

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

MAIN CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE E3 SUBTYPES: SELF-PRESERVATION, SEXUAL AND SOCIAL

BOOK ONE: THE SELF-PRESERVATION SUBTYPE

- I. Passion in the sphere of instinct: How Vanity works in Self-Preservation
 - II. The characteristic neurotic need
 - III. Interpersonal strategy and associated irrational ideas
 - IV. Other characteristic features and psychodynamic considerations
 - V. Emotionality and fantasy
 - VI. Childhood
 - VII. Persona and shadow: destructive to themselves and others
 - VIII. Love
 - IX. Historical figure: Clare of Assisi
 - X. Literary and cinematic examples
 - XI. A vignette
 - XII. Transformation process and therapeutic recommendations
- SELF-PRESERVATION E3: BIOGRAPHY

BOOK TWO: THE SEXUAL SUBTYPE

- I. Passion in the sphere of instinct: How Vanity works in Sexual
 - II. The characteristic neurotic need
 - III. Interpersonal strategy and associated irrational ideas
 - IV. Other characteristic features and psychodynamic considerations
 - V. Emotionality and fantasy
 - VI. Childhood
 - VII. Persona and shadow: destructive to themselves and others
 - VIII. Love
 - IX. Historical figure: Marilyn Monroe
 - X. Literary and cinematic examples
 - XI. A vignette
 - XII. Transformation process and therapeutic recommendations
- SEXUAL E3: BIOGRAPHY

BOOK THREE: THE SOCIAL SUBTYPE

- [I. Passion in the sphere of instinct: How Vanity works in Social](#)
 - [II. The characteristic neurotic need](#)
 - [III. Interpersonal strategy and associated irrational ideas](#)
 - [IV. Other characteristic features and psychodynamic considerations](#)
 - [V. Emotionality and fantasy](#)
 - [VI. Childhood](#)
 - [VII. Persona and shadow: destructive to themselves and others](#)
 - [VIII. Love](#)
 - [IX. Historical figures](#)
 - [X. Cinematic examples](#)
 - [XI. Jokes and vignettes](#)
 - [XII. Transformation process and therapeutic recommendations](#)
- [SOCIAL E3: BIOGRAPHY](#)

APPENDIX

[E3 ACADEMIC EQUIVALENCES: SELF-PRESERVATION, SEXUAL AND SOCIAL SUBTYPES](#)

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

MAIN CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE E3 SUBTYPES: SELF-PRESERVATION, SEXUAL AND SOCIAL

As in the case of other character types, Vanity takes very different forms depending on the subtype, and we wanted to begin this volume by describing its contrasts. This passion is an intense preoccupation with one's own image, a drive to live for the eyes of others. A life oriented toward appearances means that the focus is not on one's own experience, but on the anticipation or fantasy of others' perception.

Among the different subtypes, it is the social E3 that best fits this description of the vain personality. It represents the pursuit of prestige and fame, and among the three subtypes, it is the most openly materialistic. This type wants to be someone important, seeking widespread recognition in public spheres and leveraging social norms to their advantage, whether through fashion, physical appearance, or popular rhetoric.

Social vanity is therefore the most ostentatious and the most visible among the subtypes. It is vanity directed at the world. Being seen by many is deeply important. This type thrives on recognition from groups, like an actor who needs constant applause as narcissistic nourishment. The social E3 wants to be acknowledged by the world at large, not so much for their looks, but for what they do and their social status. They want to be charming and are motivated by success and achievement. They show off their qualities and virtues. The childhood desire to be noticed transforms into a passion; they live for prestige, which excites them, rather than for life itself, for themselves and for others.

In relationships, the self-preservation E3 is more modest, shy, or reserved, and seems content in smaller settings. The sexual E3 focuses more on a romantic bond. But the social E3 likes to be out in the world, to travel, to dabble a bit in everything (their hunger for variety and eclecticism could get them confused with E7), to be part of “high society.”

Because of a certain pompous demeanor, the social E3 may resemble E2, especially the social subtype, when they're more extroverted. But it's not that they love everyone or believe everyone loves them, as E2s often do. Social E2s feel a self-assuredness that leads them to display generosity and splendor; they are out of touch with lack. By contrast, social E3s are easily shaken by failure or insecurity if they don't feel seen or validated by others. The social E2 believes they're special in and of themselves; the social E3 needs others' recognition to feel important.

They are especially interested in capturing the attention of important people. The bigger the name, the better, as this reaffirms their value. They seek relationships with influential figures in high-status positions and tend to flaunt: possessions, power, knowledge, achievements... This brings the desired feeling of power, respect, and admiration. Money is something to be shown off: “spending brings status.” It can be difficult for the social E3 to engage in self-development work (like the SAT program) of their own accord, because they feel like they lose prestige by “confessing.”

The sexual E3 is the most shy, fragile, and insecure of the three. They don't present themselves to the world as openly as the social subtype; they tend to hold back, and only come forward when they feel safe that the group will accept and welcome them. They parade their image through the catwalks of life, seeking to be looked at. In new group settings, the sexual subtype is cautious and first observes (while the social E3 usually jumps in more dynamically, with less observation and more force). The sexual subtype seeks intimacy more than the social one and also “sells” it, putting more energy into

relationships with the opposite sex and showing less interest in large groups, which are important to the social E3.

The self-preservation E3, finally, is the “anti-vanity.” Theirs is a counter-passion: their vanity is deeply hidden. Though they do care about their image, they want to appear otherwise. They’re discreet. Their vanity lies in not seeming vain; that’s the image they project. They don’t want to come across with the stereotypical vanity of someone who dresses well, is overly concerned with physical appearance, or might be seen as superficial. They shy away from overt vanity, which they associate with self-absorbed and foolish people. In groups, they tend to take on roles as helpers or problem-solvers.

The hidden vanity of self-preservation E3s makes many of them unrecognizable in introductory Enneatype Psychology courses in the SAT program. They don’t relate to the more spotlight-loving attitude of the social E3, who can be quite flashy and exhibitionist, resembling the sexual E2 (though not crossing into extreme histrionics). They might dress as “elegant eccentrics,” or go for “ethnic chic” if the occasion calls for it, but without fully losing control or becoming as uninhibited as the sexual E2s.

If the social E3 presents a glorious and dazzling image, the self-preservation E3 offers availability and a more service-oriented posture, which is why they don’t seem vain. They are the subtype that least resembles E3, because they appear well-intentioned and are deeply committed to doing things well and being good people.

The self-preservation E3’s vanity is channeled through doing and the results they produce. Their motto could be: “There’s no problem without a solution.” Their doing is constant; the agenda never ends. The underlying belief is that if the to-do list is finished, “I don’t exist.” They are always busy with something, incapable of stopping or being alone without something to occupy their mind and hands. This prevents them from connecting with themselves: “My being is my doing.” That’s a source of suffering, because deep down they want to be recognized for who they are... only that, in truth, there is no “self.” There is only what they do. They are there for others, but they themselves are absent. It’s no surprise they struggle to connect with pleasure: “There’s so much to do first!”

While the self-preservation E3 uses doing for recognition (which they interpret as proof of love), and the social E3 is identified with their task or work, the sexual E3 focuses on their charm and appearance. They use physical beauty, sexual appeal, and intimacy to achieve success, although what they truly seek is emotional connection, which they don’t reveal outright.

While sexual E3 women identify with an ideal image of femininity, and men with masculinity, self-preservation E3s assume the roles of adult children, and social E3s identify with traditionally male roles (such as manager).

Sexual E3s also don’t invest in the masses as much as social E3s do. They lack verbal fluency and often struggle to express their feelings. While social E3s may be smooth talkers with answers for everything, many sexual E3s draw a blank and find it hard to assert themselves; they don’t have a sense of their own worth. Physicality (sensual movements, touch, eye contact) makes up for their lack of verbal resources. They use their image and sexuality to get what they want, masking what they dislike about themselves to please others. They are the most in touch with fear. They seek connection. The women may look like little girls. All offer sex in exchange for love.

The sexual E3, while they may be just as accomplished and efficient as the other two subtypes, prioritize romantic relationships. They are someone highly invested in their partner, to the point of losing themselves, forgetting both their professional life and their own sense of self.

As mentioned earlier, they grapple with low self-esteem and seek to feel valued and recognized by perceiving themselves as attractive. *Attractiveness* or *sex appeal* is the keyword that defines this subtype’s passion. They rely on their body and sensual energy to attract others, thus cultivating physical beauty. The meaning of life and their driving energy revolve around attracting and being

liked. They hide their flaws, constantly applying makeup to both their face and emotions, and eventually lose themselves to the point of not knowing what they truly feel.

This is the subtype that invests the most energy in maintaining an idealized image meant to appeal to others; appearing desirable is their main goal. They are chameleonic and will become whatever the other person wants. This extreme level of identification with their partner's desires can even lead to them being mistreated or abused without realizing it, since they split off the role they play from their true self and don't see what they're doing. They're flirtatious and glamorous, yet shallow. Behind their beautiful, often stereotypically plastic-like mask (which may appear ridiculous to others but which the sexual E3 believes is attractive), they are the subtype most likely to come into contact with a deep inner emptiness.

Their seductiveness is often compared to that of the E2, with the key difference being that the E2 does not need to transform themselves to please others. While the sexual E3's seduction relies on an idealized image, the E2's is more rooted in the pleasure of erotic and sexual contact. The sexual E3 sends erotic signals purely to attract; they are not prepared to follow through on their promises. They want to be desired but not touched, because their validation comes from being desired. They separate sex from love, and during sex, they are more concerned with what the other person likes and wants, and with doing it "well."

In appearance, self-preservation E3s tend to look more classic and discreet than social E3s: they may be just as vain but don't want it to show how much they care about their looks.

Of all the E3s, the social E3 is the most chameleonic. They dress and behave according to what is expected of them and in line with current trends. They enjoy dressing up, accessorizing with jewelry and makeup, presenting themselves as a beautiful, dazzling figure. Their wardrobe contains clothes suited to all kinds of environments. They can be posh, into having the latest and best brands (they like buying the most expensive things), or being up to date in their field of expertise. They hold the values others want to buy; they sell their personality.

What excites the social E3 is shining, and they constantly hone their skills and talents with this goal in mind. They are the most deceitful of the three and shamelessly seek an audience, fame, and admiration. They love winning over people, applause, recognition, places... and in this pursuit, they lose themselves. The "shine" is a desire for attention.

They know how to present themselves; they're charming and well-mannered. They have all the right accessories. They're efficient, energetic, and bold. They move with elegance and poise, like someone who knows their way around the world.

They're always in a good mood and are more cheerful and talkative than the self-preservation E3, who may come across as harsher, more irritable, and more rigid. The social E3 can be quite intuitive and empathetic.

As for the sexual E3, even though they may be more timid and bashful than the social E3, they certainly don't fade into the background. Their top priority is attracting a romantic partner, but they also crave visibility, even if admitting it is somewhat taboo for them.

The self-preservation E3 is also shy, but for different reasons. If the sexual E3 is shy because they fear revealing their internal hollowness or lack of worth, in the self-preservation E3, shyness (while also stemming from insecurity) is more about control. When they're unfamiliar with the environment, their need for recognition leads them to hide until they're sure they'll be accepted.

The self-preservation E3 controls themselves and controls others. They can't stand chaos. They're meticulous and detail-oriented; they're attentive to everything (like arranging shoes left in the hallway...), and always aware of others' needs. They possess an uncanny ability to remember the smallest details, from birthdays to offhand remarks someone made in passing...

Whereas the sexual E3 is quite insecure, for the self-preservation E3 it's crucial to have everything very clear; they never allow themselves to be unsure. They have structured their life

thoroughly to ensure this; it's as if they're selling security, projecting an image of having plenty of it, and becoming a "fix-it-all"—in this, they resemble E9s. They're handy, resourceful and adept at solving problems. In any situation, they assume they must have answers to everything. And if they don't, they'll fabricate them. They're quick thinkers, and their memory is usually exceptional, collecting all kinds of information to use at the right moment. They've learned skills that help others and put themselves in roles where they're needed most, often finding themselves fixing the lives of people they've only just met.

The defining trait of the self-preservation E3, *security*, is sometimes misconstrued as a compulsive search for safety in every sense, especially in basic needs. But in reality, this person builds their life from a position of already having security, with basic needs resolved, and lives in a way that ensures nothing is ever lacking to maintain that starting point. Always having, for instance, enough money (they are cautious spenders), a stable home with everything they need, and the ability to resolve day-to-day problems without asking for help (or finding the right help when necessary), preemptively identifying and solving issues like traffic jams, etc. Compared to the other subtypes, they are the most self-sufficient and stoic—so much so that they can be mistaken for a self-preservation E4, due to their perfectionism and the workload they take on, differing only in their automatic smile and lighter energy. While the self-preservation E3 is passionate about being able to do everything through sheer effort, the sexual E3 longs for a partner who can provide the sense of survival they don't feel capable of securing on their own; the social E3, on the other hand, believes they can make a living through prestige.

The self-preservation E3 presents themselves to the world as someone secure "by nature," without realizing how much energy it takes to maintain that status quo. They convince themselves they were simply "born" this way.

And this is their greatest vanity, though it may not be explicit. By selling security, they think of themselves and feel like someone of great worth: anyone would benefit from having them as a partner or friend and, as a result, they will be rewarded at some point in life. This future reward is what keeps the machine running. But it is an unspoken, never explicitly acknowledged reward—one they expect others to intuit, as it should be something obvious in the minds and hearts of those to whom they've devoted themselves so entirely.

Of course, by projecting security, they attract the most insecure, needy and dependent people. Over time, they collect on what they gave and end up demanding a steep price for a service that initially appeared to be free and generous.

When frustration sets in after they sense that the other person isn't giving them the much-anticipated reward, a monster can emerge that destroys mercilessly, in a cold and calculated way, all while maintaining the mask of being good and available. This monstrous side, which also appears in the social E3 and the sexual E3, is less obvious in the self-preservation E3 because it mostly plays out in the private sphere of the family.

The social E3 can come off as more openly selfish: if they care about you, it's because you've been incorporated into their group. Prestige, their defining word, means needing someone to take notice, to bear witness to how good they are. They're masters of self-promotion; of the three, they use it the most and the best, and quite freely, seemingly without any shame. They talk about themselves and effortlessly captivate crowds. They're skilled at presenting themselves to others.

The anti-vanity of the self-preservation E3, by contrast, lies in wanting to be recognized, but not directly: "Let people talk about me, let them praise me—not to my face, but to others, so that everyone knows." They have a taboo around social or sexual vanity. They see the self-promotion of the social E3 as shameful boasting and the open coquetry of the sexual E3 as pathetic. Their aversion to self-promotion stems from a deep fear of being in the spotlight, which they find ridiculous and, ultimately, too vulnerable a place where their mask could be exposed or dismantled. They suffer, but

they must always maintain the image that everything is fine. Instead, they project an image of goodness and responsibility.

And work: the self-preservation E3 is a production machine. They're true workaholics, even more than the social subtype. Everything they are is owed to the fruits of their own labor. They prioritize hard work over shining. They are like Gretchen from *Faust*.

While the sexual subtype is a perfectionist about physical image, the self-preservation E3 is perfectionist about action. They feel compelled to prove that others recognize their worth by doing things scrupulously, and they always think they could have done better. They resemble E1 in being honest, meticulous, critical, hyper-ethical, obsessed with details, and overwhelmed by the pressure to complete tasks to the highest standard. But whereas E1 is restrained and serious, E3 is more expansive and either cheerful or emotionally neutral. Moreover, while E1 is grounded in tradition, E3 seeks the approval of others.

The self-preservation E3 is hard-working and more ant-like than the social E3, who is a peacock, spouting grand ideas, falling in love with their own speech, promises, and inflated ego—only to later become afraid of having to deliver on what they said or cheerfully shift the burden onto subordinates, if they have any.

In contrast, the self-preservation E3 is committed and dependable. Their image is one of efficiency; that's their brand. They are the most effective of the three, and their public image is that of a reliable person, someone who provides and never forgets the promises they make. They're an efficient bureaucrat who doesn't want to show their fatigue or exhaustion.

Against that, the social E3 is the most deceitful subtype. They often misrepresent what they know and what they actually know how to do. They sell an image of competence and fake it, but they lack the patience for tasks that don't put them in the spotlight. They rely on others to achieve satisfactory results. A social E3 avoids small tasks because they offer no stimulation or return that would confirm their need to be someone important.

They may disappoint others when it comes to following through, while the self-preservation E3 fulfills everything, scrupulously. The social E3 manages to use words to smooth things over ("I know how to do a lot"), but doesn't follow through on practical, objective tasks. They focus on achieving the big, visible goals and use others to do the heavy lifting, because they're not particularly efficient themselves. What matters most is being important. The efficiency they promise only materializes if there's a chance to be seen as the one who delivered, and they always find ways to justify not taking responsibility, thus preserving their image.

They prioritize their own goals and personal interests over the needs of the community. They don't take responsibility for neglecting others—they rationalize and justify it instead of owning up to it—and they don't admit to failing in their commitments.

In the workplace, the self-preservation E3 may struggle more to delegate tasks. If they do, they never fully relinquish control; they micromanage, much like an E1, following up with coworkers to ensure deadlines are met and methods followed. The social E3 (usually more of a boss) seems to get bored overseeing the process and doesn't supervise subordinates as the self-preservation E3 would. However, near the end of a project, the social E3 critiques others' work... only to then claim all the credit in front of the client, forgetting that there was even a team to begin with. The social E3 initiates projects and sells the final results, while the methodical work is done by the self-preservation E3.

