

BACK TO THE  
FUTURE:  
TRACING THE STORY OF  
CAT  
A JOURNEY TO DISCOVER  
THE SELF

Frank Margison

ICATA International conference



# MENU

- CAT a 40 year journey
  - Interwoven with three “case histories”
- Damage to the self: alternate models
  - How does CAT contribute
- What does that tell us about the current health of CAT

# “THE CASE HISTORIES”

- The case of Jean Sibelius
- The case of Richard III
- The case of Marilyn Monroe

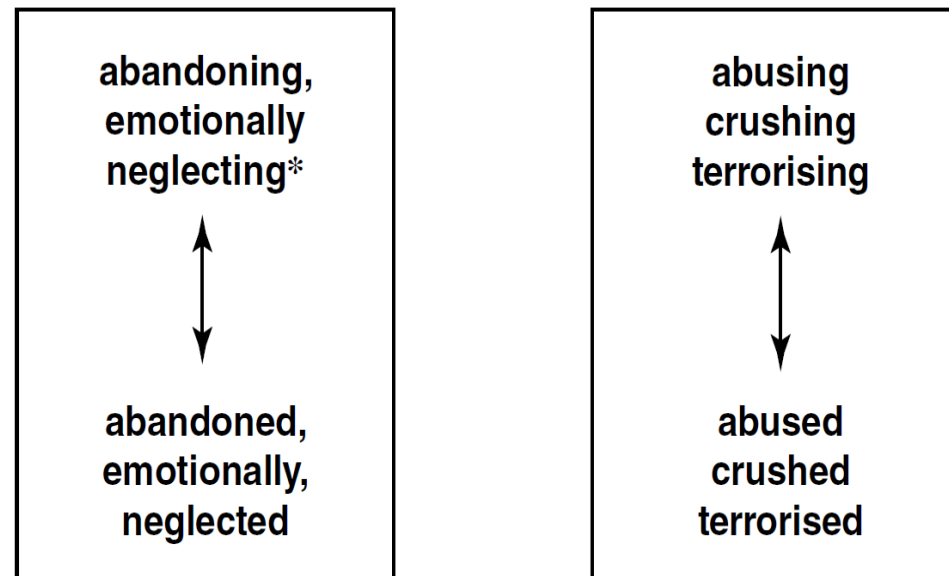
# DEFINING CAT

- “...a predominantly relational understanding of the origins of patient problems and symptoms and an explicitly empathic, pro-active, and compassionate therapeutic stance, with an active focus on issues arising within the therapeutic relationship.” (Ryle & Kerr, 2020 p1)

# IN THE BEGINNING WERE

- Snags, Traps and Dilemmas
- The (evolving) psychotherapy file
- Target problems and Target problem procedures
- Diaries of moods and behaviours- self observation
- Recognising patterns
- Procedural Sequence Model (initial cognitive model)
- Procedural Sequence Object Relations Model (PSORM) [The “eye” / unmanageable pain]
- Reformulation: Letter and SDR combination- jointly constructed

# EARLY VIEW OF SELF STATES IN THE FORM OF RECIPROCAL ROLES



# DEVELOPMENTS IN CAT: THE SELF 1.0

- Ryle 1990 view (see pp.99-100)
- The Self and RRP's
  - Integration of CAT and object relations
  - Infant's early post-natal experience with immature CNS "programmed" to organise attachment behaviours that elicit and mesh into the mother's care-taking behaviours
  - Increasingly complex self-other RRP's develop
  - Initially focused on bodily experiences (e.g. inside / outside)
  - The infant "plays" a series of roles within RRP's e.g. needy or satisfied child to providing mother; compliant or protesting child to controlling mother; excited child to stimulating mother; deprived child to abandoning mother
  - Internalisation of both roles and then infant plays out (practices both roles) e.g. parentally derived "I" in mother's voice, to child-derived "me"
  - Child then enacts either role eliciting the opposite role from the other

# THE SDR

## SEQUENTIAL DIAGRAMMATIC REFORMULATION

- The different states described in verbal reformulations
  - Represented schematically
  - Self equated roughly to the sum of RRs and related procedures-
  - an emergent property of the system
- “In their simplest form they are flow charts,
  - ... [which] arise from an initial, joint sketch of a patient’s core ‘subjective self’,
  - linking aims to outcomes and indicating how problem procedures fail to achieve the intended aim.
  - With the development of the PSORM they came to be drawn in a way which demonstrated the generation of problem procedures from the patient’s reciprocal role repertoire, in a box at the core of the diagram”.
  - Ryle & Kerr, 2002, p 10



## UNDERLYING THEORY? THE SELF V 2.0

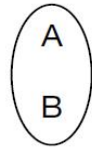
- “Everybody has a range of ways of being; in that sense the self is a confederacy of states rather than a single nation.
- The *pragmatic issue* is to decide how best to describe the level of their integration”.
  - (Ryle & Kerr, 2002, p94)
  - [Similar to Miller Mair, “Community of Selves”]



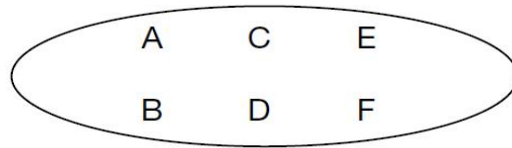
# DIFFERENT MODELS OF SELF

FROM RYLE & KERR (2002, P 95)

BASIC: single RRP

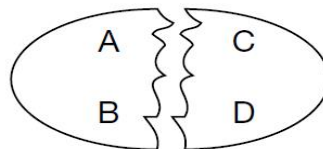


'FRENCH LOAF': RRP co-exist, mobilised appropriately, smooth transitions

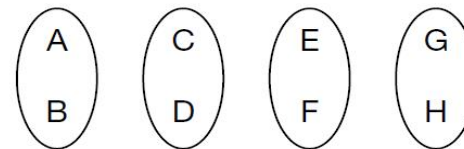


'SPLIT EGG' AND SSSD: abrupt transitions, often inappropriate, some roles extreme

'Split egg'



'Self state sequential diagram'



# “THE CASE HISTORIES”

- The case of Jean Sibelius
  - (the fragile self)
- The case of Richard III
  - (malignant narcissism)
- The case of Marilyn Monroe
  - (contextual reformulation)

# CASE EXAMPLE 1: SIBELIUS: THE FRAGILE SELF: SHIFTING SELF-STATES

- [Sibelius: A life in 10 masterpieces | Classical Music \(classical-music.com\)](#)
- 03/10/1923 “Life for me is over...that dreadful depression...which Aino [his wife] cannot understand but which I inherited. It’s this timidity, or the fact that I lack self-confidence, that means Aino and the children never get enough support in life.”
- 23/10/1923 “What unbearably difficult times I have gone through these days! Perhaps the darkest of my life.”
- 31/10/1923 “Working on a new piece. Am in wonderful spirits. Life is rich and profound”
- The following year he wrote the great 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony and commented
- “A great success. There is no denying it: my new work is one of the best. Tone and colour both powerful...” Shortly after he burned his 8<sup>th</sup> Symphony which has never been seen and went into
- the "silence of Järvenpää"



# HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND THESE SHIFTING SELF-STATES?

- As a boy he was known as Janne, a colloquial form of Johan. However, during his student years, he adopted the French form Jean, inspired by the business card of his deceased seafaring uncle.
- His father died, a doctor, died when he was 2
- Brought up in relative poverty therefore adopted Finnish language and culture
- He was a man of contradictions – “he was a depressive hard-drinker and chain smoker who enjoyed champagne and lobsters and drove his wife to exhaustion”.
- He survived throat cancer and “reformed”
- He oscillated between exuberant alive states and melancholic states



# THE “FRAGILE SELF”

MOLLON & PARRY, 1984 BRITISH JOURNAL OF MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGY  
57, 137-145

- The Fragile self refers to a structural vulnerability in the self
- “...it is hypothesized that a ‘fragile self’ exists at the core of the predicament of the depression-prone personality.. a central characteristic of depression is what might be described as a collapse in the experience of the self and an uncertainty concerning its place in the world... relating to the *sense of self*...
- the experienced self is inherently and constantly at risk of collapse. The precarious quality of this sense of self is referred to in the phrase the ‘fragile self’. The depressive personality is thus shown to be *narcissistically vulnerable*. The state of depression itself can then be seen as reflecting both an injury to the sense of self and at the same time a protection against further injury”
- Kohut has argued that the child’s positive and cohesive sense of self is for some years absolutely dependent upon the presence of admiring, empathically responsive others or upon idealized others”.

# WHICH CAME FIRST - THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG (DIAGRAM)?

- Ryle began with looking at internalised relationships through using repertory grids based on the work of Kelly
- He adopted the idea that these mathematical relationships represent something internalised and persistent-though they could change after therapy
- The idea of self states has similarities with several other approaches but
- ... in CAT each holds an internalised set of beliefs and behaviour *maintained by dialogue* (dialogical sequences)

# EMPTINESS & ALIENATION

MEARES(2000) INTIMACY AND ALIENATION P.56-57

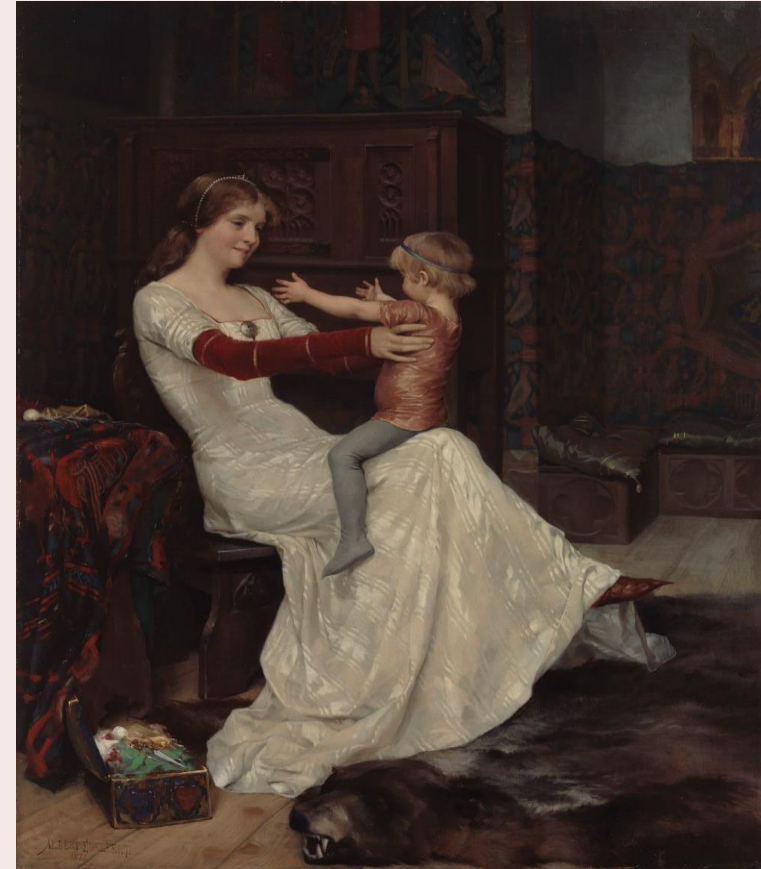
- The individual often makes desperate attempts to fill the emptiness by means of stimulus-seeking behaviours
- It is as if there is “nothing inside”, no inner life
- Trauma leads to dissociation and derealisation-depersonalisation
- With increasing intensity of trauma, and a contraction of consciousness, there is a diminution in the sense of “me-ness” and of “warmth and intimacy” of the self
- Usually accompanied by a sense of strangeness and unreality- the “myself feels altered and different”- does not match the experience of “myself” ... “one inhabits a landscape which is unfamiliar and alien”



# DISSOCIATION AND DISRUPTION OF THE SELF

Lack of secure sense of self and agency-  
chameleon-like and the False Self develops

- (See Meares, R, 1992, Metaphor of Play pp. 143-148)
- Description by Winnicott (1948) of the delightful child:
  - “The point about her is a vivacity which immediately contributes to one’s mood, so that one feels lighter. One is not surprised to learn that she is a dancer or to find that she draws and paints and writes poetry”
  - What is important about her demeanour is that it is designed to enliven. It has the function of helping the mother through lifting her mood”
    - Bowlby (1948)Through paediatrics to psychoanalysis, p9



Queen Bianca  
Albert Edelfelt 1877

# FALSE SELF

- Winnicott first described – he discussed disruption of what Winnicott called “simply being” -the sensation of being real in an ordinary sense- the physical feeling of the body [akin to a “flow state”]
- If “good enough” parenting is not present, spontaneity in the infant is replaced by needing to meet others’ expectations
- A “false self”, overlays or contradicts the original sense of self, the one connected to the very roots of one's being”
- -merely concealing a barren emptiness behind an independent-seeming façade



# DISSOCIATION AS PROTECTION OF SELF

[SEE RYLE & KERR, 2022 P.238 AND RYLE, 2007]

*“Much of the time ... the experience or threat of abuse or abandonment, the sense of powerlessness or the fear of primitive, uncontrolled rage lead to dissociation.*

*These states may involve denial of the sense of weakness, as in the High state, or fantasised emotional safety, as in the Cloud Cuckoo Land state, or the suppression of emotion, as in the Zombie state, or a combination of resentful submission and emotional flattening, as in the Soldiering on state.*

*In the absence of threat some patients can experience the OK state or may guard against abandonment or abuse by caring for weak others in the Powerful Caretaker state.”*

# STIMULUS ENTRAPMENT

## Primary damage to the self

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- Extreme maternal failure to adapt to the baby's experience impinges on the baby like repeated loud noise. The embryonic self is, for these moments, obliterated. The infant can do nothing but react to stimuli that are alien" (Meares op cit, p 146)
- "The child senses that existence depends upon a continuing bond with the parents. This child will do anything to maintain the bond, even to the point of sacrificing his or her reality"

