheme" by identifying with the primordial object who is the mOther as the wife of the father (as cited in De Waelhens, & Ver Eecke, 2001, p. 220). Interestingly, Schreber was a case who was active in terms of literary production just like Aimée. Parallel with Lacan's ideas associated with Schreber's identification with the mOther, Walker (1998) states that the writing of Schreber is similar to "the act of giving birth" (p. 64). Likewise, Abensour (2013) states that the literary production in the case of psychosis may be associated with the curiosity about the enigma of the creative process, and he adds:

"An astonishing questioning that lies at the very heart of that production – sometimes takes the form of a mirror image of the creator searching for his or her identity, sometimes it is the reflection of the process of creation by representing the artist and his or her avatars, or again it may be, in contemporary literature, like a work of art that mirrors itself and ends up by losing its own image through the interplay of construction/deconstruction." (p. 126)

At this point, focusing on the mechanism of foreclosure in paranoia and its association with the literary productions might be beneficial. Besides, I think it may provide a basis for sharing some of the main elements in my PhD thesis associated with the possible links between paranoia and suicide.

Foreclosure and literary production in paranoia

According to Lacan, paranoia is the most prominent manifestation of the foreclosure in terms of the paternal function (as cited in Lepoutre et al. 2017). Foreclosure is the fundamental rejection of the

Name-of-the-Father, and it is the main mechanism for the psychotic structure (Evans, 2006). The foreclosure of the paternal metaphor gives rise to a destabilization in terms of the subject's experience of identity because the question 'Who am I?' lacks a response (Vanheule, 2011). In a broader sense, psychosis originates from foreclosure, leading to a fixation within the realm of the imaginary. This can lead to hallucinations, an overwhelming surge of *jouissance*, impaired control over instincts, feminization, an absence of inquiry, and language disruptions such as the inability to form or understand new metaphors (due to the absence of paternal metaphor) as well as a disruption in terms of speech and neologisms (Fink, 1997).

As an outcome of foreclosure, individuals with psychotic structure may experience a sensation as if they are overtaken by language (Fink, 1997). In other words, in the case of psychosis the subject is dispossessed of the speech; indeed, it is to be spoken by language rather than speaking it (Lacan, 1966 [2006], p. 231). Lacan (1985) states that "Productions that discuss and characterize paranoia develop very forcefully, in most cases, in literary productions, in the sense that literary signifies simply sheets of paper covered with writing" (p. 93). Fink (1997) exemplifies this condition by stating that a psychotic patient "reiterates again and again the same phrases; repetition replaces explanation" (p. 101). Concordantly, Lacan (1933) states that "an original syntax" is used in the case of paranoia, which is characterized with repetition, division and multiplication. On the other hand, paranoia may also lead to an incredibly clear usage of language because a paranoid patient seeks to "deal with language" (Melman, 1994, p. 140). As an example, Lacan (1966 [2006]) states that Aimée's written productions impressed multiple writers with their literary significance; in fact, her writing was skillfully composed with a clear narrative structure which conveyed essential delusional themes (Vanheule, 2011). Either with or without the distortions in the written language, Lacan (1975) states that "the discursive products characteristic of the register of paranoia usually blossom into literary productions" (as cited in Whitworth, 2015, p. 234).

According to Withworth (2015), the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father gives rise to a cruel, envious, malicious and castrating imaginary father, and this imaginary father figure can be seen in the creative, artistic and literary productions of the patients with psychosis, through images or delusional metaphors. Those images and delusional metaphors compel them to repetitively write about themselves (Withworth, 2015). By utilizing the letters, they try to

surpass fragmentation and stay functional (Withworth, 2015). Similarly, Fink (1997) mentions a psychotic patient who experiences a certain level of security when expressing himself by writing because, for him, writing appears to stabilize or partially freeze meaning. This patient, Roger, states that:

“Words frighten me. I have always wanted to write, but couldn’t manage to put a word on a thing... It was as though the words slipped off things... So I thought that by studying the dictionary from A to Z and writing down the words I didn’t know, I would possess them all and could say whatever I wanted” (Fink, 1997, p. 107).

As stated by Vanheule (2011), Lacanian psychoanalysis focuses on “words and language” (p. 50). In this context, Lacan’s structural model offers an innovative explanation for psychosis and paranoia by illuminating the language dynamics of the people with psychotic functioning. Congruently, in the case of psychosis both delusions and hallucinations might be investigated through the speech of the subject (Vanheule, 2011). In this sense, suicide notes might be evaluated as a gateway to understanding the dynamics of the speech of individuals who completed suicide. At this point, I will share the findings of my PhD thesis which brought me to consider such a link between suicide and paranoia.