When it comes to work, the sexual E3 struggles to maintain discipline. They can be very efficient in domestic tasks, wanting their family to appear as perfect as possible. They may also work a lot and not stop, but find it difficult to develop true success or independence, because their efficiency is mostly aimed at controlling and seducing their object of desire. It's easy for them to struggle with self-actualization in the professional realm, as this runs counter to their passion for maintaining

dependency in the relationship. Their need for contact is stronger than in the other subtypes, and their low self-esteem makes them feel safer hiding in the narrow field of intimate bonds.

Just like the sexual E3, the self-preservation E3 also uses sexual seduction to obtain affection and connection. They know how to appeal to others' interests and use this skill to win them over. Their problem is that once they're in a stable relationship, they no longer have time for sexual or even emotional intimacy. It's as if those things were a waste of time because they don't yield tangible or concrete results.

Both sexual and social E3s can be conquerors and seducers, but in different ways and with different goals. The sexual E3 tends to be either naïve or irresponsible, while the social E3 is the opposite: they know exactly where they're stepping and what power they hold, are highly competitive, and likely more calculating. If the sexual E3 woman is Marilyn, the social E3 woman would be Sharon Stone—more aggressive. The sexual E3 places power in the hands of the man, whose protection she seeks, whereas the social E3 takes power for herself and is dominant ("a man's mind in a woman's body"), without ever letting go of glamor.

All E3s share a constant dependence on others. Social E3s are the most manipulative, because they seem highly autonomous: they use others without them noticing, transforming their own dependency into something that becomes meaningful in the lives of those around them. The dependency of self-preservation E3s is just as hidden, since they make others feel dependent on them for everything tied to survival. They can come across as harsh, cold, and emotionally inaccessible, and they fear anyone seeing their inner emptiness. They long for recognition but are so ashamed of showing it that it takes a trained eye to spot it. They yearn for love but don't feel it consciously.

Coldness is present in all three subtypes. In the self-preservation E3, it acts as a mask of rejection: "I won't reject you directly, but I'll become cold." The social E3 is also cold but keeps people around; their coldness is more a defense to maintain their social role. The sexual E3's coldness shows more in manners and demeanor. They invest everything in seduction, but can't fully enter into the relationship itself at a deeper level. There's a guardedness, a fear of connecting with something they can't name. The sexual E3 lives so deeply in image that if they were to step into that inner emptiness—even just enough to soften the coldness—they could lose themselves. This internal void the sexual E3 feels may be harder for the social E3 to perceive; they do so much and have so many ideas...

The sexual E3 is more transparent in showing insecurity, pain, and suffering; they express emotion more than the other two. And they are the sweetest. Even so, while they're the most emotional, they struggle to connect with their own anger. If social E3s can be aggressive, sexual E3s can't. In fact, they repress aggression and can tolerate a lot. But their emotional expression has become rigid and hieratic, which makes them appear hard. The more neurotic the person becomes, the harder they get. They can be stunning, but without tenderness. They cultivate a dangerous kind of irresistibility, like in the story of Samson and Delilah.

The self-preservation E3 is more likely to avoid acknowledging pain and exerts very tight control over emotional expression, as if incapable of letting life surprise them. They carry the belief: "If I feel pain or get emotional, I lose control of the situation." They struggle to connect with pain, suffering, and conflict. They rely heavily on denial, a defense mechanism closely tied to the belief that "no one can know more about me than I do." Still, in pivotal life experiences like crises or confrontations, they can come to recognize and accept pain.

The social E3 is the strongest of the three; they use their strength to claim a central position in a group or society, and they can be tough and overpowering. They are the most competitive. They are more aggressive and more defensive. Whatever they set their sights on, they pursue. They have the feeling that they can do anything. It's the subtype of E3 with the most energy; they're like a "cokehead." Cocaine is a very social E3 kind of drug, amplifying their characteristic tendencies. They

can't stop. Even when alone, they're already planning their next successful project. They project a clear-minded image; they're very much "in their head."

The social E3 is the most likely to lie to maintain their image. They can't tolerate criticism or confrontation of any kind, because they're constantly striving to maintain the image of omnipotence, of "I can do anything."

The self-preservation E3 doesn't take the risks that the social E3 does, which are fueled by a love of danger, adrenaline, and self-confidence. But the self-preservation E3 can still be aggressive. They know how to defend themselves, and they have the power to confront and criticize. Sexual E3s are the ones who find it most difficult to confront or face conflict. They tend to hide more; they're more seductive.

The social E3 is often highly identified with their mind (similar to E6 and E7) and aware that when they step outside, they're putting on a mask. This last point might not be as relevant for the self-preservation E3, who loses themselves more in the meticulousness of tasks and might not show much outwardly.

The social E3 believes everything they sell; they fully identify with it. Of the three subtypes, they are the most artificial, the ones whose mask is most visible. They represent the most obvious form of vanity and can even become fairly amoral. When the social E3 realizes their own falseness, they see that everything they've done is a lie. Then they fall into depression, withdraw, face their inner void, and go in search of their own authenticity.

In short: the self-preservation E3 longs to be loved for what they do; the social E3, for what they achieve; and the sexual E3, for their physical presence, charm, and intimacy.

BOOK ONE: THE SELF-PRESERVATION SUBTYPE

I. Passion in the sphere of instinct: How Vanity works in Self-Preservation

by Assumpta Mateu and Ferran Pauné

E3 is often associated with someone looking in the mirror. After all, vanity is linked to a constant need for external validation. However, in reality, vain people tend to have little awareness of their own physical traits. What they see in the mirror is merely an image that others may find pleasing to look at. When facing a mirror, an E3 doesn't truly see themselves; instead, they imagine themselves as another person observing their reflection. This suggests that an E3 embodies multiple personas within, each chosen in an effort to become an object of desire for different audiences.

The theory of instincts shows us that when vanity takes over the instinct for self-preservation, it leads the individual to a heightened focus on survival and a strong need for control to secure basic necessities. This manifests as the urge to prove—to both themselves and others—that they are capable of handling life's practical matters, presenting themselves as competent. However, this drive comes with a compulsive motivation: to turn every action into something that earns external validation. This recognition from others becomes the foundation upon which E3 relies to feel they exist. The self-preservation E3 thus compensates for an underlying sense of insecurity about their basic needs by seeking reassurance from others, believing that recognition will guarantee their survival.

When self-preservation serves vanity, it leads to self-erasure—stepping aside, making oneself smaller, or even ceasing to “be” in order to avoid rejection or hatred. After all, hatred threatens survival. This mindset can be summarized as follows: “*If I do what's expected of me, I won't be hated, and I'll stay safe.*”

As a result, this person will strive to be useful and indispensable to others. Their world is narrowed down to what is concrete, visible, and tangible. Their mind is constantly occupied with practical concerns or an endless to-do list. The most obvious trait? Always having a solution for any problem—whether it's fixing a piece of furniture or navigating the complexities of child adoption.

For me, my concern with security is almost obsessive. The fear of failing is so overwhelming that I often deprive myself of the present moment to ensure the future. Take food, for example: I almost always eat half and save the rest, thinking I need to leave some for tomorrow, even if I don't actually end up eating it. Only after knowing I have something set aside do I feel at ease. It's as if there's a constant battle inside me for survival, which is why I always want to have things, acquire things—especially material things—to make sure I'll be okay tomorrow.

(Sandra)

Perhaps the deepest, most central need of self-preservation E3 is *inclusion*—the feeling of belonging. Melanie Klein¹ spoke of the way a certain kind of gaze from others shapes, structures, and

¹ Melanie Klein placed the mother-child relationship at the core of psychic structuring and theorized identity formation through *introjective* and *projective identification*. See “Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States” (1935), in *Love, Guilt and Reparation, Collected Works I*, RBA, Barcelona, 2006, pp. 279-307; and “Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms” (1946), in *Envy and Gratitude, Collected Works II*, RBA,

confirms one's existence. It seems that self-preservation E3 has never fully outgrown this primal need and spends a lifetime chasing that gaze, as if in pursuit of it.

This pursuit leads to two opposing but connected tendencies: an open, trusting, and optimistic approach to others—paired with deep-seated distrust and disappointment. “The others won’t give me anything unless I work for it.”

The need to belong and be seen outweighs all else. “As I am, there is no love for me.” This belief, though irrational, is rooted in real childhood experiences. The family may have accepted the self-preservation E3 as a member, but not as they truly were. Faced with this rejection, they developed a behavioral strategy to ensure acceptance and a sense of belonging. This early-life confusion between two modes of existence is illustrated in this account:

We lived in a small house with my grandmother and paternal uncle—there was no privacy. My family didn’t accept my energy, my anger, or my sensitivity. My parents physically restrained me whenever there was a conflict between siblings—I was the strongest and most energetic, so it was easier to send me to a corner than to resolve the disputes. My family couldn’t handle someone so full of life, so they compulsively tried to suppress me. My need for security and acceptance was so strong that I erased from my consciousness the fact that others wanted to break me. That’s where my naïve kindness was born—one that persists even when others take advantage of it.

(Ferran)

The hope of self-preservation E3 is to regain a sense of connection and fusion with others. This is why they develop a compulsive need to be good and avoid seeing the destructive tendencies of those around them. In conflict, they fail to perceive the reality of their relationships with others, instead creating an idealized image of the other (just as they uphold an image of themselves as a virtuous person). This prevents them from recognizing that, if the other person’s needs aren’t met, they may continue to act harmfully toward them. But what drives this behavior? Most likely, a deep, unresolved pain over a fundamental loss:

One day, as a child, I felt a pain so unbearable that it became tied to my survival. I cried: “Let me live; I just want to live in peace. Why do they want to destroy me when I haven’t harmed them and have only wished them well?” It was a heartbreak cry—a mourning for the loss and for the reality of the world, which was not as I experienced it internally. Back then, I had no choice but to disconnect from myself, adopt the role of the “good one,” and focus entirely on meeting others’ needs and expectations. It was pure survival—because at that time, I couldn’t afford to be independent of others.

(Ferran)

From this need for belonging also comes the idea that love from others must be “earned by doing something.” This “doing” has an external origin (doing what is expected, rather than what one feels, wants, or needs) and an internal function: gaining recognition, which self-preservation E3 constantly seeks. To achieve this, they do what others need from them while suppressing their own needs. This doesn’t bring real satisfaction—only a neurotic sense of fulfillment—so they continue seeking approval without revealing themselves, trapped in an endless cycle: “I have to be the best so you’ll

Barcelona, 2006, pp. 11-34. Winnicott and Bowlby (who supervised her) later reformulated her ideas into the theories of *good enough mothering* and *attachment*, respectively.

approve of me.” The need never disappears because it is never truly met. It’s a longing for recognition that comes from the wrong place.

Self-preservation E3 lacks real confidence that if they simply show up as they are, there will be space for them. In fact, the very idea is unthinkable. Their psyche concludes: “If I want something, I have to earn it,” which means unconditional love—their real need—never arrives: “I want to be loved for who I am, not for what I do.”

It's as if I don't believe I have enough; I always want more and more, which is why work becomes so important. It guarantees survival. It's as if I can't afford to rest. I need to do as much as possible today because I don't know what tomorrow will bring. The pressure to maintain relationships, friendships, and material stability is overwhelming. I am constantly proving my efficiency, practicality, dynamism, courage, kindness, devotion to love, and adaptability.

(Sandra)

Another neurotic need of self-preservation E3 is *determination*, the *power to achieve*. It’s the belief that “If I work hard enough, I will succeed.” The idea of receiving something freely doesn’t exist for them; nor does the possibility of simply accepting. Instead, there’s an internal “no” (“I am not”) and an external “no” (“there is not”); the compulsion is to do in order to be.

During a retreat in Brazil, I received a strong message from my spiritual experience with ayahuasca: “attitude.” It was a powerful word that influenced me throughout the year. I found myself constantly rationalizing my attitude, telling myself, “I'll do this, I'll do that.” I fell back into an obsession with external action, especially in my relationship. I kept doing, doing, doing—thinking that external actions would heal my feelings.

But I was still denying the feelings, denying the pain, and I realized that my denial came from a deep sense of superiority. I truly believed, “I will save myself. I will heal this. I am strong enough to save myself, to save others, to save the world.” In this desperate need to save, I saw that I was seeking validation, even from God: “I'm almost like an angel. I just need God to see my angelic nature and take me closer to Him.” In chasing this angelic ideal, I was denying everything human, instinctive, and visceral, as if these aspects separated me from the Divine. In reality, it was the way I lived that separated me from my own Divinity, from my own truth. I had it all perfectly explained, perfectly understood, but it was so difficult. That's when I realized that the attitude ayahuasca was calling for wasn't external. It was internal. First, I needed to find what was true for me and be able to stand by it, no matter how others reacted. Whether the other person was happy or not wasn't my problem. My problem was being at peace with myself.

(Gisele)

The passion of self-preservation E3 manifests as showing oneself without truly giving oneself—always staying on display. This deep need to be seen comes from the underlying feeling of not having been noticed enough. Some people describe a sense of abandonment: “They didn’t see me (or my needs) the way I needed them to.” This may explain the need to attract attention—but subtly, without being obvious. As Maribel puts it: “I don’t like being invisible. But even less do I want to be the center of attention for the wrong reasons.”

Because they are so committed to being seen, self-preservation E3 struggles to step off the stage and enjoy true intimacy. Yet deep down, they long for someone to see through the facade and rescue

them. As Vera describes it: “A prince or princess who knows how to touch the rusty strings of passion and love.”

Lacking external support, they learn early on to live outside of themselves: “I only exist if others see me,” “I am only seen if I am useful.” According to various personal accounts, these are some of the core beliefs driving their relentless effort:

- I have to learn to forget myself in order to survive.
- If I show my needs, I’ll be left alone.
- Denial of spontaneous existence: it’s better if I am someone else.
- I struggle to surrender to myself. I don’t let myself fall into me. I control myself because there is no one “looking out for me.”
- I feel, deep inside, that no one can support me and that there is no love for me unless I earn it.
- My measuring stick is not my own.
- What I like is not important.
- I need to please, to shine above all else, as a guarantee that I will be loved, respected, or valued; that I exist.
- I am afraid to realize that I have no worth on my own, and at the same time, I am convinced that I must prove my worth by myself.
- I need to prove to myself that I can do, achieve, and speak with authority. In proving this, I find the certainty that I exist and that I am existing “correctly.” No one can point at me and say I am worthless. No one can say: “Off with their head.”
- I have a terrible fear of social death, of being erased.
- I fear criticism, and that fear drives me to improve. They won’t catch me slipping again.
- I have an extremely high tolerance for physical discomfort. My body complains about overexertion, but I interpret it as “weakness” that must be hidden and ignored.
- I believe that if I stop, what’s the point? I don’t recognize my physiological needs as “real.” Having a body and taking care of it feels like a nuisance.

In conclusion, the core need of self-preservation E3 is security. And what drives them toward it? A deep, underlying fear of death.

When disconnected from their foundation as a child, they are left without the internal support of feeling like they exist and without the external support of the adults who should be protecting them. At this point, they come face to face with the very real possibility of dying, in a world that feels either hostile or indifferent—a universe they can only connect with by disconnecting from themselves. The fear of death momentarily floods their consciousness, leading them to adopt an escape strategy to avoid existential anguish: shaping their identity around others. It becomes a form of surrender to the will of those upon whom their life depends—a kind of ontological obscuration that prevents them from realizing that their existence is not actually dependent on any adult but rather that they already *are*, inherently connected to Being itself.

This journey toward the core reveals the nuclear foundation of E3, which is the passion of E6: fear. It’s easy to understand how this fear of survival develops because surrendering their identity to another means placing their life in someone else’s hands. In order to fully develop their personality, they must eventually individuate and differentiate themselves:

Until now, I did everything possible to avoid losing the other person, even if they didn’t care about me at all. My irrational belief was: “If I’m good and fulfill their needs, they’ll love me; I won’t lose them.” Now, I’m starting to see reality instead of creating an image of the other person or of my own “goodness.”

I've been able to go through this process ever since I managed to take distance, to differentiate myself, to gain perspective. The first step was recognizing that what I want matters, that I have the right to be and to express myself as I am. Once I got to that point, and in the face of the other person's neurosis, I learned to stay grounded in myself and to cope with the possibility of losing them.

(Ferran)

"You may think you're controlling me, but in reality, I'll be the one seducing and manipulating you. I'll make myself so indispensable that you'll depend on me, and yet I will never fully give myself to you. When you want more from me, I won't give it; I'll abandon and reject you in some way. I'll do to you what you did to me." That's the game: getting my way in the end without anyone noticing.

(Javier)

Beneath the pain of feeling alone in the world—when, in childhood, E3 doesn't feel seen or allowed to simply *be*—and beneath the emptiness of having neither external support nor a solid sense of self, emerges a terrible fear of death. And with it, vanity, as a way of masking that fear, teetering between survival and annihilation. But within the recognition of their inherent worth, and within the fear that lurks beneath the emptiness, lies the therapeutic hope of self-actualization.

II. The characteristic neurotic need

by Ferran Pauné, Amor Hernández and Assumpta Mateu

As we've observed, the neurotic motivation behind vanity in self-preservation E3 serves to alleviate the sense of existential fragility. Their efforts to contain anxiety around meeting basic needs become *passionate*, manifesting as an excessive pursuit of security.

This brings us to the core of their behavior: "security" is the defining keyword for this subtype. It's about securing survival, plain and simple. External recognition is one of the foundations of feeling secure, which is why self-preservation E3 doesn't like stepping into the spotlight and shining. It feels risky, and they don't like risk. That kind of showy vanity isn't for them. But this is a kind of false humility because the vanity of having no vanity is still a desire to stand out, just without making it obvious. Self-preservation E3 seeks and gives love through security. They sell and offer security. That's why they make good advisors and conversationalists, with a certain perfectionism in wanting to do things well.