## Infant observation

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Trevarthen and Murray research on early conversation and disruption by mother's depression



# FALSE SELF AND WINNICOTT

[SEE MEARES, METAPHOR OF PLAY CH 17(1992)]

- The repetitive use of a strategy of accommodation leads to a false self personality structure
- People around may see a lively and engaging person who is in no way fake, but the person *feels* fake
- Internal experience is of being fundamentally bad as well as fake



# MEETING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

- Alice Miller states:
- “This does not rule out strong affection. On the contrary the mother often loves her child as her self-object passionately, but not in the way she needs to be loved. Among other things, therefore, the continuity and constancy that would be *so* important, are missing from this love, but above all, also the framework within which the child could experience her feelings and her emotions.
- Instead she develops something which the *mother* needs. . . at the time, but nonetheless may prevent her throughout her life from being herself”.
  - Miller, A. (1979). Depression and grandiosity as related forms of narcissistic disturbance. *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 6,61-74. (gender changed to she /her)

# ATTUNEMENT(BY CLIENT)

- “Chronically traumatised patients have an exquisite attunement to unconscious and nonverbal communication. Accustomed over a long time to reading their [abuser’s] emotional and cognitive states, survivors bring the ability into the therapy relationship.
- [Judith Herman Trauma and Recovery, 1992, p138-9]
- She cites: “Kernberg notes the borderline patient’s “uncanny” ability to read the therapist and respond to the therapist’s vulnerability”
- [In Kernberg et al, Psychodynamic Psychotherapy of the Borderline Patient (1989: p75)]
- “The patient scrutinises the therapist’s every word and gesture, in an effort to protect herself from the hostile reactions she expects
- ... She persistently misinterprets the therapist’s motives and reactions
- Drawn into the dynamics of dominance and submission, the therapist may inadvertently re-enact aspects of the abusive relationship
- Patients may be quite direct about their desire for a sexual or otherwise intimate relationship

# NARCISSISTIC FRAGILITY

(CF. THICK AND THIN-SKINNED NARCISSISM

FROM ROSENFELD, 1987 AND RYLE & KERR 2020, P246)

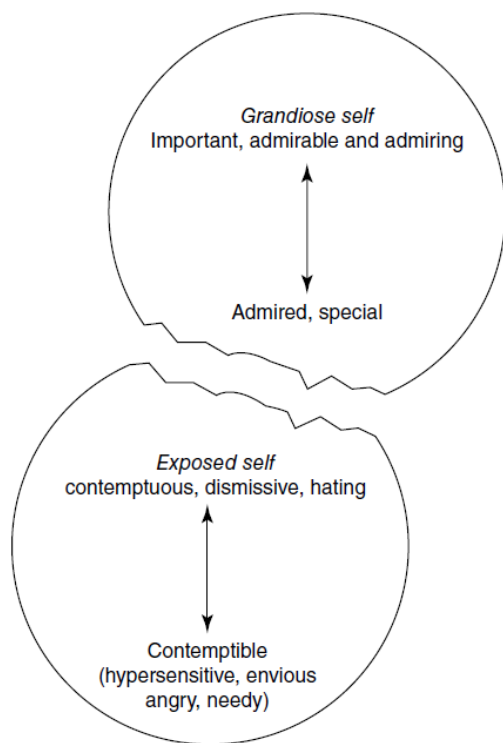


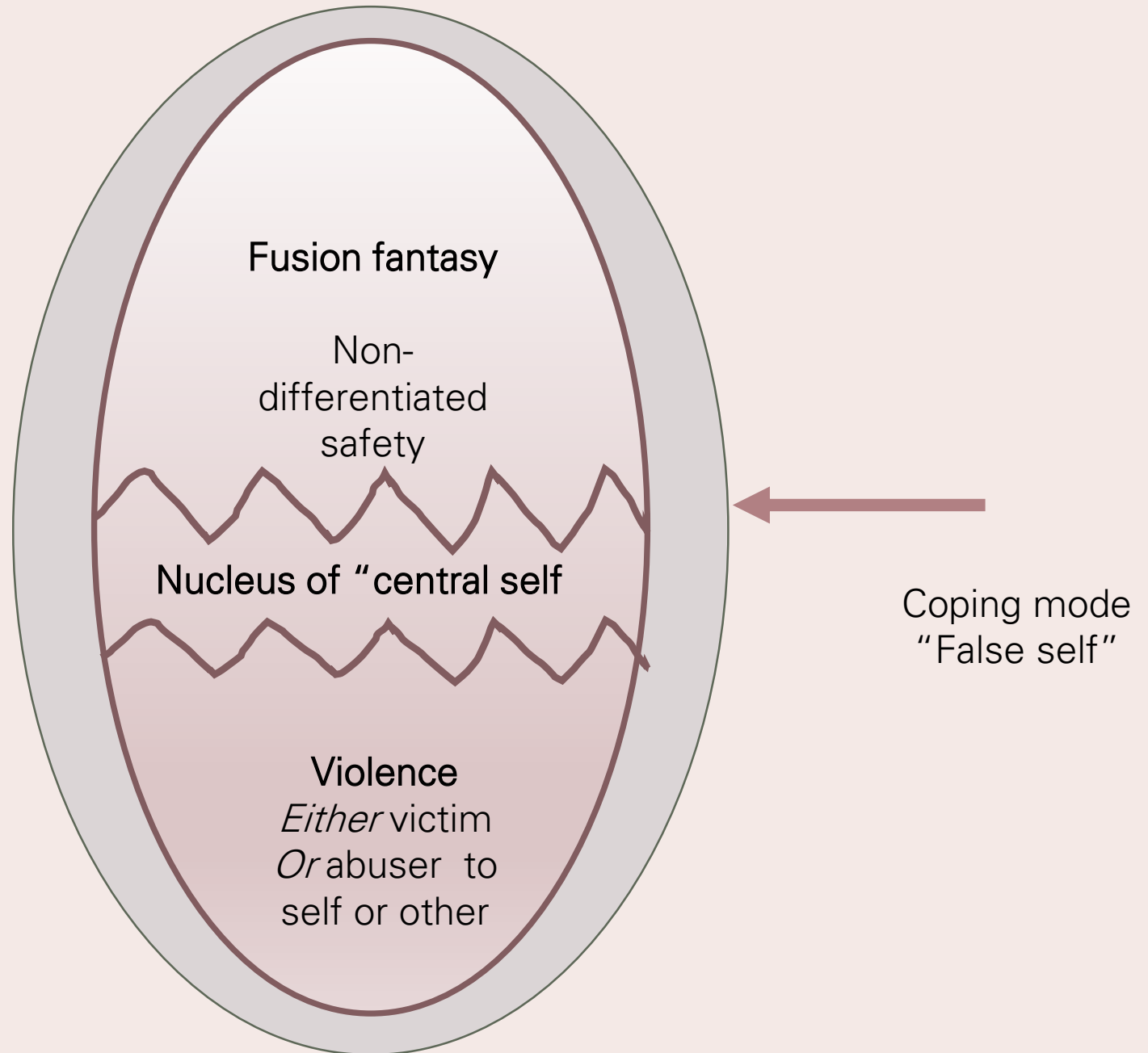
Figure 10.3 Narcissistic personality disorder: the two common Self states.