About my PhD thesis on suicide notes

“A stranger is watching.”
(from L.’s notebook, Canbolat, 2018)

I finished my PhD thesis about suicide notes of men in 2018. While starting this study, my main curiosity was about the reasons for leaving a suicide note behind. In other words, my main aim was to understand why people use words while trying to run away from the ambiguity of the words. From a Lacanian sense, this question might be formulated basically as “What is the position of the note-leavers with the Other?” or “What are their experiences in terms of the symbolic?”. I thought that it was not even a way of basic communication because it was not a two-sided delivery of messages; indeed, in the case of an accomplished suicide, the sender of the message dies and cannot receive a message back from the recipients of the notes due to the

nature of death. At that point, I thought that the note-leavers may be filling this gap in their phantasies, somewhere associated with the imaginary. After thematically analyzing suicide notes as the data that I obtained from the prosecutor's office, I concluded that it is possible to mention a narcissistic and paranoid structure (Canbolat, 2018). Hereby, I will now present some of the key components from my doctoral thesis that are related to potential connections between paranoia and suicide.

(i) Suicide notes might be evaluated as literary productions which contain certain definitions about self and others. Therefore, aforementioned link between literary productions and paranoia should be evaluated carefully in order to understand whether the dynamics in this link (i.e. dealing with language or taking control of the letters) might explain a possible inclination to write a suicide note.

- a. An interesting example from one of the notes here might be: "I don't even know why I am writing this letter; I am just writing...". This sentence might be evaluated as the subject's urge to write or express himself. Similarly, in another suicide note, the note-leaver states: "Actually, I wouldn't write anything on this piece of paper and would leave this paper empty so that everyone would understand that a person doesn't come to life so easy but...". As indicated, the sentence ends with "but" and does not continue. This note continues with other sentences; nevertheless, I think that this sudden punctuation in the sentence might be a noteworthy characteristic of language dynamics in this note.
- b. In terms of language use, some of the suicide notes were featured with repetitive, fragmented, disjointed, ambiguous, and bizarre sentences (i.e. "The sins of my children and my wife are on your shoulders, and your sin is on Allah's shoulders. [...] Your sin is on everyone's shoulders, and everyone's is on Allah's shoulders"). In fact, there was a lack of essential structure in some of the suicide notes. As mentioned above, language disturbances are common among the cases with psychosis (Fink, 1997). On the other hand, there were also suicide notes which were well-written and did not have any language disturbances. However, in those cases the nature of the action was signaling something different; indeed, the method of suicidal act was drastically aggressive for those cases as if an indication of a psychotic attack.

(ii) Some of the findings of my doctoral thesis indicated that suicide notes contain themes associated with aggressivity, illusion of omnipotence, envy and the Other's omnipotence; indeed, those themes might be linked with the 'narcissistic suicidal aggression' in the mirror stage (Lacan, 1966 [2006]). However, the association between narcissism and paranoia should not be overlooked here, as mentioned above.

- a. Suicide is an act which requires bodily engagements (such as hanging, mutilating, shooting, intoxicating etc.), and it may bring us to the idea of the body-I which might also be linked with the mirror stage. Besides, those types of engagements with the body might be an outcome of excessive aggression which leads to "a deficiency in the control over the drives" (Fink, 1997), and the act of suicide can be interpreted as "a kind of actuated castration of excessive *jouissance*" (Recalcati, 1999). Likewise, within the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is asserted that, in case of psychosis, it is possible to mention an "invasion of *jouissance*" as a result of the absence of control over the drives (Fink, 1997).
- b. It is possible to claim that there is an imaginary nature in the descriptions of the relationships with other people in the suicide notes, since the themes such as illusion of omnipotence (i.e. "I know it is a legal procedure; however, I request not to have an autopsy."; "I told you I would always be with you, watching you, but you wouldn't be able to see me."; "If you ever miss me, call out J., I will hear you."; "When you all gather, put a glass for me too."), constant idealization and devaluation of self and others (i.e: "I know that me going away like this is not something you deserve."; "As you said, I am not worth to be cared about."; "You have been my prophet. My blood, my soul, my wife."; "I think you are not as innocent as you think you are."), and an excessive endeavor to control how they seemed in the eyes of the others (i.e: "A stranger is watching."; "Do not blame me."; "As my dad has always said either you want to do the best or you do nothing at all... He has a point.") gives the impression that the note-leavers might got stuck in an imaginary level in their relationships with the others. Besides, it may also signal a lack of ego-ideal which gives rise to deficiency in the sense of identity.