Despite appearing so confident and self-assured, self-preservation E3s rarely ask for help or acknowledge that they need it:

Faced with the absolute and growing insecurity of war, I created safety by tensing my body, making myself small, and suppressing my needs. As I grew a little older, between the ages of eight and twelve, I started to feel superior to others, to pretend I wasn't afraid, to lock away my feelings, to find security in sports, gymnastics, and the Girl Scouts.

(Ilse)

The instinct for self-preservation, when tied to vanity, also involves crafting an image of goodness and perfection—not in the sense of superiority over others, but rather in being so perfect that it doesn’t even seem like it. They can even give the appearance of having flaws if that’s what’s needed. This image provides them with the security of remaining accepted by others, on whom they are almost entirely dependent. Self-preservation E3 won’t lose their composure right away—it’s as if nothing is happening (in the broadest sense of the phrase). On the other hand, they make themselves likable by smoothing out relationships; if a conflict arises, they resolve it. If they get angry with someone, they handle everything themselves—judge, jury, and executioner—without involving the other person.

To the world, someone like this is extremely *useful* (the word that appears most often in a self-preservation E3’s vocabulary) because they know how to be discreet and anticipate the desires and needs of those around them. But the price they pay is high: their personal growth becomes difficult because those who benefit from their help don’t want them to stop providing it. As Suzy poignantly notes, “A friend of mine used to say that E3s shouldn’t do personal development work because they become ‘useless’ people.”

It’s no surprise, then, that anxiety runs high and constant, showing up in their pursuit of getting everything just right. Everything must be *whole*, looking new and well-maintained. Any signs of deterioration or failure feel like a threat to their security.

Today, I see the worry lines on my face from years of accumulated stress. Making sure everything is okay, ensuring that everything around me is in order. And the moment something isn't right, I jump in to fix it immediately. Once, I had a very vivid image of myself: I am like a stake in the ground that hasn't been hammered in, standing upright only because other stakes around me lean on me for support. In reality, the one holding everyone else up is actually being held up by them.

(Maribel)

I've sold the image of "being secure" to myself and to the world: "Everything is fine," "Everything is under control." I don't reveal my deeper self because if I did, people might find out that I'm not as secure as I pretend.

(Ilse)

How does someone with this level of concern operate in the world? Self-preservation E3s are tireless workers, relying on efficiency and effectiveness as a form of self-care. This drives them to strive to be first, to be the best. They find satisfaction in accomplishing tasks and place a great deal of importance on personal achievement. Almost without realizing it, they become obsessed with the idea of “doing it all alone, without help.” As a result, they become experts in multitasking, as if they had ten arms and ten legs. Their love language are acts of service, and if their efforts aren’t acknowledged or are criticized, they may experience frustration and anger.

I believed that if I worked extra hours at my company, everything would be under control in my department. If something went wrong, no one could accuse me of not giving my all or of being negligent. I aimed to always go the extra mile so no one could raise objections. My boss once pointed out that I seemed to take responsibility for the actions of all 200 employees in my department.

(Assumpta)

I take pride in the fact that “I can do it alone.” I openly look down on people who are dependent. I feel satisfied with having achieved financial independence and security, and I used to pretend it had come easily to me (though now, I admit it hadn’t).

(Ilse)

For self-preservation E3s, being accepted, understood, and recognized for their competence and care is as fundamental a need as security itself. When that recognition doesn’t come, they often go into autopilot, simply fulfilling the expectations of others. This, in turn, leads to frustration and a sense of failure, which deals a significant blow to their self-esteem and wounded vanity.

Closely tied to their need for recognition is the suffering that comes from being ignored by those they dedicate themselves to. Self-preservation E3 waits silently for acknowledgment, and if they have nothing to offer—if no one needs them or seeks their assistance—they don’t feel loved.

Additionally, as they age, a fear of the future often emerges—especially the idea of no longer being useful to family or friends. Who will love them when they are no longer needed? This is why they seem to fear life itself—fear of becoming a burden, of physical dependence, of poverty, of abandonment—more than the prospect of death per se.

What drives this subtype to live this way is their core fear: fear of *being*, of taking responsibility for “what isn’t visible”—their own feelings and needs.

On the other hand, self-preservation E3 approaches things and people in a “practical” manner, prioritizing functionality over aesthetics. For example, when picking a car, the most important factor is that it’s the safest one. When choosing a home, it’s the one with the shortest commute to work.

When it comes to practical matters, self-preservation E3 gives the impression of having everything under control, within reach, or within their “line of sight.” It feels as if they are living in a watchtower, where parents, children, friends—everyone—is accounted for.

There’s a strong sense of security in being “the best” in terms of efficiency, and adept at resolving work-related, emotional, and practical issues. I put on a front that says, “Of course, I understand, I know, I reflect, I see beyond,” projecting intelligence, empathy, and comprehension. I subtly showcase my achievements and experiences, inviting admiration: “Aren’t you impressed? What an interesting life I lead. What a brave, free, special woman...” There’s an inherent need in me to become a better person, to shine through intelligence, professional excellence, wisdom, integrity, and kindness—to be seen as a responsible, competent teacher, therapist, or expert. However, I often find it quite challenging to confront the people I care about for fear of rejection: “They won’t love me” or “They’ll leave.”

(Ilse)

Their relationships are established with an eye on the future rather than the immediate present. A self-preservation E3 might even keep a friend “in hell,” just in case they ever end up there. They interact with people in a pragmatic way, considering how those connections might be useful down the road. This sense of security allows them to move forward. They often think about what a friend or partner could offer if something were to happen to them. The relationship is not felt as much in the present but rather as an “investment” for the future.

Beneath this character structure lies deep insecurity and a fear of making a fool of themselves or being wrong. They cannot afford to lose control, which turns them into strict self-regulators, often denying their own feelings. They are extremely honest—though self-deceptive in the way characteristic of E3—but nonetheless hold themselves to high personal standards to maintain their image. Outwardly, their image is impeccable, but in private, they may allow their negativity to surface and occasionally exhibit despotic attitudes.

A major underlying fear in this personality type is failure, incompetence. In their mind, they are constantly haunted by the feeling that they are not as good as people *expect them to be*. As a result, they tend to fill their time with responsibilities that make them feel needed and important. They have to try harder! Compete more! Shine even brighter! This compulsive drive to *do* serves as an escape from the anxiety of possible failure. At the same time, they may self-sabotage, avoiding greater challenges (such as a higher-responsibility position or a PhD) to prevent taking risks. A significant portion of their life may be spent controlling others, as a way to distract from their own fear of failure:

I can't stand failure—not even the smallest mistake, an ill-timed word, forgetting something, being late, failing to anticipate a problem, not pleasing everyone, choosing the wrong gift... But above all, hurting someone, making them suffer. And when that happens, the anxiety builds, and I become even less effective, more nervous—desperately trying to fix it by doing something to compensate.

(Maribel)

This personality structure also struggles with resting, recognizing their own limits, or even acknowledging exhaustion. They may push through fatigue, finding it difficult to “allow themselves to be sick” or let others take care of them. This stems from the interplay of two core attitudes: “What I need isn’t important” and “If I’m needed, I exist.”

Everyone can count on me, and I'll do whatever it takes to please them if they ask. But I, on the other hand, don't know how to ask for help, don't know how to receive. I can't be in debt. The concept of receiving something freely, with no strings attached, is hard for me to grasp.

(Maribel)

Over time, the self-preservation E3, molded by the desires of others, becomes their caretaker, clinging to an identity of responsibility, usefulness, and trustworthiness. Their behavior rarely comes across as aggressive, except in very subtle ways.

This neurosis makes it difficult to acknowledge personal limitations and flaws. Alienated from their deepest self, they may develop a self-destructive, depressive, or even melancholic tendency. This leads to a harsh, impatient, and demanding way of treating themselves. However, this is precisely the moment to learn to connect with fear and emptiness, to heal through transformative experience rather than continuing the compulsive search for validation in external interactions that ultimately fail to satisfy.

III. Interpersonal strategy and associated irrational ideas

by Amor Hernández, Vera Petry Schoenardie and Ferran Pauné

The ontic obscuration of the self-preservation E3 leads them to relate to others through the image they want to project. It’s an appealing image, a blend of intelligence, efficiency, and kindness, conveying: “You’ll be safe with me; I’m your best friend, your confidant; I will always be loyal to you.”

However, this deep-seated feeling of loyalty is ultimately misunderstood, as it manifests in serving others' needs without considering their own. One could say that they ensure others never go without, never feel lacking, which grants them a position of power by creating a subtle dependency.

Let's recall a phrase typical of the self-preservation E3: "*Step aside, I'll do it.*" They may appear helpful, but beneath it lies an excess of initiative and impatience, driven by an underlying thought: "*I know how things should be done, and I can do them better than you*" or "*My way is the right way, but you don't know it yet.*" In other words, an arrogance disguised as kindness and grace. Deep down, they believe they are teaching others how to do things—not in the directive way of an E1, but subtly, even appearing humble.

A strong sense of competitiveness is also common in the self-preservation E3, leading them to constantly compare themselves to others. They have an automatic tendency to invalidate other people's ways of doing things because they can't see that there might be another equally valid way of doing things.

Another implicit irrational belief is: "*If I pour my energy, vitality, and motivational speech into something, it will happen.*" This magical thinking propels them into action, reinforcing a sense of power. Their strong persuasive ability works in two directions: convincing both themselves and others. Moreover, their persuasion is bolstered by their well-trained charm: always a smile, a positive remark, a well-placed joke, thoughtful gestures. A person so kind and good-natured couldn't possibly be challenged or proven wrong.

They invest significant energy into maintaining the belief that "*I have to be liked by everyone and do everything perfectly.*" It's no surprise, then, that they make themselves completely available to others, lacking a strong personal criterion since they can "*find something positive in everything.*" This fosters an image of someone who accepts everyone, expecting mutual acceptance in return. As a result, they seem fair, nonjudgmental, and uncritical of others' actions. But this is merely a strategy to secure the same treatment in return: they don't want to be criticized or blamed for anything. Here, we see a defense mechanism against pain—self-preservation E3s cannot bear devaluation or criticism, which becomes unbearable if done publicly. For example:

I can't tolerate making mistakes; I'm terrified of forgetfulness, chaos—anything that means losing control of a situation. I strive to be present, to say and do just the right thing but—if possible—something excellent, and to do so discreetly. But I know I make my presence felt.

(Maribel)

In response to this existential impoverishment, the self-preservation E3 projects an image of self-sufficiency, confidence, and, at times, even arrogance. In any setting, they seek to stand out—whether through sharp words, stylish clothing, energy, or humor—depending on what will make them most visible in that environment.

Their core interpersonal strategy is securing recognition by being useful or indispensable to others. This is how the self-preservation E3 feels they *earn* their right to exist. From this position, they are invulnerable, untouchable, unquestionable. The underlying belief is: "*With all I do for you, how could you possibly question whether I deserve your love?*"

Ultimately, what is deeply healing for the self-preservation E3 is connecting with their deeper emotions—tenderness, softness, and the awareness of emotional connection, whether with another person or with their own existence. However, for this to happen, they must be in a deeply relaxed state. Typically, in a crisis, emotions are suppressed in favor of action.

These observations help us understand their *I-You* relationships, where the self-preservation E3 appears devoted and available but ultimately creates only a superficial connection. Beyond their

apparent quest for recognition (by being perfect and problem-free), they cannot acknowledge their own needs. Instead, by projecting security and earning the other person's trust, they create a relationship of dependence. As a result, the relationship revolves around *You* for the secondary benefit of *Me*, but *We* does not exist. It is within this irrational belief—"I will take care of you so that you will love me"—that the self-preservation E3 conceals their fragility and vulnerability. The unspoken demand is: "I will always be here when you need me, so when I need you, you must be there, too. I won't ask for anything, but you must understand and take care of things as I see fit."

The self-preservation E3 is particularly sensitive to the mistakes of others. If they show vulnerability and the other person doesn't *rise to the occasion*, they won't forgive it. Deep down, they seek the same (albeit false) unconditionality they provide. If the other person fails to meet their expectations, they are easily hurt—but this pain does not surface honestly. Instead, it manifests as advice: they won't say "*I need...*" but rather "*Don't you think it would be better if...?*" or "*If I were in your situation, I would...*" In short, they believe there is a right way to do things, and they function accordingly, expecting others to adopt the same approach. As one person put it: "*If you're going to help me, it has to be my way—or I'll tell you how to do it.*"

Another way they avoid mistakes is by blending into their surroundings, adapting to what the situation demands. However, if others don't do the same, they may react coldly and harshly in private, using detachment as a form of aggression and invalidation. They may also ignore the other person entirely, as if they no longer exist, if they feel let down.

It is striking that self-preservation E3s rarely allow others to support them. Deep down, they have a profound distrust that anyone will truly be there for them. But by rejecting help, the other person *doesn't exist*, which means they don't have to ask for help, nor for forgiveness. After all, how can they receive help from someone who doesn't exist—when they themselves barely exist?

This helps clarify how self-preservation E3 reinforces their sense of loneliness and how their only way of connecting with others is by being useful, feeling superior in the sense of not causing problems or being a burden. The irrational belief here is: "If I have value or if I'm useful, you'll love me; if I cause problems, you won't." Thus, relationships become transactional: "I serve a purpose for you, and you serve a purpose for me." It's striking to observe that, since they don't see relationships as emotional nourishment or companionship, they lack the ability to truly connect through what actually fosters human contact and growth. However, they aren't conscious of this lack; they compensate by doing.

Another key aspect is how they express anger, which rarely appears openly since it's seen as ugly or unrefined. Instead, it comes through irony, comparisons, or subtle put-downs. When self-preservation E3 feels treated unfairly, they may break down in tears in front of others, though more often, they retreat into deep sadness, like a child.

Their emotional expression is, therefore, childish and theatrical. On one hand, they might cry when criticized, seeing themselves as the ultimate victim. On the other, when encountering a new friendship or project, they can become giddy with excitement. Around more expressive types, like E7, E8, or E2, they may even become overly animated or performative, trying to project joy and enthusiasm:

I tend to bottle up my emotions. When I'm in the middle of something intense, it's like I don't feel anything at the moment; later, I process it. It's as if I only allow myself to feel after the situation has passed. I feel like I repress and delay emotions. Allowing myself to feel in real time is difficult—there's a huge block when emotions arise. I have this fear that I'll look ridiculous, that I'll seem weak and humiliated, that my emotions "don't fit" in the moment. I think about embarrassment, what others will think, that they'll laugh at me.

(Sandra)

Regarding the psychodynamic movement from fusion to differentiation, this subtype's deep need for an initial bond and existential merging leads them to adapt to others rather than truly connect with them—or with themselves. This compulsive tendency to merge prevents differentiation, which could otherwise emerge from self-acceptance and from using their energy not to “do” but to sustain their individuality in relation to others. Instead, the self-preservation E3 mistakenly directs their energy toward serving others and proving their place in the world, when a more authentic movement would be using that energy to solidify their own identity.

Additionally, egotism dominates the interpersonal relationships of self-preservation E3, especially in parent-child and romantic relationships, where they tend to hold onto established dynamics rather than adapt to new circumstances. When confronted with others' limitations, instead of standing their ground, they adapt out of fear—fear of rejection, conflict, separation, and ultimately, of being alone. This is why they live in function of others.

Ultimately, this tendency to seek love through fulfilling others' needs only pushes them further from true connection. To relate from a place of love, one must relate from a place of truth (or reality), which requires overcoming the fear of loss. Understanding that true connection can only happen when embracing both the positive and the negative (such as anger or feelings of inadequacy) is key for this vanity-driven type to finally experience real intimacy.

IV. Other characteristic features and psychodynamic considerations

by Ferran Pauné

Origins

The self-preservation E3 character develops in an insecure environment. These are often children who grow up in a setting where they are made to take care of themselves, and sometimes even their parents, in order to receive care in return. The context is usually chaotic: a difficult family situation in which the future self-preservation E3 child feels alone or emotionally neglected, often revolving around an illness affecting a parent or another family member. In any case, there's no room for emotional expression or personal needs, so the child learns early on to “not need.” They suppress awareness of their own needs and instead focus on meeting the needs of others. This attitude is positively reinforced, leading the self-preservation E3 to internalize the belief that their place in the world is earned by “doing good” and being good.

What this image of “goodness” hides is a deep sense of inadequacy, not just in an external sense, but in an existential one.

Sometimes, the self-preservation E3 experiences humiliation if things aren't done the “right” way or if they fail to take care of themselves. This is reinforced by introjected messages like: “You're stupid for falling,” “You're silly for nearly drowning in the pool,” or “If you fall, come here so I can hit you and teach you not to fall”—messages that cement the idea of self-sufficiency. Not only is there a lack of trust that others will be there for them, but there's also the belief that if they want something, they have to take it and do it themselves: “If I do it all on my own, they'll love me.”

This is how the irrational belief develops: that one must be perfect in order to exist. It's a belief so deeply ingrained that no other internal possibility is allowed. Perfection is understood as the absence of emotion and need; it's not a conscious mechanism, but an automatic one.

They cannot allow themselves to have problems, much less show them, because they carry family messages like: "Don't cause more trouble," "We've got enough on our plate already," "You don't know what real problems are."

Thus, the self-preservation E3 builds the habit of being the good host, the good friend, or the attentive and caring mother, as a survival strategy. In an effort to stabilize the chaotic environment, they turn outward, channeling their existential energy into becoming better, purer, into cleansing themselves of needs and emotions, into emptying themselves in order to be for others.