... the thick-skinned narcissist relies heavily on grandiosity as a defensive strategy and appears untouched by interpretation which is denigrated and dismissed; whilst the thin-skinned, having no access to the grandiose defence, is easily hurt and self-abasing.....

CAT suggests (see also Britton, 2004 Bateman, 1998) that these are different states rather than two types of person

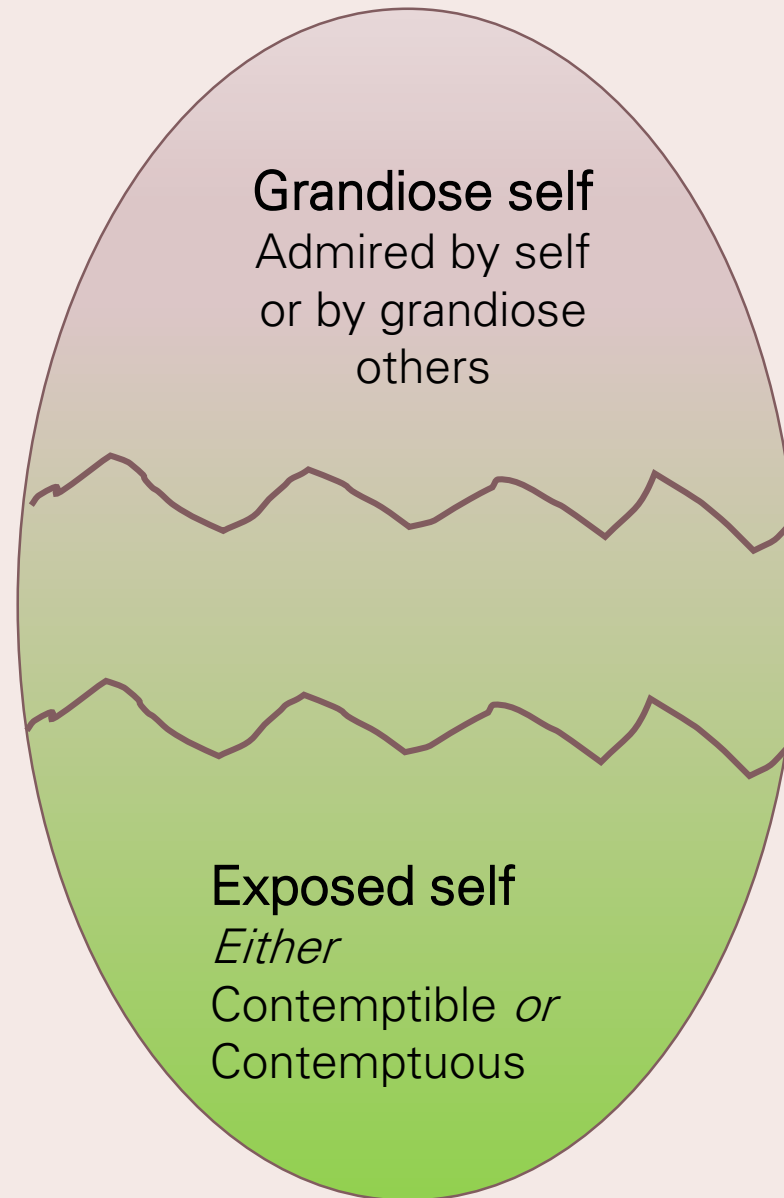


**SELF V2.0**  
**BORDERLINE**  
**PERSONALITY**  
RYLE, 1990 P106



# NARCISSISTIC SELF

RYLE 1990, P107

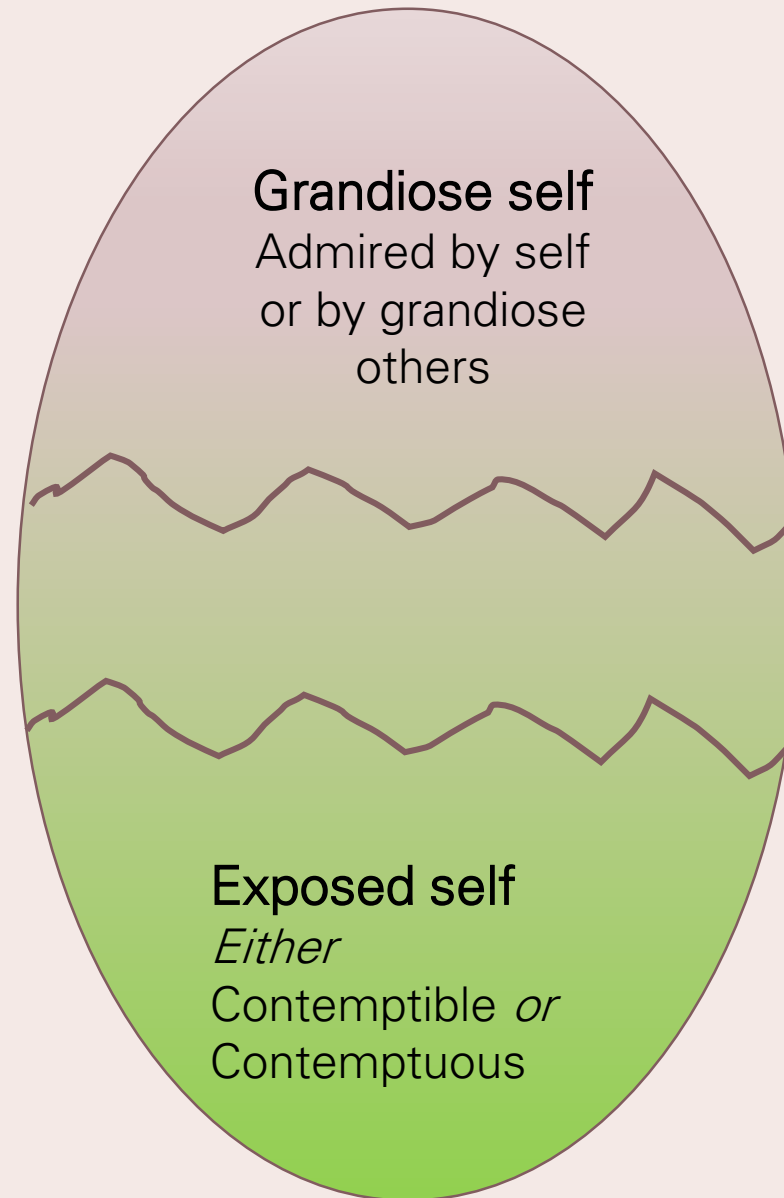


## CASE EXAMPLE 2: RICHARD III

- Act V, Sc 3 192-220
- [Richard III - Scene 17 - YouTube](#)
- It is now dead midnight.  
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling  
flesh.  
What do I fear? myself? there's none else  
by:  
Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
- Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:  
Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason  
why:  
Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?  
Alack. I love myself. Wherefore? for any  
good  
That I myself have done unto myself?
- O, no! alas, I rather hate myself  
For hateful deeds committed by myself!
- I am a villain: yet I lie. I am not.  
Fool, of thyself speak well: fool, do not  
flatter.
- My conscience hath a thousand several  
tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villain....
- I shall despair. There is no creature loves  
me;  
And if I die, no soul shall pity me:  
Nay, wherefore should they, since that I  
myself - Find in myself no pity to myself?

