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## Psychiatry in Literature

### Georg Groddeck: the first psychoanalytical novel, *the Soul-Seeker*, and a musical mystery in Essex

Greg Wilkinson  and Andrew Plant

Physician, pioneer of psychosomatic medicine, inspiration for the *Id*, after many rejections Groddeck succeeded in publishing *Der Seelensucher. Ein psychoanalytischer Roman* in 1921 with Internationale Psychoanalytische Verlag (IPV), at that time the most important publisher of psychoanalytic journals and books. Freud and Rank were shareholders and supported publication, whether or not, then and now, deemed pornographic and/or one of the funniest books in modern German literature. Compared by Freud to Cervantes and Rabelais, and by others to Swift and Balzac, reviewed favourably by Ferenczi, Freud's library catalogues two copies.

*The Soul-seeker* re-imagines psychoanalysis as Faustian satire and conduit for cultural liberation. The protagonist, August Mueller, personifies the *Id*. When he takes his recently widowed sister, Agathe, and her teenage daughter, Alwine, into his home, ineradicable bedbugs emerge, and infection in its origins and functions becomes the central metaphor. Maddened, August 'dies' and revives, un-infested, as Thomas Weltlein – a wise fool who leaves home and becomes involved in picaresque adventures through the strata of society. Rich sexual symbolism underpins motivation, thought and action in themes of art, childhood, crime, feminism, literature, medicine, philosophy, politics, religion and truth. Ultimately, our de-railed anti-hero perishes in a railway disaster. Ironically, his head cannot be found, and he is identified by a scar, its intimate location volunteered by Alwine, whose liaison with August invites interpretation.

Wit may be lost, and found, in translation. French and Italian versions are in currency, but the only one known in English appears to be by Christian Darnton (Baron von Schunck, 1905–1981), the communist Anglo-German composer and author, and his typescript remains repressed at The University of Essex in The Georg Groddeck Archive of Oscar Kollerstrom. Darnton experienced enduring adverse psychological effects of his traumatic childhood, described in his revealing memoir *No Name*. He consulted Groddeck, became a disciple, and translated *Der Seelensucher* with a view to its appearance in England. In March 1933, he wrote to the editorial board of IPV, which agreed to waive rights of translation if all other expenses were met – but there the publication trail ends, for now [ETHOS ID: 490316].

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