This mechanism is not just a supposed guarantee that others will stay with them but also a state of dissociation: a way of avoiding connection with a painful inner world, repressed beneath a state of apparent emptiness: no experiences, no personal criteria, no clear sense of self. That's why a key question in the process is: "*What had to happen to me for me to stop feeling and needing?*" Judith Herman² writes: "The child victim prefers to believe that the abuse did not occur. In the service of this wish, she tries to keep it a secret from herself. The means she has at her disposal are frank denial, voluntary suppression of thoughts, and a legion of dissociative reactions." Here we could also add: the suppression of emotion.

The self-preservation child turns their focus toward being efficient. The irrational idea that takes root sounds like: "If I fulfill my duties, if I'm practical, I have a guaranteed place."

All their energy goes into meeting external demands, making it impossible to look inward. Entering a state of hyperactivity keeps them from stopping and connecting, so there's no awareness of simply being without doing. Added to this is a compulsive need to keep everything under control, along with the deep belief that such control is actually possible.

Characteristic traits

Body traits

In *The Language of the Body*,³ Alexander Lowen states about the hysterical character: "She comes for help because something has gotten out of control, and she wishes to reestablish that control. [...] She may also undertake an analytic therapy because the control is too effective."

The bioenergetic study of the hysterical character structure points to great bodily rigidity: the back is stiff and inflexible, the neck is tight, and the head is held upright. The pelvis is somewhat retracted and kept tense. What stands out most in this type is that the front of the body is hard because the rigidity of the chest and abdomen is key in building the "armor." We should understand the front as the soft, vulnerable side of the body.

The self-preservation E3 is not a "pure" hysteric in character. They primarily belong to the rigid-hysterical character type with obsessive-compulsive tendencies (order, control, hyperactivity, perfectionism, and self-demand).⁴ Beneath the surface of rigidity, we also find traits of:

- Schizoid structure: "They wanted a boy and I was a girl" (Ilse), "My brother wanted a boy when I was born" (Assumpta), "There were already too many of us when I was born; they didn't want more" (Ilse's patient);

² J. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence*, Espasa, 1997

³ Lowen A., *Language of the Body*, 1988

⁴ Véase S. M. Johnson. *Character styles*. Norton & Company, New York, 1994

- Oral structure, in its compensated form: the omnipotent belief that they can fulfill others' desires, and the pathogenic belief of "I don't need," "I can do everything myself," "I give and care for others."

There are also some shades of:

- psychopathy, in the unwillingness to see the reality of the family situation, the emphasis on achievement, and a kind of omnipotence regarding what can be accomplished, with a sense of grandiosity tied to action;
- overload (masochism), in difficulty in enjoying pleasure, taking responsibility for their own anger, and letting go of the heavy load of tasks and work they take on.

Depending on the prominence of these additional character traits, the body of a self-preservation E3 may look slightly or significantly different from that of a classic rigid type.

Being the best, being useful

A childhood environment oscillating between deception and seduction may lie at the root of the basic distrust and constant sense of danger in this subtype. The early imprint might be something like: "*They say: 'I'll give you something,' but in the end, they give you nothing*"—mere flattery wrapped in empty promises. As a result, the child cannot trust the caregiver.

In her book *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman explores what it means to survive in a climate of danger. While the origins of a self-preservation E3 don't necessarily need to be so extreme, we include some excerpts that may well resonate with their experience:⁵

Adaptation to this climate of constant danger requires a state of constant alertness. Children in an abusive environment develop extraordinary abilities to scan for warning signs of attack. They become minutely attuned to their abusers' inner states. [...] This nonverbal communication becomes highly automatic and occurs for the most part outside of conscious awareness.

This explains the remarkable ability of the self-preservation E3 to intuit what others "need," to serve others, to do what is expected of them.

Children raised in dangerous environments try to protect themselves. What the self-preservation E3 typically does is avoid drawing attention to themselves, becoming frozen and expressionless. As Herman notes, they "avoid any physical display of their inner agitation." And when all else fails, "children attempt to appease their abusers by demonstrations of automatic obedience." Similarly, children who later become self-preservation E3s double down on controlling the situation in the only way they know how: by trying to be good.

A self-preservation E3 typically has a background of implicit psychological neglect from their parents. As a child, they learn to manage life with strategies like: don't make noise, don't cause problems, stay under the radar, take care of the parent figure, and solve any kind of problem. Over time, this stance becomes increasingly rigid and gives way to a lifelong pattern of striving to rise above others, a lack of trust in their own organic self-regulation, and beliefs like: "I'm only worthy if I'm the best," and "I only exist if I'm useful." Their constant drive to be the best or to be useful is born from an unspoken plea not to be abandoned.

⁵ J. Herman, op. cit. p. 13

Self-sufficiency

One of the defining traits of the self-preservation E3 is being able to do things alone. This ability to act and solve problems using only their own resources reinforces both their sense of capability and the image they hold of themselves: that of a self-sufficient, highly effective, and efficient person. This self-image compensates for a deep, hidden sense of awkwardness and shame that lies behind the mask of a self-preservation E3. Shame and awkwardness were feelings repressed early on, while competence and achievement were praised by their environment. These are often children who speak early, walk early, and take on adult responsibilities at a young age.

Control

Control acts as the flip side of anxiety, and anxiety—or fear—is an overwhelming and unacceptable experience for an E3. They manage internal anxiety by turning outward, thereby avoiding any attention to their inner world. This is why the self-preservation E3 is always available to respond to whatever comes from the outside.

This trait is underpinned by the irrational belief that life *can* and *should* be controlled. That leads them to keep their inner world under constant, automatic control, suppressing and flushing out anything emotional or unresolved, while focusing on resolving external conflicts in ways that make others feel okay with them. As a result, they cannot tolerate anger or conflict in others. Ironically, because they need things to be done their way, they also have a hard time giving space and validity to others—their perspectives and ways of being.

An apt metaphor for this dynamic is the chameleon, which can look in two directions at once. This could represent the self-preservation E3: one eye on what the other person is doing, and the other eye on what they themselves are doing.

This controlling behavior, rooted in a deep need for security, propels them to try to control virtually every aspect of their surroundings: daily routines (keeping the house and objects in perfect order), family life (giving advice, solving problems), and work. It's a kind of control that manipulates those around them into doing what they feel is necessary for their own safety: "*If you do what I think is right, then I'll feel at ease.*" They're often unaware of who the other person truly is, masking reality. In turn, their strong sense of superiority, the attitude of "*I know, and you have no idea how things really work,*" comes from a hidden fear of others, of life, of change, and of losing control.

Hyperactivity

Another trait of the self-preservation E3 is doing multiple things at once, feeling better the more they get done. Action fuels this personality type; they find satisfaction in multitasking. Staying busy is a way of feeling safe, and jumping quickly from one thing to another becomes a strategy for maintaining control.

This penchant for multitasking serves two purposes. First, it reinforces their self-image of competence: "*Look how smart and capable I am.*" This has to be constantly reaffirmed, since it masks a sense of internal clumsiness. Second, it keeps them from connecting with their inner world; it makes it difficult to pause and just be with themselves. One testimony puts it well:

Doing several things at once, like preparing food, feeding the cats, and setting the table all at the same time, is something I often do. We need to believe a bit more that we get physically tired, that we have the right to do just one thing at a time. I do things and feel safe; I don't ask for help and I feel better than anyone else. I do it all, I'm a superwoman, I give myself to everyone. And that's how I feel loved.

(Yolanda)

Helping compulsion

Another inseparable trait of the inner void is an automatic tendency to focus on the needs of others, which dynamically stems from an inability to tolerate the emptiness of “not helping,” since there is a deep fear of real contact. The self-preservation E3 doesn’t know how to handle reality, and this clumsiness is neither acknowledged nor expressed; instead, it manifests as an inability to say no. They don’t know how to defend themselves, ask for things, or enter into conflict; it seems easier, at least on the surface, to be there for others and thus avoid confrontation altogether.

Meeting others’ needs serves a dual purpose as well. On one hand, it prevents conflict with the other person, who never fully contacts the dissatisfaction of their unmet need, and therefore doesn’t reach frustration or direct their destructiveness toward the helper. On the other hand, the self-preservation E3 is so focused on others that they neglect themselves. This feeling of not needing anything creates an illusion of strength and perfection, giving them a sense of control over themselves—an illusion reinforced by becoming a reference point for others and thereby earning a place in the world.

It’s also true that this helping compulsion can be a projection of their own unmet needs. In this sense, the self-preservation E3 must learn to ask for help, allow themselves to be nourished by others, drop the strong facade, show vulnerability, ask for forgiveness, say no, live and let live.

Being a reference point

As we’ve just seen, another key trait is being a reference point, which is dynamically linked to the helping compulsion. It stems from an inclination to do what is expected, in order to avoid the conflict of feeling inadequate. This leads to an inability to remain quiet or still, resulting in a tendency to become the leader of any group. However, it’s not always done in an “obvious” way; it’s about weaving a web that makes self-preservation E3s indispensable. By always having something to say or contribute, they create dependencies.

With their well-intentioned attitude, they subtly steer conversations in the direction others expect, always seeking approval and adjusting their emotional expression accordingly. It’s typical of this vain subtype to constantly insert their “two cents,” often before the other person has even finished speaking. They already have a prepared response and, contrary to what they believe, end up repeating the same thing just with their own personal touch.

I often catch myself saying the word the other person couldn't find, as a way of having the final word. We convince ourselves we've come across well, when in fact we've said nothing new, only stolen the conclusion from someone's mouth. It's about looking good at someone else's expense.

(Yolanda)

Confluence

If we understand the self-preservation E3’s confluence with others as a survival strategy, we can better grasp how the need to “be there for others” becomes a lifestyle. This often makes them highly intuitive individuals who, in this regard, may resemble E8s, though with entirely different motivations.

The pain of individuation, the risk of being, and fear of showing themselves are all hidden beneath doing what’s expected—an automatic response that masks the existential emptiness of not

knowing how to act for themselves or where to go without someone else pushing them into constant motion.

It should be added that this fusion or confluence with others is also a way of feeling powerful. Creating dependency through kindness feeds their belief of being needed. But it also comes with a major struggle: being alone, recognizing their own feelings, needs, and boundaries. This being-for-the-other also makes it easier for them to blame the other person when things go wrong, as a way to avoid the responsibility of being, feeling, and needing.

Not knowing how to be themselves without someone else's gaze or approval resembles the fusion seen in E9s, but while E9s tend toward automatic, lazy compliance, the self-preservation E3 helps, advises, and listens to avoid loneliness and feel loved. It's a long-term investment built on patience, restraint, self-repression, and endurance.

The rejection of error

Closely tied to the image of kindness and competence is the self-preservation E3's inability to allow themselves to make mistakes. They don't distinguish thought from action; they act before digesting their thoughts. Thus, their first "error" is stopping to focus on themselves, to be "selfish," and to think about what they truly want.

The error in not wanting to make errors comes from a deep fear of disapproval and rejection. This is a life-or-death issue for this subtype; rejection feels like death. If someone criticizes what they do, it feels like they are criticizing *them*. In short, to reject their actions is to erase their very being.

Competitiveness

A hallmark trait of the self-preservation E3 is the feeling that constant self-improvement is a way of life. It's not just about doing better, it's about *being* a better person. Conforming to the values others expect of them reinforces their self-image as someone adequate and perfect.

This helps keep their vanity "in check," never lowering the bar and pushing each time a bit more to surpass their previous achievements, both in the eyes of others and themselves. The self-preservation E3 is deeply committed to doing things well, resembling E1s, though where E1s strive for moral perfection, E3s pursue perfection through action. From this position, they tend to teach others the "right way" to do things: without errors and preferably on the first try.

A classic trait of this subtype is the "Let me do it" attitude, stemming from the belief that they can do it better and faster than anyone else. Saving time matters. They become quicker so they can take on even more tasks, which enhances their feeling of capability and effectiveness. The loss of self, coupled with vanity, here takes the form of ego inflation through self-exhaustion.

Order

When they lose control and get emotionally overwhelmed, the self-preservation E3s typically get angry at themselves or at the situation or person involved. After all, what's the point of emotions? They view feelings as a waste of time that doesn't solve anything. Emotions disrupt their sense of order and control.

Linked to perfectionism, order is a crucial value in the life of a self-preservation E3. They tend to maintain order across all areas of their life, from their physical space at home to family life and work.

Self-demand

Self-demand operates as an unrestrained force that pushes the self-preservation E3 even further into disconnection from themselves. It prevents them from accepting things as they are or tolerating what

they don't like (such as being angry with someone), instead imposing on them demands to do even better.

This extreme self-demand is tied to their inability to tolerate mistakes or when things don't go as planned (something that generates a lot of internalized anger, as all the effort they put in often seems to go unrewarded).

The persistent pattern is to never give up, on anyone or anything. They control every detail, overanalyze every gesture from others, and blame themselves when things don't turn out as expected. For them, surrender means defeat, and they typically respond to obstacles by trying *every* possible way to overcome them and reach their intended goal.

Knowing how to sell themselves

The image projected by a self-preservation E3 is that of someone confident, trustworthy, kind, available, strong, who doesn't need help, who does everything on their own, who won't be a burden, who knows how to make people feel good, who doesn't get angry, and who won't create conflict. But unlike the persuasive charm of the E7—who, by being admirable, serves their desire to be liked by others—for the E3, the ability to sell an image serves the need to be *accepted*. That's why they're easy to like, but also easy to overlook, since their constant availability and competence can become boring.

V. Emotionality and fantasy

by Amor Hernández and Ferran Pauné

If we take the metaphor of the self-preservation E3 as a “doer” or a “factory of results”—understood as a way of being geared towards action—we could say that this E3 does not *feel* so much as it “manufactures” emotions to fit a specific goal: obtaining recognition.

Their compulsion to act makes them detach from their own feelings, which they see as useless. They hold the belief that feeling is “not very productive,” a function that *can* be dispensed with since it doesn’t contribute to achieving specific goals.

When the self-preservation E3 stops and realizes that, in creating a persona, they have *banished* their true self, the first thing they encounter is a sense of inner emptiness. The primary, recognizable emotion that surfaces is fear, as the foundational emotional state of their character.

As a result, they have no trust in their emotions, allowing them space only when they become “unbearable” and “hinder productivity.” Their relationship with emotions is highly calculated: they control how, when, and why they express them, ensuring that every feeling comes with a rationale and justification. With emotional spontaneity thus suppressed, the self-preservation E3 presents an outward image of confidence, self-sufficiency, and arrogance.

Since emotions are contained and disconnected from the heart, when they emerge unexpectedly, they create a sense of vulnerability. This vulnerability is quickly compensated for with action—either by taking on a challenge or proving themselves. The following account illustrates this dynamic:

I remember when I received the news of my father’s death. Immediately, I felt an immense weight in my chest; I could hardly breathe, I froze for a few seconds, and then my mind started working at full speed. Within minutes, I had arranged my travel tickets, made

decisions regarding household matters, called my office to give instructions to my secretary, etc. All while my husband stood next to me, ready to help!

(Vera)

Ultimately, self-preservation E3s have a deep difficulty in “letting themselves feel” and following the pace and rhythm of their own hearts.

Another of their characteristics is the habit of “looking outward” to check whether their image “aligns” with the situation at hand. This results in an obsession with “not being a bother” and ensuring they “feel at the right moment.” Unsurprisingly, they struggle to tolerate criticism—especially if it comes after they’ve expressed an emotional state or opinion with strong feelings, such as anger or sadness. When this happens, the self-preservation E3 disconnects, feels unsettled, and withdraws. At this point, the fear of “not being good enough” arises, accompanied by an imminent sense of danger—since their relationship with others feels at risk if someone disapproves of what they do or feel. This repression process is illustrated in the following account:

It's as if I only allow myself to feel after the situation has passed. I feel like I repress and delay emotions. Allowing myself to feel in real time is difficult; I can't really explain it. There's a huge block when emotions arise.

(Sandra)

We can now see how and why this subtype mentally rehearses the situations they will face, imagining what they will be like beforehand and, afterward, fantasizing about how they could have gone better. They plan both forward and backward, leaving little room to be present in the moment and experience situations as a process, listening to their true feelings and needs. The self-preservation E3 conceptualizes emotions; when the time comes, the appropriate one surfaces, just as rehearsed in advance. These individuals are not even aware that they manufacture emotions, taking what is essentially an act as something authentic:

My mind never stops; it races ahead of situations, mapping out every possibility, imagining the worst that could happen so that I can have everything under control. It's not just images and potential responses that come up. I also imagine what I would feel, as if I were fabricating not only scenarios but also emotions.

(Maribel)

Behind this veil over their emotional world, vulnerability is never shown to others; it is kept hidden. They struggle to express their feelings and acknowledge their need for care and support.

It is no surprise, then, that self-preservation E3s appear cheerful, uninhibited, and excellent hosts in social settings—attentive and entertaining. But this experience is purely external. They are not truly connected to deep joy, which is rooted in an inner sense of love that they have cut off within themselves. Not even fun comes naturally to them; they have little connection to play, leisure, or pleasure, which they see as a waste of time—just like *feeling*, which only serves a purpose if it leads to an end goal. Even friendship is not understood as *companionship* but as a form of support. They keep friends “just in case”—investing in relationships as potential lifelines in case of future emotional distress or loneliness. They do not *grasp* that friendship fulfills an emotional need simply through presence and warmth. Likewise, they do not see the point of gatherings where people “just talk for the sake of talking” or “get together just to hang out.” There must be a practical purpose, or else the self-preservation E3 must play a role—being the host, the entertainer, the witty one, the confidant, or the helper...