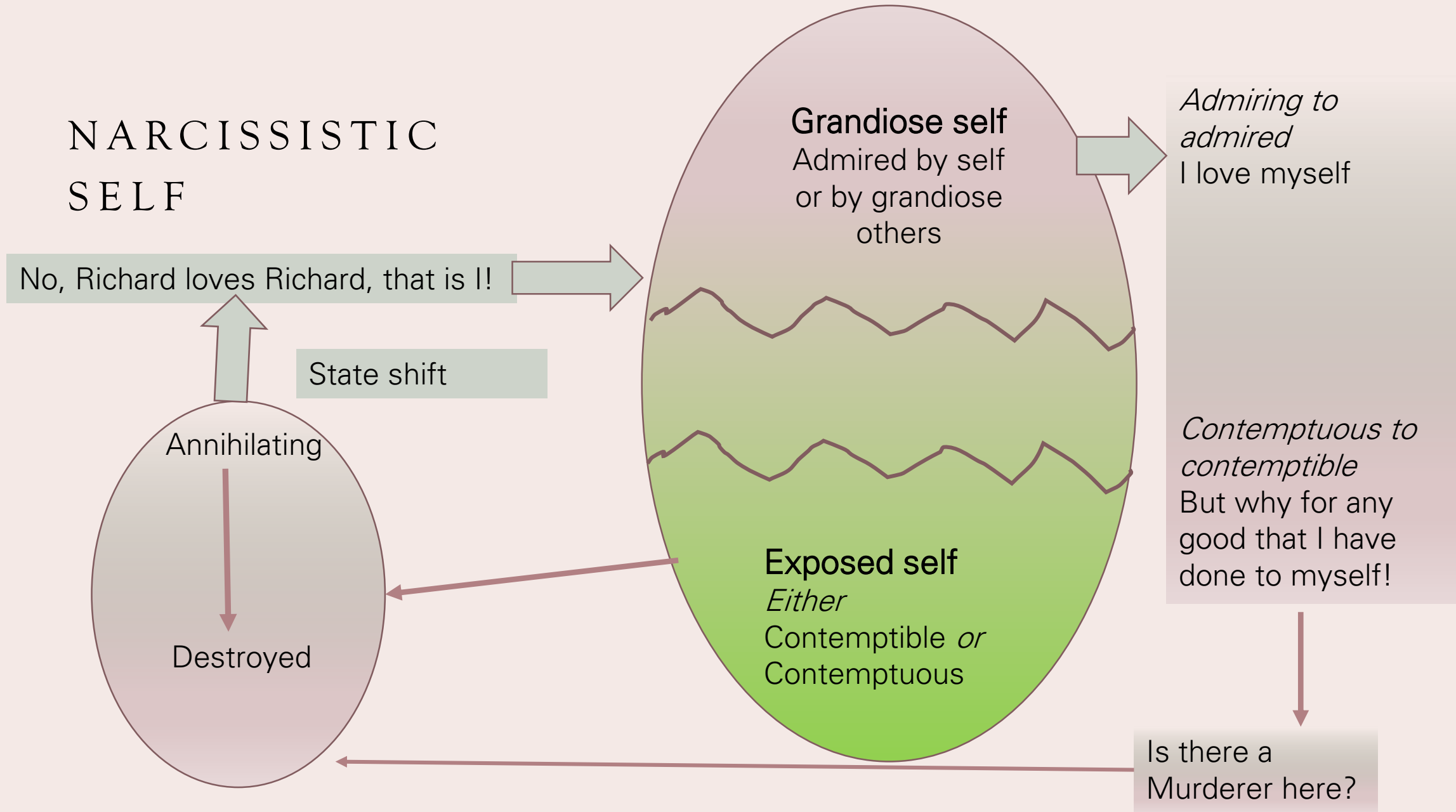
# NARCISSISTIC SELF

RYLE 1990, P107

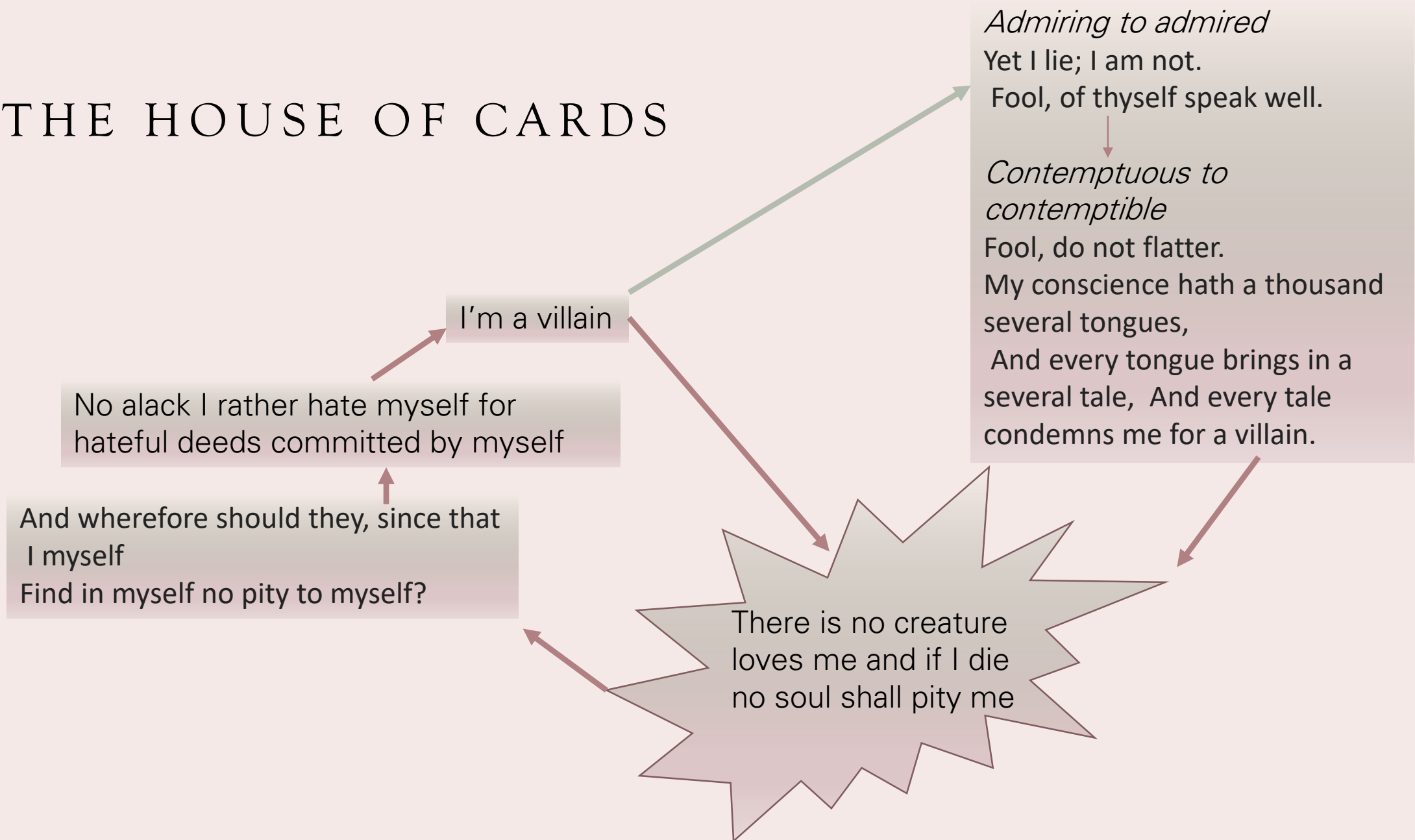




# NARCISSISTIC SELF



# THE HOUSE OF CARDS



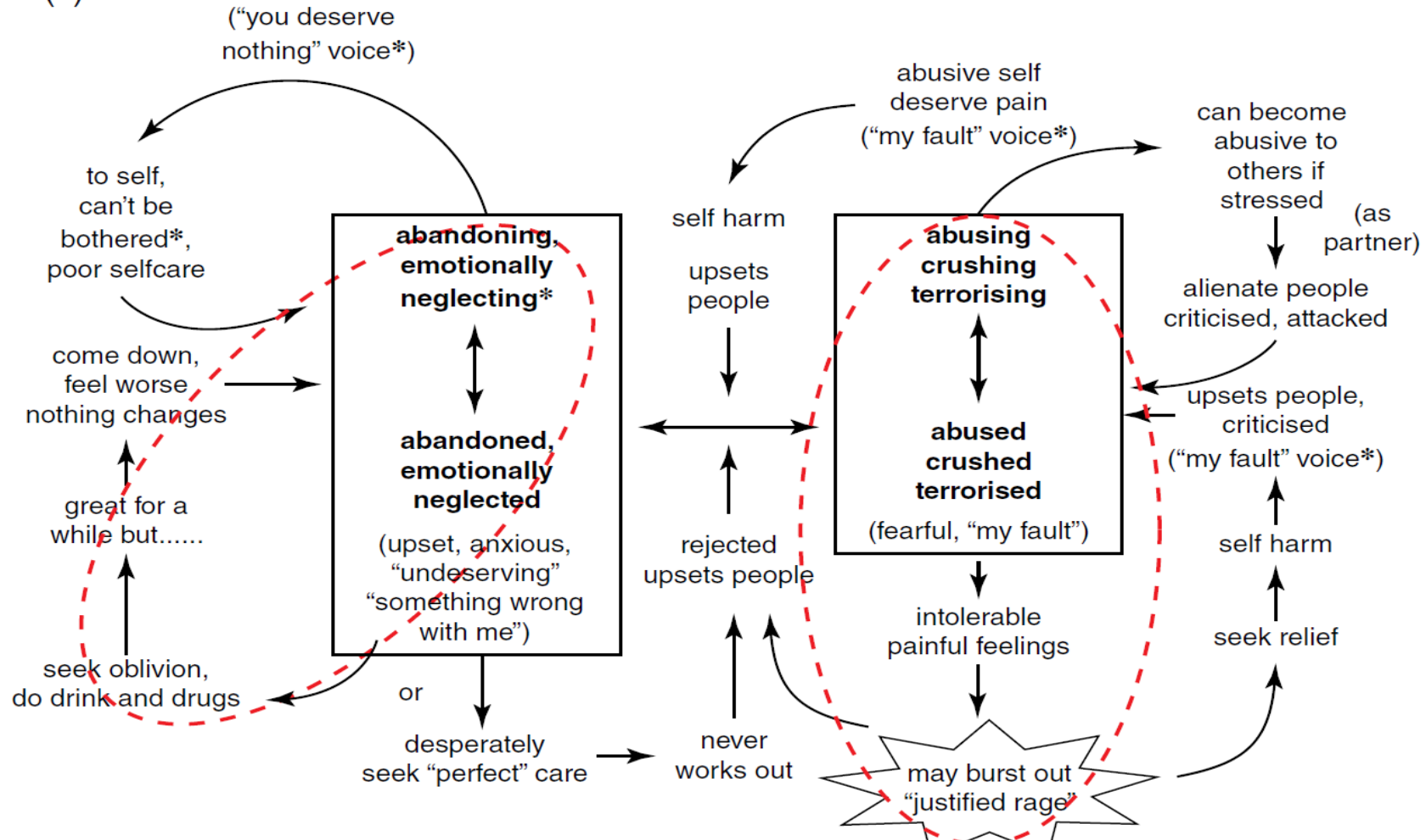
## TO SUMMARISE- BY 2002

- CAT integrating attachment theory
- Dialogical nature of the self fully established
- False-self idea incorporated into thinking on narcissism
- Subjective sense of self more central in clinical work
- Symbol use and the self extended with work on semiotics
- Self-states clarified
- Dissociated RRP's as part of new developments on Borderline Personality and cPTSD
- Theoretical nature of self-states clarified in terms of dialogical sequences – partly dissociated