(iii) The persecution anxiety in the suicide notes may be directly linked with paranoia.

- a. Entrusting the loved ones to other trusted people was a common theme in the suicide notes (i.e. “I entrust him to you”; “My only wish is that you look after my kids very well and don’t let them be dependent on someone else.”), which might highlight the possibility of an imaginary danger perception and the presence of a persecution anxiety among the note-leavers.
- b. Blaming self or others was a common theme in the suicide notes. Careful examination of the function of blame in the suicide notes brought us to the wish for being purified when evaluated together with the apologies and the endeavors to escape from the responsibility, even from the responsibility of their death (i.e. “Nobody is responsible for my death”; “I am G., nobody is responsible for the death of myself, my wife and my daughter.”; “I don’t blame anyone.”). Even the punitive tone towards the self or others in the suicide notes might indeed signal a wish for being purified in the eyes of others as a way to escape from persecution (i.e. “I know that it is a very selfish act, [...] Please forgive me.”; “Yet, everyone should realize their own mistakes and regret them. I am paying my dues with my death”.) Besides, the note-leavers take a position similar to a judge in their notes, deciding who is guilty and who is not (i.e. “If you regret the things you did, give me your blessings. Pray to God because you won’t have a high position.”). In other words, they take a castrating position rather than being castrated. It is possible to claim that they are taking the position of the Other, which may also be directly associated with paranoia.

(iv) Melman’s formulation of paranoia emphasized the importance of elements such as grandiosity, jealousy, and protest (Melman, 1994). All those three elements were present in the findings of my PhD thesis (Canbolat, 2018).

(v) In case of psychosis the paternal function is accomplished by delusional metaphors (Fink, 1997). I think it is possible to consider the act of suicide as a delusional metaphor in which the subject takes the position of a cruel and punishing imaginary father. In this sense, writing a suicide note might signal another delusional metaphor as the

act of giving birth and taking the position of a female creator through literary production.

To sum up, the findings of my thesis brought me to the idea that it is possible to mention a different state of mind in the case of suicide which is reflected by the suicide notes and the impulsive nature of the act itself.

Conclusions

While psychoanalytic theory often links suicide with narcissism, the possibility of an association between paranoia and suicide has been hardly mentioned in the literature. In this article, my aim was to point this link through providing a careful investigation of the Lacanian theory and to exemplify and highlight this connection by utilizing different case examples and the findings of my PhD thesis which was conducted on suicide notes.

Even though a direct connection is not established between suicide and paranoia, it is possible to see various case examples in the literature describing paranoid cases with suicidal ideation. The most famous case example with these characteristics might be Schreber (Freud, 1914) as discussed in the previous sections of this article. In addition, although in the case of Aimée (Lacan, 1932), violence to another person is the visible part of the action, it is possible to interpret this event as a tendency towards suicide because Aimée attacks an other who is an idealized self-image of herself (Roudinesco, 1990). Congruently, Leenaars (2023) states that violence and suicide indicate a similar state of mind. In this regard, it might be beneficial to focus on murder-suicides in order to better understand the dynamics of the connection between paranoia and suicide in the future studies or theoretical discussions.

The discussion in this article proportionately gives more weight to the suicide notes as a way to understand the connection between suicide and paranoia. On the other hand, taking into consideration that not all the subjects who commit suicide leave a note behind, this possibility of this connection should also be questioned for the cases without a note. A sudden, unexpected and impulsive suicide attempt may be evaluated as passage to the act (*passage à l'acte*) in Lacanian sense, which may also “mark the onset of an acute psychotic episode” (Evans, 2006, p. 139). As an example, Freud’s case (1920) who was a young homosexual woman might be shortly mentioned at this point.

One day, while walking with her lover around Vienna, she encounters her father. Disapproving of the situation, her father directs an angry gaze towards her. Upon her partner's realization of the identity of the man they've encountered and his reason for the glance, she informs the homosexual woman that they should cease seeing each other. After this break up, the case throws herself from the railing of the bridge onto the railway. According to Lacan, this event is an example of passage to the act because it is a complete "exit from the scene"; in other words, it is "an exit from the symbolic network, a dissolution of the social bond". (Evans, 2006, p. 140). Besides, there is not any message in this action of the homosexual girl addressed to anyone.

I think that future clinical work and case examples might provide a stronger association between paranoia and suicide, considering Lacan's emphasis on the paranoid overtones in the mirror stage. In fact, the grandiosity observed in the suicide cases might be signaling paranoia alongside narcissism. Clarification of the diagnosis might help to facilitate for the clinicians to understand and gain a better grasp the dynamics of the suicidal patients during psychotherapies.

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