Above all, as mentioned earlier, the most defining aspect of their emotions is that they manufacture them, often “mimicking” the environment or situation at hand. This process is often so automatic that they are unaware of it. As self-preservation E3s learn to slow down, they also learn to stop manufacturing. As Suzy puts it, “I felt what I faked, not what I actually felt.” Assumpta describes it as “sad eyes behind the image of happiness.”

The ability to manufacture emotions extends into various areas. For instance, self-preservation E3s often fantasize about making the world a better place simply by existing. They have an *anastrophic* fantasy of becoming a reference figure for others—someone who helps and is indispensable. To maintain this self-image, they live outside themselves, never fully embodying their true identity.

On the other hand, the *catastrophic* fantasy is the opposite: if they don’t *do something*, something bad will happen. The self-preservation E3 sees themselves as crucial to the world, especially to their family. If they are not present, everything will fall apart. This belief is especially strong regarding their children. If they stop, everything around them will stop, which is why they feel they cannot afford to get sick or fall into depression. And if they don’t “keep everything running,” when the time comes that they need help, they won’t receive it. Because they won’t deserve it.

This leads to a deep difficulty in seeing reality as it is, rather than as they *want* it to be. Since they “do everything possible for others,” they cannot comprehend or accept that others might “fail them”—meaning, that people might not step up the way they *would*. The fantasy here is: “*If I do everything expected of me, then when I need help, others will do everything I expect of them.*” This illustrates how the self-preservation E3 emotionally invests in relationships for their future security.

In the realm of sexual fantasies, there is often a compensatory element, providing a release from their control and emotional restraint. Their fantasies frequently involve themes of freedom and expansion:

My sexual fantasies have always been with men I loved. There's total freedom, and we do it in the sea, on the beach, in the woods, in the swimming pool... Always in open and distant places, like deserted islands.

(Nilda)

There is also a common theme of breaking taboos, and the thrill of the forbidden, serving as an outlet for their self-control:

My fantasies involve having sex on a bus during a trip. It's packed with passengers, and at night, while they're all asleep, my boyfriend and I start making love. Then they wake up, start watching, and get aroused... Several people begin masturbating or having sex too.

It's always in public, in a place where I don't know anyone so my image remains intact. Like at the beach or a club, always surrounded by people watching, who eventually join in too.

(Sandra)

VI. Childhood

by Ferran Pauné

How is the childhood of a self-preservation E3? The answer to this question can shed light on how such a personality takes shape in early life.

A defining feature of this type's childhood is a profound emotional upheaval in one of the most fundamental instinctual needs of growth: survival. When this need is frustrated, threatened, or obstructed, it creates insecurities and fears in the self-preservation E3 that prevent them from feeling a sense of fulfillment and security—the feeling that life is about more than just survival.

My mother says I cried a lot. I would calm down when she nursed me but would soon start crying again. Some time ago, I realized that what I felt wasn't hunger but cold.

(Maribel)

Between nine months and two years old, I suffered from severe asthma attacks. Later on, I remember the intense anguish and anxiety I experienced in bed. I would lie face down in a fetal position, rocking back and forth insistently. At six years old, I developed nearsightedness, which worsened until I was twenty-one.

(Ferran)

This personality type experiences an early childhood marked by feelings of non-acceptance or rejection within the family.

It's usually common for one of the parents to come across as demanding. When that is the case, it also has an impact when the other parent tends to assume a secondary role or shows an evasive character. As Nilda recalls, "I was raised with a lot of rigidity by my mother (E1) and intellectually guided by my father (E5)."

In such situations, though not always, the father figure tends to be invalidated (either by the mother or by his own absence), appearing weak or detached. As a result, the child may unconsciously assume the paternal role, especially if they do not see a strong or valid model of masculinity. This dynamic is especially noticeable among self-preservation E3 women, who may internalize the father's role under the logic that if the figure is absent externally, they must embody it themselves.

My parents lived with my paternal grandparents. My grandmother, a tough woman, was the true head of the household—the superwoman who had given birth to and raised many children and knew how to do almost everything. My grandfather was practically invisible. My father clung to his mother's skirts and was rarely home, working as a bricklayer by day and drinking in bars at night. My mother was a long-suffering woman.

(Maribel)

There is often a lack of acceptance of the child, both physically and in terms of their instinctual-emotional nature. Physically, this might stem from the child not meeting family expectations. Emotionally, parents may struggle to handle the child's natural energy or expressions of anger. It's important to remember that E3 is a highly energetic type. As a result, the child's rebelliousness (strength, vitality, and anger) may be rejected, even by loving parents:

Before me, my parents had two sons. After so long, they finally had the long-awaited baby girl. But it turned out I was born with a manufacturing defect: congenital torticollis. At the age of six, my parents made me undergo corrective surgery. I now understand that this was a form of rejection. A rejection I internalized, since I have no memories, no images of myself before the age of six. The first memory I have is of standing in front of a mirror, wearing a

plaster cast that covered me up to my waist—only my arms and face were left exposed! It's quite telling that, to correct a flawed image, I had to spend a long time encased in a fixed position.

Sensing the rejection of my appearance, I made a deep, subconscious “decision” at some point: to create a new image—one that everyone could be proud of, one far superior to the version my parents had created and rejected. An image I could (at least in my mind) control. And I wouldn't need anyone else to do it.

(Vera)

After my mother, the first people to see me were my maternal grandmother and my father. Grandma said, “She’s ugly, isn’t she?” And my father had to admit it.

(Maribel)

After my older brother, my mother gave birth to twins. My twin was born first. My mother thought the labor was over and didn’t even realize I was still inside her until the doctor said, “Here comes another one,” a full fifteen minutes later. They always told me that my father’s hair turned gray overnight. I wasn’t expected, and I was just another burden. As an adult, I’ve had moments of deep realization where I’ve cried while justifying myself: “I had to be born to live!”

From my earliest childhood (around five or six years old), my father—emotionally detached—would mock any display of genuine emotion and suppress my natural expressions of energy: aggression, fighting spirit, impotent rage.

(Ferran)

If one thing stands out in this childhood experience, it’s the quest for autonomy as a means of survival. There is a belief, almost a conviction, that survival depends on self-sufficiency.

For years, my family told this anecdote. I must have been around eight or nine months old. My mother worked in the family store downstairs, while I slept in a crib in a bedroom on the first floor of our very large house. My mother would check on me frequently. But she noticed that I started crying every time she came up to see me. She decided she couldn’t let me cry every time, so she began watching me through the crack in the door instead. One day, I must have been especially tired of my solitude because I climbed out of the crib, crawled down a long hallway, went down a flight and a half of stairs, and crossed another long, dark hallway until I reached the store’s entrance, where they found me crying. My parents were terrified; they couldn’t believe it.

Later, during a life-line therapy session, I had a powerful realization: this experience had profoundly shaped my personality. I understood that this might be where my deep-seated belief was formed—the belief that I have to provide for myself because no one else will; that I can do it; that I exist only in what I do; that, ultimately, no one is really there to take care of me. This conditioning is so strong that, even with a hyper-caring and generous mother, I have never been able to fully rely on anyone.

(Assumpta)

I was born strong and vigorous, full of vital energy (unlike my twin). Even as a child, I was very affectionate and communicative with everyone, able to win their affection.

(Ferran)

The recognition of myself as a self-preservation E3 comes from my strong need to feel secure. My wild fantasy is that, with sufficient financial resources, I could somehow “cheat” or “buy” health, longevity, and keep anything bad from happening to me.

(Vera)

The combination of rejection (or lack of acceptance) and the need for parental approval leads the child to seek ways to please, striving for recognition from at least one parent. They do whatever will earn them praise, as Maribel recalls: “My father used to throw parties at home. He would put on music so I could dance while all the relatives and friends gathered around, clapping... And I would pour my soul into it, making sure I didn’t disappoint him and that he looked good.”

No wonder that they typically model themselves after a parental figure or someone close to them, as a way to escape the anxiety of feeling neither secure in *being* nor in *doing*—understood here as the first attempts at action, the early stage where one is still testing what works best for gaining acceptance.

My adolescence was marked by a significant struggle with social relationships. My father had a huge influence; I took him as my model. I always tried to share his opinions, sought his advice before acting in any situation, and followed his ideas, his words, and his ways almost without exception.

(Ferran)

All of the experiences described thus far inevitably lead the self-preservation subtype to grow up too soon, either by taking on responsibilities for others or by seeking security through work (stability, money). Let’s examine an event, which shaped the self-preservation instinct in a woman around the age of five or six:

My mother was excessively demanding (“Good is the enemy of the best,” she used to say). It wasn’t enough for her that I could already read and write perfectly. I also had to master every embroidery stitch the nuns taught. I hated it, I found it pointless, and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t get the stitches right, which always ended in tears. That, in turn, made my mother furious. She’d punish me and argue with my father, who always took my side.

One night, after one of those fights, my mother came into my room and said, “One day, you’ll remember this—I’ll leave, and then your father won’t fight with me over you anymore.”

I spent weeks unable to sleep, watching the door, worried about my father. What would happen to him without her? They took me to doctors for my insomnia, gave me medication, but nothing worked.

Then one day, I found the solution. I decided I could take care of my father and the house cats. And I wouldn’t cry!

I started watching my mother closely. How did she make rice? And those eggs my father loved—how were they cooked? Washing shirts was easy, but ironing would be a challenge... In no time, I felt ready. She could leave whenever she wanted. I slept again, reassured that my father would be safe with me. I would take care of him, the house, and the cats. That was when I replaced “being” with “doing.”

I learned that problems aren’t solved by crying—especially not in public—and that the world belongs to the strong.

(Nilda)

Described by their peers as mature beyond their years, these children find comfort in that perception. Ferran recalls, “I spent my first savings on books about my passion, nature, while other kids were still spending theirs on candy.”

It’s no surprise, then, that the value of hard work is instilled in them early on:

I come from a family with severe financial difficulties, and I wanted things—toys, clothes (my mother only ever bought second-hand clothing)... but it was never possible; we had no money. So I fantasized that people with money must be very happy.

(Sandra)

My grandmother placed great value on hard work and effort. She’d always find little tasks for me and reward me with some money, which made me feel appreciated and also gave me a bit of financial independence for my hobbies. I worked hard to please her.

(Ferran)

This dynamic goes hand in hand with the rejection of pleasure and fun, particularly evident in the repression of sexuality.

We also see how self-preservation E3s, through the adoption of role models, attempt to avoid repeating their parents’ unhappiness. This desire manifests in many ways—determination not to marry, the drive to “be someone” in life, the will to stand out, and so on.

I began working at six, helping my mother make salty snacks to sell. At that age, she also taught me crochet and embroidery, and I already had household chores. Since then, I’ve never stopped working. But even then, I knew I didn’t want the life my parents had. I wanted money. I wanted to make a name for myself. A different life, without so much suffering. I always heard my mother complain about our poverty. I also always heard her telling her friends about my father’s infidelity and how all men were the same. I decided then that I would never rely on a man for my livelihood, and I would never get married either, because marriage only made people miserable and caused suffering.

After making those decisions, I became a very serious girl. I didn’t want to play anymore, and all my energy went into doing. “Do in order to have” became my motto from the age of six. I wanted recognition, first from my mother, proving I was good at what she expected of me. But most of the time, I did things even without being asked, just to please her. So, I channeled all my energy into excelling at everything I did. When I was eight years old, I started practicing sports, and was always among the best. It was my way of being seen, of being noticed. I thought that this would make people like me and accept me.

(Sandra)

How do self-preservation E3s fulfill their need for recognition and visibility? Through effort, since they haven’t found acceptance simply in *being*. That’s why many of them become high-achieving students, chasing the validation they crave. There’s often a strong drive to surpass their siblings, with whom they are in constant comparison and competition:

A brilliant student, always following the rules at my Catholic school, I made sure my parents never had any reason to hear complaints about me.

(Nilda)

To my father, I was his pride. To my sister, I was an infuriating point of comparison. To some of my classmates, I was the teacher's pet. And I suffered because I wanted to please everyone, to do everything right, but I had no idea who I really was.

(Maribel)

Throughout my school and university years, learning always motivated me. For example, I started primary school at four years old and quickly excelled at reading and writing. Teachers would ask me to read in front of the class, and by the end, I'd get applause. I even skipped a grade because they considered me ahead of my peers. At that school, at the end of each month, the student with the highest grades would be awarded a ribbon or sash to wear on the way home. I remember walking down the street with those ribbons on my chest, feeling proud and happy to show off. Looking back, I think that really shaped my need to be efficient and recognized.

(Assumpta)

My siblings' and my life revolved almost entirely around mountaineering and similar sports—our father's greatest passion and pride. The goal was to be strong, efficient, fast, skilled... the best. That shaped much of my life, setting me apart from urban social circles. We lived in the city, but we turned our backs on it. I had to live up to my father's standards.

(Ferran)

But how can one achieve perfection in the relentless effort to be accepted, especially under the weight of constant demands? By showing no signs of rebellion or inadequacy, of course. And yet, the individual still needs to release their pent-up energy. The escape valve, in that case, is rebellion over trivial matters—never anything that would truly sever the bond with home.

This trait also carries a solitary dimension, which serves as a means to escape pain.

I was a quiet child, always trying not to be a burden. I was something of a recluse, always immersed in books and magazines, playing with the house cats, and watching the ants.

(Nilda)

The absence of emotional connections in my life became fertile ground for a profound influence that took hold of me around the age of eight: the figure of Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente. His passion for nature, which he shared so vividly with children ("... and my dear children might be wondering..."), resonated deeply with my own love of life. I would spend hours on a hill near my house, hidden among the bushes, watching birds up close. At eleven, I took my first field notes, imitating Félix. Not only did he open for me the door to a fascinating world, but he also became my idol and mentor.

(Ferran)

I was a lively, cheerful, and playful little girl—until I was about five or six, when I started hearing my sisters and cousins say that I was annoying, that nobody could stand me. That's when I completely shut down. I became a silent, observant, and deeply sad child.

(Sandra)

VII. Persona and shadow: destructive to themselves and others

by Ferran Pauné and Assumpta Mateu

Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. At all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions.

~ Carl G. Jung

After examining the ways in which self-preservation E3 presents itself to others, this chapter will analyze the dominant passion of this enneatype in light of Jung's theory, particularly the concepts of *persona* or *mask* and *shadow*.

From a Jungian perspective, self-preservation E3 is inextricably tied to the *persona-mask*—so much so that they often confuse the face they present to the world for acceptance with their true sense of self. The shadow, on the other hand, is the more instinctual, primal part, the archetype Jung associates with the pre-human past, when survival and reproduction were our only concerns, and we had no awareness of ourselves as individuals. It also includes the “dark side” of the self—the more negative, uncontrolled aspects related to the instinctual center: erotic love, pleasure, letting go, and simply enjoying existence. It is, ultimately, the part of ourselves we refuse to acknowledge.

The way self-preservation E3 presents itself to others can be summed up with these descriptors: someone competent, serious, perfect, reliable, secure, at the service of others and happy to be so, without problems, having overcome all difficulties, and in total control. These individuals are deeply rooted in *doing* and self-improvement (“I can”), as their achievements (“I am valuable”), successes (“I am seen”), and status (“I am someone”) are all aimed at constructing a mask that compensates for unmet emotional needs and developmental deficiencies. By overvaluing achievements and success, they sacrifice pleasure, rest, and play. Their deeper frustrations, however, tend to surface in subtle ways, as described in the following testimony:

That manipulative and neurotic side—the one that makes me appear endlessly available, responsible, good, capable of handling everything flawlessly—is just as much a shadow as the whiny, overwhelmed, stressed, angry, and demanding side that erupts uncontrollably when I can't sustain the mask any longer.

(Assumpta)

Self-preservation E3 typically comes across as someone who is always busy, energetic, optimistic, full of plans, expectations, and exciting projects—self-sufficient, independent, and content with life. Their constant busyness serves not just to demonstrate competence but also to shield themselves from the insecurity of simply *being*. In the end, their stress is deeply tied to their search for security. That's why they project confidence, give advice, offer solutions, teach others how things should be done, and “rescue” people. Another hallmark of this subtype is its kindness and benevolence, akin to the Robin Hood archetype—they seek to stand out through good deeds.

Despite being highly competitive, self-preservation E3 can work well in teams, often seeking leadership in organizing and executing tasks. However, contrary to popular belief, when someone else is the leader, they choose to align with them rather than challenge their authority—trading leadership for greater security.

That said, when they feel threatened, they may attack from behind (even if it's disguised as seemingly objective criticism). In these cases, they also tend to withdraw emotionally, as they have a very low tolerance for rejection and discord. But why this extreme difficulty in dealing with rejection? Because they must hide from themselves how deeply they *need* others, especially when those others are emotionally distant. And, after all, who does someone disconnected from themselves seek to connect with? People who are equally disconnected.

It's paradoxical that a person so fixated on blending in would go to such lengths to avoid true connection—both with others and with themselves—essentially self-sabotaging. Genuine connection requires mutual listening and an encounter rooted in authentic feeling. But why does self-preservation E3 avoid this deep listening and real emotional engagement? Because they must conceal from themselves their fear of *being*—of expressing themselves, of revealing who they truly are, and of engaging in an honest relationship with someone who might expose that truth. As Nilda puts it:

For me, the most distressing thing was not knowing whether the happiness or sadness I felt in certain moments was real or just a reflection of my adaptation to whatever emotions were expected at the time.