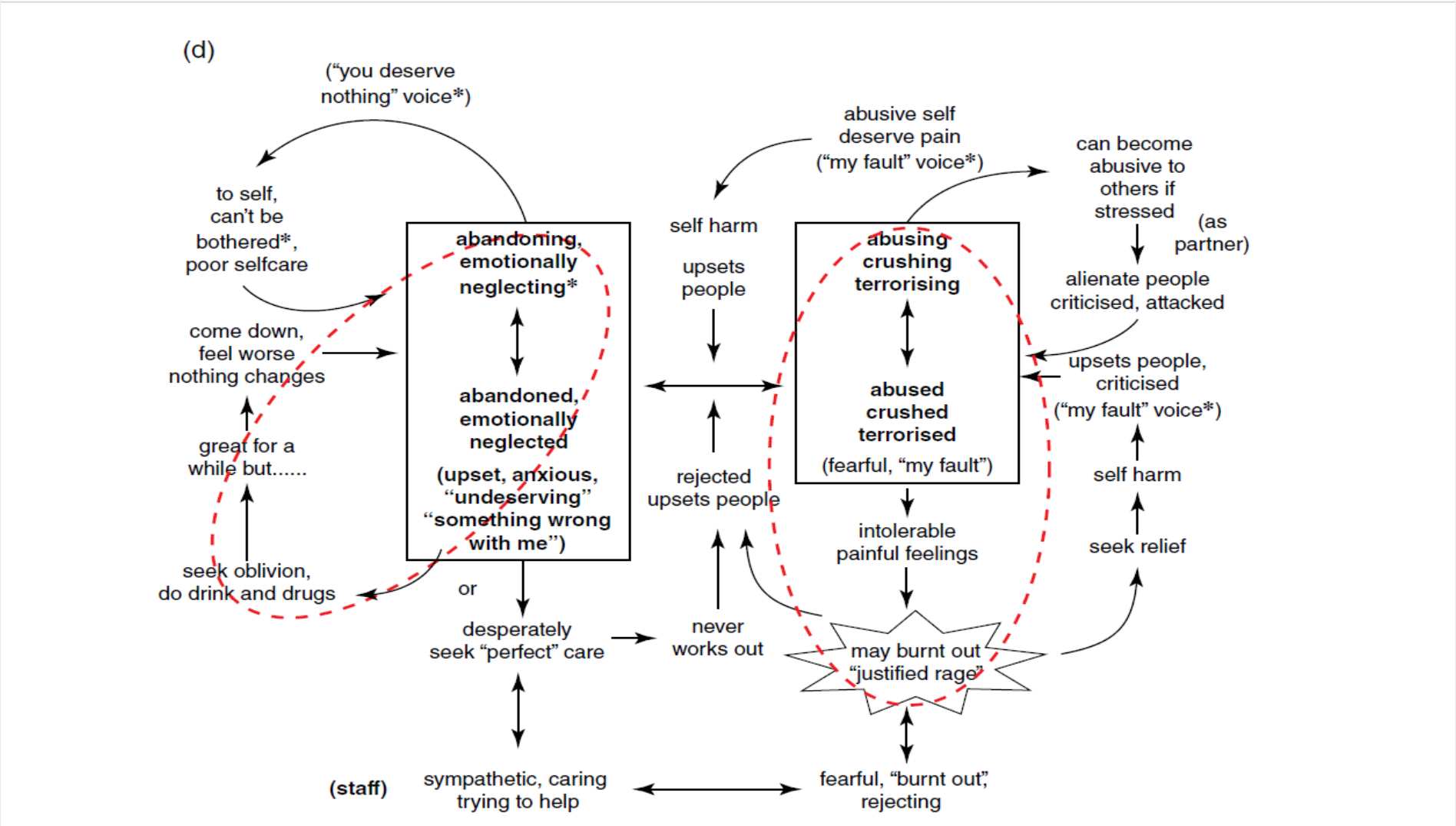


# THE SELF 2.+

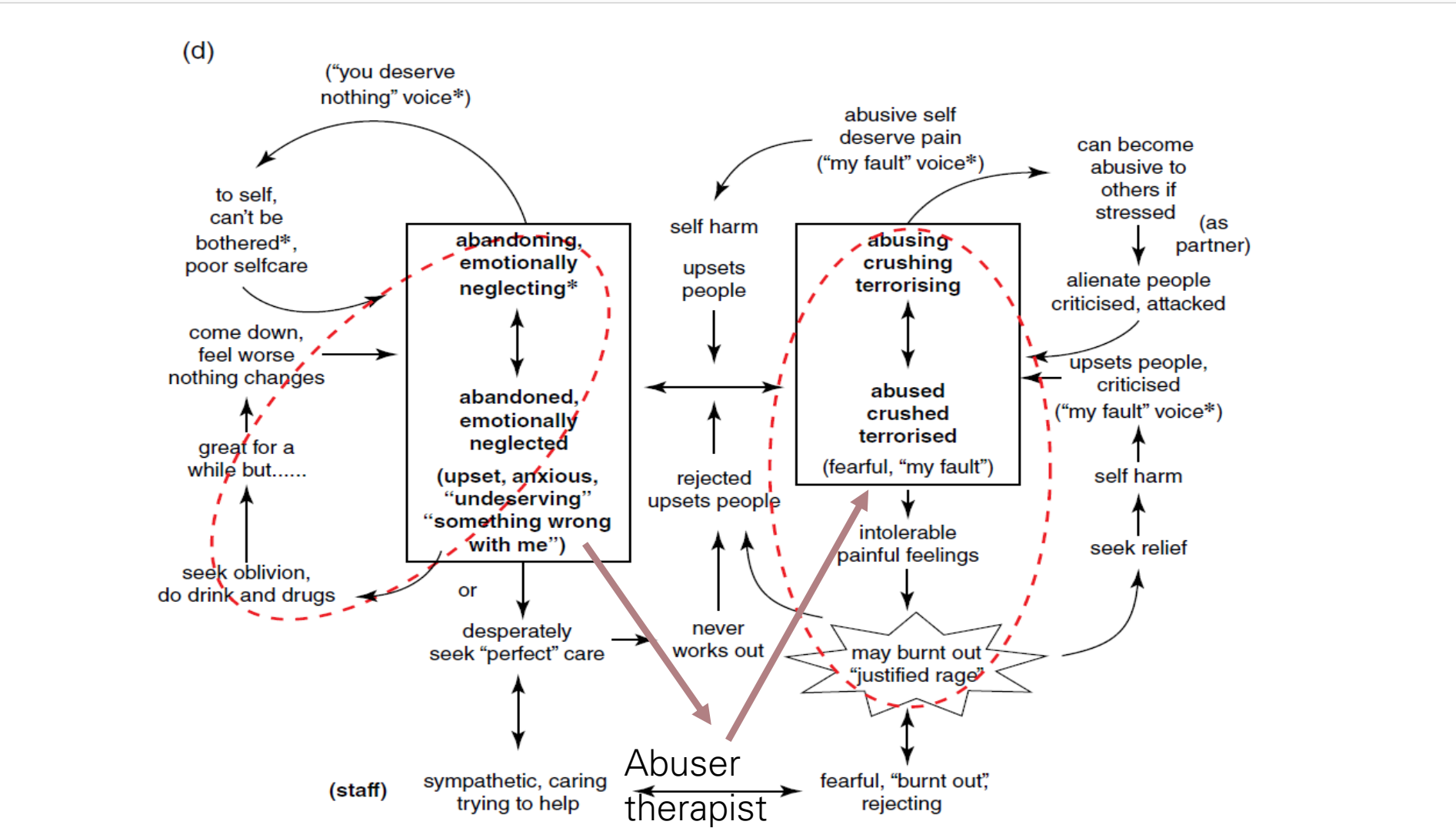
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# CONTEXTUAL REFORMULATION: SELF 3.0