The difficulty in surrendering to relationships and trusting life without constantly proving their worth—and what lies beneath that struggle—becomes clear in the following account:

My shadow is a mask hiding everything I don't want to admit to myself or, especially, to those around me. I project strength where I have none, confidence where I feel insecure, determination when I am deeply unsure. I show kindness while secretly calculating how to use the situation to my advantage. I pretend to know things I don't, and I act sweet when, deep down, I feel malicious. I present myself as different, independent, as if I need no one, while in reality, I feel utterly dependent on everything. I play the modern, progressive role when inside I'm old-fashioned—and vice versa. It's all one big self-deception.

(Sandra)

The very qualities that make self-preservation E3 efficient and impressive are also what drive their deepest struggles, ultimately undermining emotional bonds instead of strengthening them.

Precisely one of the most defining traits of this subtype—their apparent kindness and harmlessness—actually forms the foundation of their manipulation, a trait that often remains hidden. This *monstrous* side emerges when they have a goal to achieve and a need to conquer. Their approach is to use any means necessary, adapting their morality to fit their desires. The ends justify the means. However, these means remain hidden to preserve the image of being a “good person.” A perfect example of this is found in the novel *Dangerous Liaisons*⁶ (and its film adaptation), where the Marquise de Merteuil stops at nothing to seduce the man she wants—scheming to eliminate rivals and orchestrating situations that break his self-esteem, keeping him emotionally dependent on her. When she fails, her malevolent side emerges, and she seeks cold vengeance to compensate for her frustration and defeat.

Another aspect of this subtype is the constant obligation to appear confident. This is the great torment of self-preservation E3s. They cannot afford to waver in their certainties; they cannot be lacking in any way. Underneath this lies the fear of invalidation, humiliation, and disgrace—in short, rejection.

⁶ *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, 1782)

It's worth noting that self-preservation E3s struggle more than other subtypes when it comes to facing conflict. Why? Because conflict and confrontation bring chaos, rejection, insecurity, and the looming threat of abandonment or estrangement. Since they find it difficult to handle conflict directly and openly, they become experts in diplomacy and mediation. But of course, the price they pay is often the sacrifice of their own coherence, truth, and connection to their real needs and desires.

For all these reasons, self-preservation E3s never show weakness. On top of that, they want others to realize—without them saying it—that they need help. And even then, they might still reject it: “*No, thanks, I’m fine.*” Ultimately, once again, beneath their fierce independence lies the primal fear of survival—a fear that destroys relationships.

Another way this fear manifests is through extreme difficulty in acknowledging their own needs and openly asking for help. Admitting they need something triggers the fear of abandonment and rejection: “*If they see I can’t do it alone, they’ll leave me.*” This leads to the specific *inhumanity* of self-preservation E3s: they disconnect from their own feelings to avoid being abandoned or rejected—and, by extension, disconnect from the feelings of others as well.

I hide my needs, my fragility. That way, there’s no real relationship—it’s more about letting myself be “used.” And that becomes my bargaining chip when I want something in return. The toxic part of this is that others are always in debt to me, and I end up feeling alone. I also have a tendency to lecture people, to think I know them better than they know themselves, to treat them like objects: if they serve me, great; if not, I replace them with someone else.

(Maribel)

It's no wonder that they fear being exposed as not being as good or generous as they appear. This fear drives them to work even harder to maintain the mask—the image that they can do it all. You can see how their optimism hides their despair, their busyness masks their anxiety over feeling empty, and their constant adaptability conceals their deep fear that their entire identity is built on unstable ground.

Another point of interest is their lack of true spirituality or genuine faith in God or the universe. On one hand, this leaves them anxious and fearful about everything since they don't feel part of something greater that could bring peace or reassurance. On the other hand, they approach spirituality through achievement and image, using it as just another way to prove their worth and be accepted. True spirituality never takes root because, for them, it's just another goalpost: the promise of becoming *better* and *more worthy*, of achieving happiness without having to confront their inner darkness. They might present themselves as highly spiritual people because it brings them recognition, but in reality, it's just an escape from their own disconnection—a way to hide their fear of the world, of life, of truly *living*.

Since the future is unpredictable and uncontrollable, it terrifies them. To cope, they focus on securing themselves against uncertainty in every material way possible, because they do not trust in life or in God.

One of the most destructive aspects of self-preservation E3s may well be the way they channel their deep frustration of not feeling like they truly *are*—that is, of intuitively knowing they are off track from self-actualization and far from fulfillment. This pain, born from a profound sense of disconnection, is redirected into demands and anger toward those around them. The rage they suppress to maintain their “good” and “capable” persona eventually seeps out in the form of criticism, high expectations, constant complaints, and even authoritarianism. Let's look at the following example:

I keep my shadow behind closed doors, at home, with my family. If people outside say they always see me smiling, at home, there’s irritability, exhaustion, sudden fits of hysteria, yelling,

complaints, reproaches. I hide my insecurities—my physical flaws, everything I have no clue how to do, my ignorance, my fears... Maybe my greatest fear is loneliness, abandonment. I hide my sense of superiority under the mask of being a champion for equality and the underprivileged. I bury my pain so deep I don't even let myself feel it. I store tension in my body, especially on the right side (my shoulder and hand hurt, I have chronic sinusitis). There's barely any room for inner silence; it's either mental noise, hyperactivity, or both. I'm extremely demanding of myself and others. I measure everything by my own standards, and that can be very hurtful, making others feel small.

(Maribel)

This difficulty in truly connecting—with others, with themselves, and with the reality of their own existence—leads self-preservation E3s to weaken or even destroy their relationships, as well as their own chances of climbing out of their existential void.

In the end, the most destructive thing—for both themselves and those around them—is the way they mask their inner emptiness with a *valuable* persona, all while their inner turmoil leaks out in harmful ways. The way back home is the opposite path: the shift from *mediation* to *meditation*.

VIII. Love

by Ferran Pauné

If we had to define the dominant tendency in the realm of love for self-preservation E3 in a single phrase, it could very well be *love-security*.

In this subtype, maternal love takes the lead; love is channeled through being useful. Their compulsion is to ensure that the conditions around them remain safe and stable, giving them a sense of control over their immediate environment.

Their need for affection shows up as constant care for others and a drive to avoid conflict or anything deemed inappropriate. This tendency to adapt can go so far that they forget their own feelings in favor of fulfilling a certain idealized model of love. Though this pattern starts in childhood in response to their caregivers, it often reaches its most painful expression in romantic relationships.

Admiring love, by contrast, never takes up their whole inner world. It tends to be reserved for a few people, such as spiritual mentors, scientists, or people who stand out in an area they personally consider important.

Finally, erotic love is usually the least developed or most dormant at the conscious level. One could say that the compulsion to always be doing, to stay in motion, makes it hard for them to open up to pleasure. It's not surprising, then, that if they feel admiring love toward one of the figures mentioned above, they may throw themselves into work in service of the world that person represents, neglecting pleasure and the rhythms of everyday life in the process.

So how does a self-preservation E3 experience love? Generally, they expect to receive admiring love in all areas of life while offering little admiration in return. How could they give admiring love when they themselves exist to be admired?

From their partner, they expect all three types of love since this kind of relationship is one of the most important aspects of their life. Romantic partners are everything for self-preservation-sexual

E3s, while for self-preservation-social E3s, the professional sphere takes center stage, along with the recognition they gain for their services and efforts.

From significant figures like mentors, self-preservation E3s expect both compassionate and admiring love. In return, they give admiring love and, to a large extent, compassionate love as well—expressed through loyalty, commitment, affection, and service. The following testimony sheds light on how these different types of love manifest:

Few people are worthy of my admiration. I tend to scrutinize authority figures, and I had a hard time when someone I blindly believed in let me down. When I admire someone, I feel unworthy and I'm usually quite timid when approaching them. But if they show interest in me, I become unconditionally devoted.

(Maribel)

It's quite common to hear individuals of this subtype talk about how having a child has been a healing experience: "What healed me was my daughter. Having a child brings back a sense of wonder, genuine love, and intensity," says Maribel. Similarly, they often take on the role of counselor, offering maternal love while receiving admiring love in return. It's not rare to come across cases like that of a woman who, while advising a friend about her recent breakup, didn't mention that she herself was going through the same process—separating from her partner the very next day.

However, the type of love that likely causes the most internal conflict for this subtype is erotic love, as it's the least developed and integrated. Everything associated with pleasure, sensuality, or spontaneity has been repressed in favor of adapting to the environment. Through this self-restraint—even forgetfulness—the *inner child* is pushed into a hidden, internal space. A self-preservation E3 struggles to express or share their desires and frustrations, sometimes withdrawing from social life and the world altogether.

It's typical for them to view sexuality as something dirty or shameful, thus gravitating toward partners who represent *what is good*. In many cases, romantic relationships function more like friendships. This, along with the aforementioned tendency to take on the role of a *counselor*, creates points of overlap with E1. (These are only some of the similarities that lead self-preservation E3s to mistakenly identify themselves as E1s on their typological journey.)

Self-preservation E3s, therefore, often experience internal tension between the security of the world they have built and their frustration at being unable to fully embrace pleasure, expansion, and adventure. Nevertheless, life has a way of bringing to the surface these unacknowledged aspects of themselves that they view as unacceptable.

The need to integrate their whole self frequently leads them to an ongoing conflict between the desire to experiment and open up to change, and the fear of loss. Here are some eloquent ways they express this:

I make sure not to show when I like someone, and I am careful to be faithful so I don't create conflict or risk my partner leaving me.

(Ferran)

*I've repressed my sexuality; I present myself as **kindness**.*

(Maribel)

For me, desire is dangerous, and I have not allowed it in myself or my partner.

(Teodoro)

Ultimately, romantic relationships for self-preservation E3s are built on maternal love and emotional dependence, as the following accounts make clear:

I express love by taking care of and doing things for others. I take care of people, but I wish they would do the same for me. If they don't do it the way I expect, I feel like they don't love me.

(Maribel)

In relationships, all my effort goes into making sure the other person feels safe with me. "You can trust me, I provide security." I make myself valuable. In today's world, I offer something priceless: trust. So, I create a sense of obligation, expecting my partner to give me the same trust and security in return. After all, who are we without a significant other?

I take pride in being faithful, paying attention, being present, sacrificing myself, and adapting to my partner's needs: I don't drink, I call at night, I take care of them. My goal is to avoid causing any worry.

(Teodoro)

The ideal love, for me, was about offering maternal love, but never receiving it.

(Juanjo)

We have learned that love is earned through effort.

(Maribel)

The self-preservation E3 thus lives in a perpetual state of uncertainty, caught between love and need, between pleasure and goodness, between sensuality and friendship.

In intimate relationships, they seek the warmth and contact they didn't receive from their opposite-sex parent. For example, a self-preservation E3 man who lacked closeness with his mother as a child will be drawn to fulfill his most basic needs: safety and warmth. Without that foundational experience, it's hard for him to expand outward into the world. His sexuality will often feel incomplete, whether he's confined to the safety of his relationship or projecting erotic love outside of it.

The internal longing for happiness, paired with the inability to simply *be* or to feel authentic, causes the self-preservation E3 to idealize love. Their model of love looks like something out of *Little House on the Prairie*: a devoted relationship where sex must always be an expression of love, and certain sexual practices are off-limits because "that's not love." This idealization of fidelity and happiness often leads them to renounce sex or being "sexy" altogether. They carry their pursuit of excellence into the sexual realm too, which makes it hard to engage in everyday, ordinary intimacy and instead pushes them toward something either intense or exalted.

This projection can result in a dramatization of sexuality, tied on one hand to the replacement of the real with the imaginary, and on the other, to relating through action. The former is connected to the self-preservation E3's fantasy life, where they construct idealized, deeply internal emotional bonds they relate to, but which have little to do with the actual other person. It's an internal ideal, built in the image and likeness of the perfection they seek, which leaves little energy left for real connection.

The role that *action* plays in the relationship stems from the self-preservation E3's discomfort with vulnerability—specifically, with showing affection and speaking about it. Action becomes a form of protection against any potential harm or emotional overstepping from the partner. As a result, love is expressed through attitudes and gestures; in short, through *doing*. The stronger the attraction (read: dependency), the more they throw themselves into doing for the other person, to the point where it can

become overwhelming or invasive. That same unconscious self-referencing—the need to be needed, to be seen—makes it hard to really see the other. The self-preservation E3 is drawn to people who seem valuable, because being with them makes them feel valuable themselves. But they don't truly care about what the other person might need. It's a paradox: they seem to be giving everything, but it's not quite *to* the other. It's more about earning love or worth. This pattern is reflected in the *Warm Fuzzy Tale* from transactional analysis, which tells the story of an emotional cooling-off where genuine expressions of care are slowly replaced by plastic ones. What remains is a kind of generalized, conventional kindness.

I'm protective, helpful, a counselor... "maternal" love is highly developed in me. But there's a price, because it's not selfless—I'm looking for recognition. I'm loyal to my friends, very sociable and family-oriented. My desires, my needs always come last, and I prioritize the needs of everyone around me (which is a lot of people).

(Maribel)

So, what ego mechanisms are at play when the self-preservation E3 is choosing or attracted to a partner? The driving force behind “security-love” is a deep craving for emotional safety and recognition at the most personal level. They’re drawn to partners who resemble their mother or father, and who match the values they grew up with. But they don’t *see* this consciously. It’s also difficult for these individuals to love without admiring; they don’t know how to coexist with people they see as failures.

In relationships, they usually feel neglected or unfulfilled, which eventually turns into frustration, emotional restraint, or the feeling that “*this isn't the kind of loving relationship I should be in.*” Rather than face that truth, and the intimate discomfort it would bring, they escape into fantasy. “If they don’t give me anything, I survive by making it up,” Juanjo says.

The fear of change, uncertainty or the unknown is sometimes so overwhelming that it’s the *body* that stops the self-preservation E3. They endure and hold back so much that they get sick. Only when their physical health declines or they feel close to death do they finally take action, driven by survival instinct. Ironically, this instinct had been paralyzed by a fear of death all along.

We don't know how to end things. It's terrible. I worked so hard to win a guy over, and even when it wasn't working between us, I kept trying because it just had to work out.

(Maribel)

This complex security system leads the self-preservation E3 to crazy conclusions like: “*If I'm not overexerting myself, I'll die,*” “*If I surrender, I'll die,*” “*If I lose control, I'll die.*” There’s also a fear of becoming complacent if everything is handed to them. But at the same time, this internal system provides the necessary signals to notice when a relationship is empty or not working. So if it feels draining or burdensome, to them, it’s not love.

This subtype finds it incredibly difficult to leave a partner, even if deep down they know it’s not the right person for them. There’s a persistent belief that they “*can't be the bad one*” or “*can't just leave.*” They’re often afraid of causing pain: a self-preservation E3 can drag out a relationship for years just to avoid hurting the other person, even though that very state of limbo and lack of courage ends up creating a slow, quiet suffering for both parties. Underneath it all is a fear of loss and pain, and a strong resistance to letting go. Many men have described it like Juanjo: “We act like we’re being honest, but it’s self-deception—really, it’s just fear of being abandoned.”

It’s common for the self-preservation E3 to have few but long-lasting relationships. Since they’ve shaped themselves into being good and adaptable in the pursuit of safety, when they finally open up to

change, it's not unusual for them to revisit a love they once put aside. You often read in their biographies how, after an initial "security-love," they later experience a new kind of relationship—what could be called a "passion-love." Ilse puts it this way:

My second love, years later, was a passion-love. He was a very passionate man, insecure, but a great lover, very irrational, a bit crazy, not very socially adapted, macho, much younger than me, adventurous, with multiple exes, full of fire and life.

I could afford to be in this relationship, because my needs for basic material security were already taken care of; I could provide for myself. I did feel an internal conflict over values; I even made a list of "do's and don'ts," but the passion and my craving for intensity ultimately won.

When it comes to romantic relationships, the self-preservation E3 is torn between the need for control and the fear that lies beneath it:

The notion of being emotionally dependent on a man felt unbearable to me. So many fears came up: fear of being betrayed, of being abandoned, of being made secondary, of playing the role of a clown... All of that would make me jump ship, leave the relationship, quickly. I'm fully aware of how hard it is for me to share. I want everything exactly my way, and if it's not how I'd like it, I invalidate the other person. I lose my spark and any positive emotions, and the negative ones take over; then I can't manage to keep the relationship going.

(Sandra)

Finally, in the way they build relationships, there's a drive fed by the urge to prove to themselves that they *can* get what they long for, that they *will* succeed. Their crazy idea is that they have the power to make things happen exactly how they envision them, because *their way is the right way*. In this sense, they idealize and even romanticize the other person, and being with them becomes a kind of personal mission—an act of self-affirmation, a demonstration of their own power. All of it reflects a deep difficulty in trusting life itself.

IX. Historical figure: Clare of Assisi

compiled by Amor Hernández



Portrait of St. Clare of Assisi, by Simone Martini, 1326

This chapter presents a historical example of self-preservation E3. It's worth noting that it's difficult to find a more ordinary figure—one less saintly or even with a negative or monstrous image.

Clare was born in 1193, the daughter of the noblewoman Ortolana and the knight Favarone Offreduccio de Bernardino. Biographers agree that her early years were marked by the typical feminine and religious virtues of the time: praying, fasting, wearing penitential garments, giving alms, valuing solitude, and wanting to remain a virgin. In this sense, Clare's childhood was not particularly unique. She grew up under the control of her noble lineage as the eldest of three sisters, living in an aristocratic household of women in the upper part of the city—a secluded, quiet, and clean environment where she was surrounded by neighbors, friends, and cousins.

From an early age, Clare gave her life entirely to the poor. She loved poverty itself. She quickly became sympathetic to the movement surrounding Francis, the son of the merchant Pietro di Bernardone. Before leaving behind the wealth of her upbringing, she sold part of her inheritance to benefit the underprivileged and sent money to Francis's brotherhood, which was building a rural hermitage outside Assisi in 1209.

She was described as independent in her thinking from a young age. Out of love for her divine spouse, she rejected all marriage proposals. She refused to enter a well-established monastery, preferring an existence without security. She sought to join women who shared her approach to life. Raised in a chivalric and courtly atmosphere, she learned to read and write Latin, and her letters reveal the influence of spiritual theology. Isolated by her social class, she was nonetheless known for performing frequent acts of charity and her delight in visiting the poor (often hiding food to distribute among them).

In her Rule, Clare wrote that no one should aspire to mere education but rather to unity in the spirit of love. Her priority was the union of the sisters. Her mother, Ortolana, instilled in her the truths of faith and the practice of mercy, along with practical arts and crafts. Ortolana also made a

pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which likely influenced Clare, who spent her early years in this cloistered domestic environment.

At the age of thirteen, a significant event in Assisi left a lasting impression on Clare: Francis publicly renounced his father, who subsequently disowned him. Francis left Assisi and was taken in by the Benedictines on the grounds of the chapel of Santa Maria.

A cousin of Clare joined Francis's brotherhood, and from that moment, she sought contact with the movement, looking for a spiritual guide. She found one in Francis himself. Their meetings took place between 1210 and 1211.

On Palm Sunday in 1211, Bishop Guido II, a friend of Francis, handed Clare an olive branch instead of having her approach to receive it—an act interpreted as his blessing of her spiritual journey. That same night, Clare left her family home. In those first moments, her only companion was solitude. Before leaving, she transferred part of her inheritance to her sister Beatrice and set off with nothing. Outside the city walls, a group of friars awaited her, taking her to Francis, with whom she underwent a traditional initiation rite, dedicating herself to the path of God: her head was shaved, she was consecrated, and she donned the penitential habit.

She was then taken to the Benedictine monastery of San Paolo delle Abbadesse while decisions were made about her future. There, she was welcomed as a servant. When her relatives attempted to bring her back, she clung to the altar cloth and revealed her shaved head as a sign of her unwavering commitment. A few days later, she left the Benedictines and went to Santo Angelo di Panzo, where a group of women lived a life of penance. But even there, she did not find what she was seeking.

Sixteen days after Clare's escape, her sister Catalina joined her. The family tried to stop Catalina as well, but to no avail. Once they overcame this conflict with their family, they left the hermitage of Panzo and began a new life in the church of San Damiano.

Francis played a crucial role in this process, convincing Bishop Guido II to provide episcopal protection to the newly formed religious community.

At first, the San Damiano community was familial. Clare's mother and younger sister joined, along with acquaintances and childhood friends. Over time, it opened its doors to other women. They lived in absolute poverty, often lacking essentials like oil or bread. Reports describe how their hardships were often resolved through Clare's miraculous intervention. The sisters renounced all possessions and lived only on what they could earn through manual labor.

Some theories suggest that San Damiano became a kind of charitable center for children and lepers. The goal at San Damiano was a sedentary, contemplative life that was also charitable, remaining close to the city. Francis remained in contact with them and cared for them with great affection. He wanted Clare to take charge of San Damiano, but she resisted. From 1215 onward, religious communities were required to follow a pre-existing rule, but neither Francis nor Clare wanted a traditional monastic structure.

The San Damiano community developed with a strong sense of self-governance. No brother chaplains or prelates of any kind were allowed to interfere between God and the sisters. At San Damiano, the friars were under Clare's authority.

In 1224, the sisters called on Francis for help when Clare fell seriously ill due to her extreme fasting practices, which Francis challenged her about.

Two years later, Francis died, and with him, Clare lost her most important ally. In his final message to her, he encouraged her to continue the movement.

She led by respecting each sister's individual calling. She urged them to be "mirrors and examples" for one another, not to maintain a childlike dependence on the mother superior, but to care for one another as mothers. As a person of great initiative, she organized her life innovatively. While she initially valued suffering for its own sake, she later adopted a more rational approach. Clare institutionalized poverty through fasting. She and her sisters survived on what they could beg for.

Clare lived out her evangelical life in community, staying near the city and remaining connected to earthly society. Between 1228 and 1235, she faced pressure to accept the papal mandate for a cloistered life, but she chose a relatively open and flexible approach to enclosure, even allowing the sick to be treated within the convent. For Clare, poverty took precedence over strict seclusion.

In 1228, Pope Gregory IX canonized Francis and visited San Damiano. This led to a confrontation with Clare, as the pope intended to transform the community into a Hugolinian monastery. Clare, however, secured from Gregory IX the confirmation of the Privilege of Poverty, a vow that could only be practiced in connection with the city. Through this, she sought recognition of her communal poverty as both an evangelical way of life and a distinctly feminine charism. In 1230, Gregory IX severed the connection between the Friars Minor and San Damiano—a decision Clare successfully overturned by threatening a hunger strike.

From 1235 onward, Clare found a strong ally and friend in Agnes of Prague, a king's daughter who chose the Hugolinian model of poverty. Two years later, San Damiano was home to fifty sisters. In 1240, the monastery came under attack by Emperor Frederick II's soldiers. Clare confronted them, not only saving San Damiano but also using her intercession to halt the siege of Assisi.

In 1241, Pope Gregory IX died, and in 1247, Pope Innocent IV formally integrated the women of San Damiano into the Franciscan Order. Clare devoted herself to writing her own rule, spending her final years fighting for its papal approval. Despite the support of Cardinal Rainaldo, Clare was not satisfied.

In the spring of 1253, she wrote her last letter to Agnes of Prague. In her testament, she reminded her sisters, the Friars Minor, and the institutional Church of the unique charism of San Damiano. That summer, Innocent IV and his curia traveled to Assisi to visit Clare. On her deathbed, the pope finally confirmed Clare's rule. On the eve of her passing, she kissed the bull of confirmation.

After her death, numerous miraculous healings were recorded, leading to her canonization in 1255. However, contrary to her wishes, in 1288, the community at the Assisi monastery renounced the Privilege of Poverty. From that point on, as "Poor Clares of the First Rule," they were permitted to accept testamentary donations.

Therefore, I, Clare, a handmaid of Christ and the Poor Sisters of the Monastery of San Damiano—although unworthy—and the little plant of the holy father; consider together with my sisters so lofty a profession and the command of such a father and also the frailty of some others that we feared in ourselves after the passing of our holy father Francis, who was our pillar of strength and, after God, our one consolation and support. Time and again we willingly bound ourselves to our Lady, most holy Poverty, that after my death, the sisters, those present and those to come, would never turn away from her. (Test., Cls. 13-40)

Clare embodies contemplation in action.

X. Literary and cinematic examples

by Maribel Fernández, Nilda Paes
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Cinematic examples

This section provides a brief analysis of various films where a character is identified as self-preservation E3. Their attitudes, behaviors, and dialogue help readers recognize this subtype and perhaps see themselves reflected in it.

“Ordinary people”

Synopsis: The accidental death of the older son of an affluent family deeply strains the relationships among the bitter mother, the good-natured father and the guilt-ridden younger son.

Character: The mother, portrayed by Mary Tyler Moore.

Discussion: This film is filled with powerful, suggestive scenes, but the beginning and ending are particularly revealing:

In the opening scenes, the mother appears cheerful, enjoying a night out at the theater with her husband and another couple. She seems happy. However, when she gets home, she transforms, becoming cold and distant with her husband. She walks ahead of him on the stairs, pretends to be asleep when he caresses her in bed... The next morning, she carefully prepares her son's favorite breakfast, but when he says he's not hungry, she reacts sharply, throwing the toast into the garbage disposal as if it were the most natural thing in the world... She creates an incredibly tense atmosphere without ever losing her composure.

Throughout the film, we witness a woman who hides and avoids facing problems. She's controlling, doesn't listen, and assumes she knows what others need. Her relationship with her son is strained and superficial; she doesn't know how to be there for him. What she fears most is her real feelings being exposed, since she doesn't express them (she didn't cry at her eldest son's funeral), and instead focuses on appearances (concerned with what shoes and shirt her husband should wear to the service). She keeps everything organized and persuades others to follow her plans.

She distances herself from her younger son because, as she says, “I don't know what he wants from me” and “I don't know what anyone wants from me.” One particularly striking moment is when her husband and son tell her, “We just want you to be happy,” and she responds, “What is it to be happy?” At the end of the film, her husband confronts her:

“You are beautiful. And you are unpredictable. But you're so cautious. You're determined, Beth; but you know something? You're not strong. And I don't know if you're really giving. Tell me something. Do you love me? You really love me?”

“I feel the way I've always felt about you.”

“We would've been all right, if there hadn't been any mess. But you can't handle mess. You need everything neat and easy. I don't know. Maybe you can't love anybody. It was so much Buck. When Buck died, it was as if you buried all your love with him, and I don't understand that, I just don't know, I don't... Maybe it wasn't even Buck; maybe it was just you. Maybe, finally, it was the best of you that you buried. But whatever it was... I don't know who you are. And I don't know what we've been playing at. So I was crying. Because I don't know if I love you anymore. And I don't know what I am going to do without that.”

Beth is left speechless and uncertain about how to respond. She turns away, goes upstairs, and enters a room, appearing somewhat lost in thought. She then retrieves some luggage from the closet. Suddenly, a burst of emotion overtakes her, and she cries, but it's unclear if she truly identifies with the emotion, and she restrains it.

In his bed, her son is awake and hears the door of the house closing, followed by someone walking on the gravel. He gets up to look out of the window. Outside, a taxi leaves.

“Steel Magnolias”

Synopsis: A story of love, friendship, determination, courage, and loss. Six women from different ages and social backgrounds support each other through life’s ups and downs, especially in the face of death.

Character: M’Lynn, portrayed by Sally Field, is the emotional center of the film—the rock of her family and the only one present in her daughter’s final moments.

Discussion: M’Lynn is the pillar of the family. She manages the household, her husband, the children, and organizes her daughter Shelby’s wedding, which she has to keep under strict supervision due to Shelby’s diabetes. Examples of her need for control and efficiency can be found in the first part of the film.

During a party, she is constantly multitasking—managing the event, keeping her children in check, and making sure the house is in order. She juggles a phone call, handles a complaint from her daughter, and scolds her husband for making too much noise, all while keeping a smile on her face. Here, we see her detachment from stress, her disregard for her own needs, as well as her inability to enjoy herself.

A similar moment occurs during the wedding. While dancing with her son-in-law, she can’t fully relax, taking the opportunity to remind him that Shelby should not get pregnant due to her medical condition. Even in a celebratory moment, she remains vigilant and unable to let go.

Her efficiency, sometimes mistaken for coldness, is evident when she assists her daughter during a hypoglycemic episode. M’Lynn knows precisely what to do to bring her daughter back to normal, demonstrating complete control of the situation.

The most revealing moments about her self-preservation tendencies come after Shelby’s unexpected pregnancy, which goes against M’Lynn’s wishes. She loses control over her daughter’s choices, and when Shelby tells her she is pregnant, M’Lynn responds coldly. When Shelby mentions that adoption isn’t an option, M’Lynn bluntly replies that “people buy babies all the time.” Their ensuing conversation is tense, dominated by M’Lynn’s practical approach to problem-solving rather than an attempt to understand her daughter’s emotions.

A few months after the baby is born, Shelby requires a kidney transplant. Her mother willingly donates one of hers. Despite Shelby’s concern, M’Lynn maintains that she’s not doing anything special, downplaying the significance of the situation. A good example of this emotional detachment is when M’Lynn’s friends express their worry, knowing she’ll be hospitalized the next day to donate the kidney. However, she dismisses it as unimportant, remaining superficial and asking them to dry her hair (a trivial request given the circumstances).

Shelby doesn’t survive the organ rejection and falls into a coma, her condition irreversible. M’Lynn arrives at the hospital, determined and seemingly oblivious to the fact she’s just lost her daughter, continuing to speak to her, loudly ordering her to open her eyes. The family jointly decide to remove her from life support, and then leave, except for M’Lynn, who holds her daughter’s hand until

she is certain that she's dead. At this moment, her need for a sense of control over everything, even over death, becomes evident.

M'Lynn barely finds the strength to attend her daughter's funeral. She organizes every detail, including the clothes Shelby will be buried in, before going to see her grandson. It's only while she's driving alone, on the way to pick up her grandson, that she finally allows herself to cry (she needs solitude to express her grief).

During the burial, she starts breaking down, temporarily losing control of the situation. But since such an outburst isn't considered appropriate, she pulls herself together, conceals her grief, and turns her attention to caring for her grandson. Because life must go on. It's as if she believes she has no right to be fragile, and her pain is not important.

This sense of practicality, which masks an inability to sit with her pain, marks the film's conclusion. After the funeral, while taking care of her grandson, a friend tells her she's pregnant and will name the baby Shelby. M'Lynn smiles and replies, "That's how it should be. Life goes on..."

In summary, regarding self-preservation E3, the film primarily explores themes of control, practicality, rebellion in the face of helplessness, self-denial, and solitary grief.

"Blindness"

Synopsis: In a town struck by a sudden mysterious case of blindness, a doctor's wife becomes the only person with the ability to see. She pretends to be blind in order to take care of her husband as the surrounding community breaks down into chaos and disorder. She leads them through a journey of horror, depravity, love, and solidarity, in search of hope. Based on the novel *Blindness* by José Saramago, the story can be summed up in one line: "If you can see, see. If you can see, look closer."

Character: The doctor's wife, played by Julianne Moore.

Discussion: While this character is clearly a self-preservation E3, the essence of the story is about someone who can see, who is awake, and who is genuinely a good person—traits that don't align with the darkest aspects of the self-preservation E3's neurosis. Now, let's examine the traits that do.

The blind are placed in quarantine in an abandoned asylum, where they are stripped down to their most basic human nature, and moral and ethical values quickly disappear. The doctor's wife, as mentioned, does not go blind but pretends to be blind in order to stay with her husband and care for him. Once she realizes that no one else can see, she feels a deep responsibility: she has sight while everyone else has lost it. She looks *at* others and *for* others. Seeing gives her both power and overwhelming responsibility, leaving her utterly exhausted. For her, everything boils down to survival instinct.

She remains in isolation with the rest of the survivors. As if she had superhuman abilities, she fights for the well-being of the group, securing food, cleaning, being understanding of her husband's infidelity, burying the dead, and telling stories to a child.

Inside the asylum, an antagonistic dynamic emerges: *the woman who sees* versus *the blind man who never saw*. They lead opposing groups, and to protect her people, she kills—and feels no guilt. She cannot reciprocate her husband's displays of affection; what matters is getting things done. Only one thing makes her break down in despair: losing track of time because she forgot to wind her watch.

When she finally leads her small group to escape, she takes them into her home, feeds them, and protects them from the chaos outside (dead bodies, accidents, aimless wanderers). She never asks for help.

While scavenging for food, she takes shelter in a church and notices that all the statues have their eyes covered. She stares at them, seemingly thinking: *Not even God Himself can see... Who would do this?*

Key moments that characterize her as a self-preservation E3 are:

When health officials come to take her husband into quarantine, she pretends to be blind so she can go with him—she *must* take care of him.

As she leads the group through the corridors to the restroom, she picks up scattered trash, cleans, organizes. She completely forgets about herself.

While attending to an injured man, she worries:

“I’m afraid it’s gonna be infected...”

“You can’t be responsible for everyone,” her husband tells her. “Go to sleep. Are you afraid to close your eyes?”

“No. I’m afraid to open them. Afraid I’ll go blind in my sleep,” she replies. She walks away, avoiding confrontation with her husband so she doesn’t have to show weakness. “I’m gonna take a walk.”

She has a moment of weakness: “I can’t take this anymore.” She feels guilty for the death of the injured man she was caring for. “I think I have to tell them that I could help, that I can see.” Her husband stops her, but she insists: “I can handle it.” He confesses that he can no longer think of her as a wife, only as a mother or a nurse. “Well, you’ll just have to get used to it, won’t you? Because I don’t have any choice,” she retorts.

She catches her husband having sex with another woman. Understanding his situation, she chooses to step away, and later comforts someone else, revealing the truth to them. She knows it’s not the right moment for accusations.

She’s also among the first to volunteer in the sex-for-food exchange. “You can do what you like, and we’ll feed you both. And then you can talk to me about dignity,” she tells someone who opposes the idea.

She walks down the hallway with determination, carrying the scissors she had hidden and kills the opposing leader who had been raping her companion. She argues with the man who has been blind since birth: “We’re the ones in charge now.”

She starts pulling people out of the fire without a second thought for the guards who might shoot. She keeps going, leading everyone to the street. “We’re free!” she shouts.

The woman’s surrender comes when she guides the blind through the city to a shelter. For the first time, she admits she needs help and accepts her husband’s support, realizing she’s not all-powerful. She needs protection, too, especially when she is attacked by the blind and her husband has to defend her, as she refuses to let go of the baskets of food she found. She would rather risk her life than lose the supplies. When she realizes the food is running out, she no longer decides to search alone but tells her husband that the matter must be discussed by everyone.

At the moment she tells her husband they’ll have to find more food because it’s running out, the first man who went blind begins to see again. She walks toward the terrace, knowing that soon, everyone will be able to shout, *I can see!*, and no one will be the same as before. At last, she feels free. She is no longer needed... And now? Can she finally let go? She looks up at the bright, clear sky and thinks, “I think I’m going blind.” Then she looks down. The city is still there.

A literary example



Screencap of Lara (Julie Christie) in the movie *Doctor Zhivago*, directed by David Lean (1965)

This section provides an analysis of self-preservation E3 based on the character of Lara Antipova in *Doctor Zhivago*.