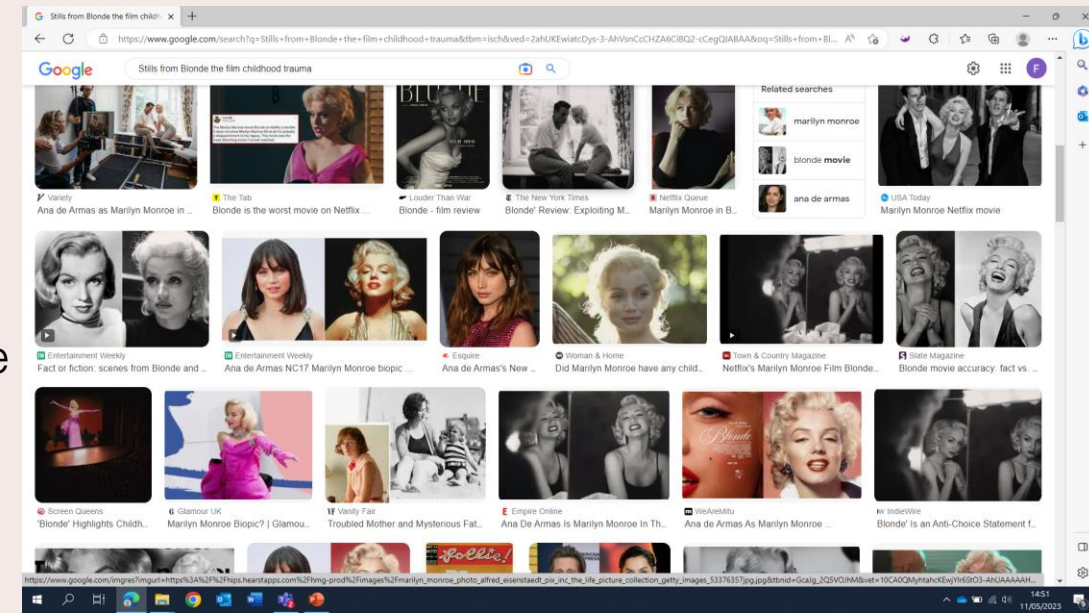
# CONTEXTUAL REFORMULATION: SELF 3.2



# CASE EXAMPLE 3

## CONTEXTUAL REFORMULATION BRINGS IN STAFF AND WIDER WORLD'S RESPONSE

- Discussion about “Marilyn” as a semi-fictional case report
  - Early trauma
  - People-pleasing and the difficulties of celebrity
  - Self-harm
  - Relationship difficulties and re-traumatisation
- Re-enactment
  - Reciprocal role 1: Nurture to needy
  - Reciprocal role 2: sexualised care to abused victim
- Boundary breaches and intense counter-transference



# ALTERNATE VIEWS

- When Marilyn Monroe attained the status of an iconic starlet, her fans got curious to find out about her family and friends, including the woman who gave birth to her. For years the model-turned-actress claimed she never knew her mother and instead was an orphan who spent her childhood bouncing between different foster homes - a claim that made her image a tragic one.
- This account is contested and many biographies become fixated on the extent of “actual” abuse
- Here I am repeating the same problematic relationship- treating “Marilyn” as a vehicle to get across some ideas

# BOUNDARIES?

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## Spoto's view

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- "... Greenson deeply resented her increasing independence" - He ordered the sedation – he had provided Nembutal and substituted chloral hydrate but she still took Nembutal
- Both drugs were found at autopsy
- "His patient's death indicates the awful possibilities when an analyst does not keep to his boundaries and yet continues, knowing full well that his own emotions are intertwined with his patient"
- "He had become very emotionally attached to her" (Spoto, p591)

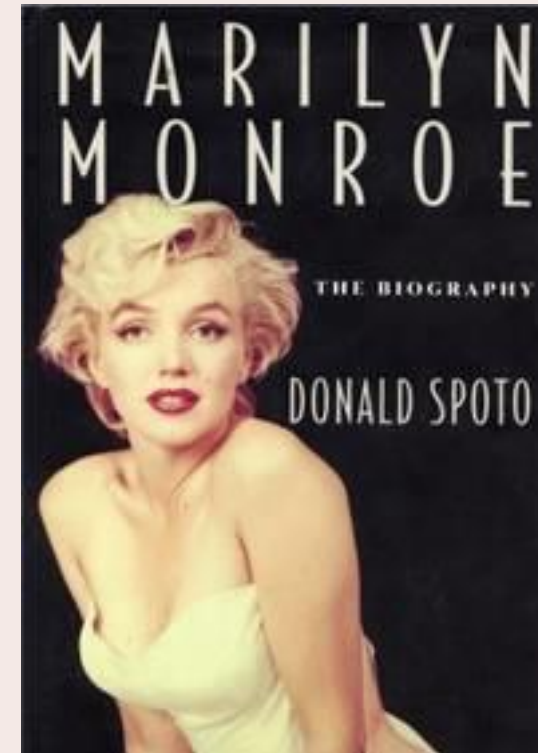
# BOUNDARIES AND THERAPY

- Ralph Greenson famous psychoanalyst was seeing Norma Jeane at the time of her death
- Prescribed Nembutal and chloral hydrate
- She had become extremely dependent on him and he invited her to stay at his house and asked his two sons to befriend her
- Some biographers blame him for her death or involve him in conspiracy theories
- Surely it couldn't happen now...



# “THE CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION”

- Donald Spoto wrote a famous biography in which he blames [Dr Ralph] Greenson, her last psychiatrist for Monroe’s death
- “...she realised ...that their relationship had to come to an end. This he realised, too, admitting to colleagues that he had reached a classic state of countertransference- his work could no longer be justified”
- “Dr Greenson took her death very personally. He was deeply shaken , even devastated by it... he could not restrain himself. In his own way, he loved this girl in a sense that she was a wonderful person to him. He had become very emotionally attached to her”
- John Miner Forensic pathologist cited in Spoto p 272 590





REFLECTIONS ON CAT

SUMMARY: HOW DO WE ASSESS THE  
DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH OF CAT?  
[SEE ALSO ISSUE 5 OF ICATA JOURNAL]

- Is the model coherent in itself and is it underpinned by a coherent body of theory?
  - *Has the theory base continued to expand alongside the growth of training?* [See this conference!]
- Can the model be defined and differentiated from other approaches?
  - *As part of that definition, can we assess whether the approach is being used in a competent way that is consistent with the theory?* [CCAT]
- Has the approach been tested adequately across a range of conditions?
  - *Are new areas of applicability being continuously developed?* [Extending gradually into a wide range of areas]

# THE DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH OF CAT? CONTINUED

- Are there tried and tested ways of teaching the model to a new generation?
  - *Are new ways of developing therapy skills welcome?* [e.g., Video films and role play]
- Are new approaches to practice welcomed, tested, and assimilated
  - *Do these new developments link back seamlessly to existing knowledge?* [See journal Special issue]
- Finally, are there any warning signs of the field splintering into disparate factions?
  - *Is there a new generation drawn to the model and generating new research questions, or are subgroups fighting for the right to be the true heirs of Ryle?* [Health of discourse at this conference]