Lara is the main female character alongside the protagonist, Doctor Zhivago, who gives his name to Boris Pasternak's (1890–1960) most well-known novel.

Yuri Zhivago and Lara Antipova, each in their unique way, try to build their lives in the Soviet Union, where the war against Germany deeply impacted them on the most personal level. In a sense, *Doctor Zhivago* is a novel about life and love, following in the footsteps of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* though with a reversal of roles between the man and the woman.

It tells the story of Yuri Zhivago, a doctor and poet, and his relationships with two women: his wife, Tonya, and his lover, Lara. It is important to clarify that this analysis focuses strictly on Lara as she is portrayed in the novel, not in the film adaptation, which deviates from Pasternak's characterization of her.

As readers, we first learn about Larisa in the second chapter when she arrives in Moscow with her mother (a humble seamstress) and her brother, having traveled from the Urals to study at a girls' institute. Later, the author almost always refers to her by her diminutive, Lara.

She was a little over sixteen, but she was a fully formed young girl. They gave her eighteen or more. She had a clear mind and an easy character. She was very good-looking [...] She and Rodya [her brother] understood that they would have to get everything in life the hard way, relying only on their own strength. (p. 37)

It is common for self-preservation E3s to realize from an early age that they will need to fend for themselves with little external support.

Lara's sense of responsibility is also evident in her work ethic, her support for her mother, and her practical approach to earning a living:

Lara studied well, not out of an abstract thirst for knowledge, but because to be exempt from paying for one's studies one had to be a good student, and therefore one had to study well. Just as she studied well, so without effort she washed dishes, helped in the shop, and ran errands for her mother. She moved noiselessly and smoothly, and everything about her—the

inconspicuous quickness of her movements, her height, her voice, her gray eyes and fair hair—went perfectly together. (p. 37)

This is very characteristic of self-preservation E3: studying with a concrete goal in mind—in this case, securing a scholarship—rather than from deep internal motivation. In practical domestic work as well, this personality type tends to be efficient, orderly, and fast.

Lara is seduced by Komarovsky, a friend and financial supporter of her mother, “who could have been her father,” and whose strength and “covert boldness prompted the little demon awakened in her to imitation.” She’s drawn to the fact that he “spent money and time on her, called her goddess...” (p. 62). She feels deeply vulnerable around him, yet she does not sink into despair or tragedy. Internally, she is trapped between attraction and hatred. He gives her all the *fatherly* attention she never had, but at the same time, his romantic advances disturb her more and more.

Lara was not religious. She did not believe in rites. But sometimes, in order to endure life, she needed it to be accompanied by some inner music. She could not invent such music each time for herself. This music was the word of God about life, and Lara went to church to weep over it. (p. 64)

Among self-preservation E3s, spirituality, particularly during youth, expresses itself more as a longing for a sense of belonging or refuge, rather than a pursuit of mystical enlightenment or supreme illumination.

When she becomes too disturbed by Komarovsky’s persistent sexual advances, she finds work as a governess and moves far from home: “For more than three years Lara lived with the Kologrivovs as if behind a stone wall” (p. 91). This decision saves her from falling victim to an older, dominant, and experienced man, from continuing a double life in secret, and from losing control over herself. Here, we see a clear distinction between self-preservation E3 and E4: while Lara is *lost* in this relationship for a time, she ultimately finds a way out through her own decision, determination, and effort—in this case, by making a drastic escape. She does not remain a perpetual victim, resigned to her fate, or stuck in complaint; instead, she leaves, without explaining her reasons to anyone. She keeps quiet about what happened. She also finds nature

dearer to her than a father and mother, better than a lover, and wiser than a book. For an instant the meaning of existence was again revealed to Lara. She was here—so she conceived—in order to see into the mad enchantment of the earth, and to call everything by name. (p. 94)

There is a certain simplicity in this subtype, a sense of safety in nature, a groundedness, and a search that starts with the possibilities at hand. Nature does not demand anything; it cannot be burdened with personal projections. Because of this, the mind of someone who constantly sees themselves through the eyes of others can finally rest. This allows for a moment of awakening to the essential, a realization that there is something *beyond* the mundane routine of life.

Another theme typical of self-preservation E3, which is already evident in the young Lara, is being “overtired from the excessive work she had heaped on herself” (p. 94). She works harder than required, driven by a need to be independent and useful, to owe nothing to anyone. But when she fails to achieve this and falls into melancholy, depression, and confusion, she aims an “imaginary shot... fired at Komarovsky, at herself, at her own fate...” (p. 96). Desperate, she asks her friend Pasha to marry her as a means of salvation. When she actually fires a shot at Komarovsky, who is only slightly injured, he reflects on her: “There had always been something extraordinary about her. Yet how

painfully and, apparently, irreparably he had mutilated her life! How she thrashes about, how she rises up and rebels all the time, striving to remake her fate in her own way and begin life anew!" (p. 113)

For Lara, it's unfathomable to be defeated by someone who has inflicted so much harm upon her. Many human beings, if not all of us, are in some way "survivors" of trauma, and we respond to it in various ways. In self-preservation E3, it is particularly characteristic not to stay down, not to accept failure, but to get back up however possible and keep going. Even when she is very ill, Lara has a hard time accepting help from a paternal friend: "And, on leaving, he [Kologrivov] forced her, despite her objections, tears, and even something like a scuffle, to accept from him a bank check for ten thousand rubles" (p. 11). This resonates with a common process for self-preservation E3s: having to learn to accept help, to understand that there are moments in life where "*I can do it alone*" or "*I must do it alone*" reaches a real limit.

Once she's married to Pasha and done with her studies, she experiences a period of relative tranquility:

Lara was immersed in her chores and work. She was in charge of the house and her three-year-old daughter Katenka. She took care of all her husband's affairs and herself also taught in the girls' high school. She worked without respite and was happy. This was precisely the life she had dreamed of. (p. 128)

In general, this is the dream of a self-preservation E3—a kind of "having it all": a job they enjoy, a spouse, children, and being in charge of everything that needs attention. But life, in all its unpredictability, external circumstances, or internal processes, eventually puts an end to this idyll—sometimes abruptly, sometimes gradually.

When Pasha decides to leave on an assigned mission, Lara experiences it as "the most serious defeat in her life. Her best, her brightest hopes had collapsed." But she doesn't just sit idly in despair. Instead, she "begins seriously to study the basics of medicine and passes an examination at the clinic to qualify as a nurse" (p. 133). We've already seen that study and work are two fundamental pillars for this subtype. Through them, they secure and reinforce their deep need to feel "safe." Education is an investment in a good job that brings satisfaction and financial independence—ensuring that "nothing is lacking," allowing them to "treat themselves," "avoid financial struggle," "be useful," and uphold their idealized self-image as "good," "intelligent," "hardworking," "efficient," and "practical." With this mindset, everything is done well and with great efficiency. As Lara wants to search for her husband, she "goes to work as a nurse on a hospital train" heading to the location from which she had last received a letter. Her mind is highly pragmatic, always focused on achieving her goals. Along the way, when she learns that Zhivago, her childhood friend, is working in a neighboring town, she "finds" "a wagon that was headed in that direction" (p. 134).

When she hears that her husband has been imprisoned (which she refuses to believe), we witness a moment where "She could not hold back the rising tears and did not want to cry in front of strangers. She got up quickly and left the ward, to regain her composure in the corridor" (p. 152). For many women, crying in front of strangers is uncomfortable, but for a self-preservation E3, appearing fragile and vulnerable is particularly distressing and deeply feared. One of their greatest self-delusions is projecting an image of being accepted for their goodness, efficiency, diligence, empathy, loyalty, and commitment, while suppressing their deeper internal truth, which holds feelings of inadequacy, weakness, fear, sadness, and profound pain.

With the revolution now in full swing, Lara finds herself working at a hospital near the front lines alongside Dr. Zhivago. Their first and, for the time being, only personal and intimate conversation takes place in Lara's room while she's ironing clothes. She becomes so unsettled by Zhivago's sudden emotional openness and his desire to protect her that, distracted, she burns a blouse. She immediately

stops what she's doing and ends the conversation. She is deeply affected. When faced with intimacy—the raw, human revelation of another—her defenses crumble.

Much later, the two cross paths again in Yuratin's library. Once more, Lara is immersed in her studies:

Now and then she lapsed into thought, raising her eyes to the ceiling or narrowing them and peering somewhere far ahead of her, and then again, propped on her elbow, her head resting on her hand, in a quick, sweeping movement she penciled some notes in her notebook. Watching her, Yuri Andreevich [Zhivago] was verifying the correctness of his old impressions. "She doesn't want to be admired," he thought, "to be beautiful, captivating. She feels a kind of contempt for that side of a woman's nature, this aspect of femininity; and it is as if she punishes herself for being so good-looking. And that proud hostility to herself increases her irresistibility tenfold."

Zhivago's thoughts go straight to the heart of the matter: this particular way of experiencing vanity. Women of this subtype are not prone to confidently flaunting their femininity. They don't have the feline sensuality of a seductress nor the overt flirtatiousness of a hysteric. Their expression of femininity is more restrained; they possess a form of "anti-vanity," where a certain disregard for outward appearance may actually be intentional. She is indeed seductive, but in a more subtle, intellectual manner, so understated that it almost goes unnoticed. Her womanhood is expressed more through actions, through caring for and serving others.

When the two of them arrive at her home, Zhivago continues to observe her:

"In the reading room I compared the eagerness of her reading with the passion and ardor of actually doing something, of physical work. And, on the contrary, she carries water lightly, effortlessly, as if she were reading. She has this facility in everything. As if she had picked up the momentum for life way back in her childhood, and now everything is done with that momentum, of itself, with the ease of an ensuing consequence. She has it in the line of her back when she bends over, and in the smile that parts her lips and rounds her chin, and in her words and thoughts." (p. 344)

Through Zhivago's reflections, the author now paints a picture of Lara as an adult. The confusion, limitations, and chaotic, tragic events of the revolution have not broken her. She remains centered and focused on what she does. She seems more integrated, softer, freer, and more mature in her identity.

Lara tells Zhivago about her childhood and her perspective on the revolution:

"In my childhood I saw poverty and labor close up. That makes my attitude towards the revolution different from yours. It's closer to me. There's much in it that is dear to me. And suddenly he becomes a colonel, this boy, the yard porter's son. Or even a White general. I come from a civilian milieu and don't know much about ranks. By training I'm a history teacher. Yes, that's how it is, Zhivago. I helped many people." (p. 347)

Lara is no revolutionary, but she sympathizes with the movement and understands its human and social causes. She is close to people, and because of her social skills, she has used her connections to support those in need.

Self-preservation E3s are generally less self-centered than the other two subtypes. Their primary need is always to ensure their own security, which is strong, but they know how to survive on little

and save when they have more. They also know how to share—they are moved by others' struggles and enjoy helping those in need. They want to be good, to do the right thing. They don't get carried away by social causes or ideologies; instead, they prefer to help on an individual level, where they can make an immediate impact.

People like Strelnikov (formerly Antipov), her husband, are incomprehensible to Lara. She tells Zhivago: "They're flint, not people. Principles. Discipline. [...] He needs to lay all these military laurels at our feet, so as not to come back empty-handed, but all in glory, a conqueror! To immortalize, to bedazzle us! Like a child!" (p. 351)

She longs for a genuine closeness between him, her daughter, and herself. However, the increasing emotional distance caused by his absence, the news of the atrocities he has committed, and his lack of communication about the attitudes that motivate him in his revolutionary struggle alienate her from him more and more.

When Zhivago tries to end their affair and stop seeing her, "Unfelt, unbeknownst to her, tears flowed down Lara's cheeks, like the rainwater that now poured down the faces of the stone statues opposite, on the house with figures. Sincerely, without affected magnanimity, she repeated quietly: «Do what's better for you, don't think about me. I'll get over it all.» And since she did not know she was crying, she did not wipe her tears." (p. 353)

Lara acts as if his sufferings were more important than her own. She buries her own sadness so as not to "upset him with painful scenes." All individuals of this subtype can recall moments in their own life when they expressed far less emotion than the true depth of their pain warranted. It's the inability to show how much someone truly means to them, how painful their departure is, and how deeply they feel. It's the difficulty of allowing themselves to be fully seen in their emotions. They put the other person's feelings above their own, trying to understand them more than they understand themselves. There is no longer any spontaneity, no internal connection with their emotions. It is a kind of self-erasure, an emotional suppression so deeply ingrained that access to those feelings is almost lost. Pasternak captures this in his poetic way: "Unfelt, unbeknownst to her, tears flowed down Lara's cheeks, like the rainwater that now poured down the faces of the stone statues opposite, on the house with figures." (p. 353)

When Zhivago finally returns to Lara's home after a long period of captivity at the hands of partisans and his eventual escape, he finds a letter from her in the usual hiding spot for the house key. In it, she explains how he can use the house, and mentions she left food for him. The term "security" aptly illustrates her thoughts and actions here—she provides him with what he needs to survive and be safe. Once again, she is the woman who loves him, and for her, love means care: caring for the other person, making practical things easier for them. That is how she expresses her affection. In the end, she returns when Zhivago is gravely ill. "Lara nourished him, nursed him by her care, by her swan-white loveliness, by the moist-breathed, throaty whispering of her questions and answers." (p. 456)

In the intimate conversations between Lara and Zhivago about life, love, Russian families, and their respective histories, the woman's maturity is evident in the depth with which she analyzes, understands, and summarizes her experiences. She is very realistic, acknowledging "All that's productive, settled, all that's connected with habitual life, with the human nest and its order, all of it went to rack and ruin along with the upheaval of the whole of society and its reorganization. All everyday things were overturned and destroyed." (p. 464)

On the one hand, she defends duty, "the call of faithfulness. I would sacrifice everything. Even what's most dear. You." On the other hand, she adds, "Oh, forgive me. I'm not saying the right thing. It's not true. [...] What will become of us? What are we to do?" (p. 465) Their fate remains uncertain. The two of them are together in the present, each with a broken past and an unknown future. Never

before have they spoken with such intensity and clarity about how history has shaped their lives. Lara communicates with great focus and clarity:

"Then untruth came to the Russian land. The main trouble, the root of the future evil, was loss of faith in the value of one's own opinion. [...] This social delusion was all-enveloping, contagious. Everything fell under its influence. Not even our home could stand against this bane. Something in it was shaken." (p. 466)

Lara doesn't follow the revolutionary path of the majority. She declares herself affected by it, but refuses to sacrifice her inner values. Instead, living through those tumultuous times has only clarified her beliefs with greater maturity. And yet, she carries on with everyday life as naturally as ever:

She cooked or did laundry and then with the remaining soapy water washed the floors in the house. Or, calm and less flushed, she ironed and mended her own, his, and Katenka's linen. Or, having finished with the cooking, laundry, and tidying up, she gave lessons to Katenka. Or, burying herself in textbooks, she occupied herself with her own political reeducation, before going back to the newly reformed school as a teacher. (pp. 468-469)

Throughout the novel, Pasternak repeatedly highlights these traits in Lara—traits that are deeply familiar to self-preservation E3s. Near the end, Lara reflects:

"What domestic instinct, what ineradicable striving for a nest and order!" said Larissa Fyodorovna, watching her daughter's play from the kitchen. "Children are unconstrainedly sincere and not ashamed of the truth, while we, from fear of seeming backward, are ready to betray what's most dear; to praise the repulsive, and to say yes to the incomprehensible." (p. 498)

While it might hold true that, in general, adults are more hypocritical than children, the examples Lara gives are particularly emblematic of the tendency to present a false front associated with Type Three, and especially, the self-preservation subtype.

In the cottage where they have taken refuge, Lara wants to establish order: "Do you have any sort of weapon? No, you see. I'm frightened of your lightheartedness, which you've infected me with. It muddles my thinking." (p. 500)

Then she adds:

"Sacrifice a few hours for me during the next few nights and, please, write down everything you've recited to me from memory at various times. Half of it has been lost, the other half has never been written down, and I'm afraid you'll forget it all afterwards and it will perish, as you say has often happened to you before." (p. 501)

Love and care go hand in hand. The ease with which she organizes, puts things in their place, stays grounded, makes ideas concrete, thinks ahead and preserves thoughts by putting them in writing so they won't be lost—all of these are common characteristics of this subtype. Security in the interest of self-preservation manifests here in her ability to foresee what might happen, prevent it, and act accordingly.

Lara is determined to leave, but only under the condition that Zhivago goes with her:

In the same way states of equilibrium alternated in her with fits of anguished uneasiness, natural in a hardworking woman unaccustomed to daylong outpourings of the heart and the idle, impermissible luxury of immoderate caresses. (p. 508)

Here, however, given the real danger of staying in that house, the constant activity so characteristic of this subtype (which might sometimes appear as a quiet efficiency) is actually driven by a deep-seated inner restlessness. It's an addiction to constant doing, to keeping busy, to trying to quell anxiety through action. The act of *doing* helps to maintain a semblance of control, providing her a sense of security.

Finally, upon Yuri Zhivago's death, Lara reflects on their relationship with a clear mind and an open heart:

They loved each other. Not out of necessity, not because they were "swept away by passion," as it is falsely described. They loved each other because everything around them wanted it so: the earth beneath their feet, the sky over their heads, the clouds and trees. [...]

Never, never, even in moments of the most gratuitous, self-forgetful happiness, did that most lofty and thrilling thing abandon them: delight in the general mold of the world, the feeling of their relation to the whole picture, the sense of belonging to the beauty of the whole spectacle, to the whole universe.

They breathed only by that oneness. And therefore the exaltation of man over the rest of nature, the fashionable fussing over and worshipping of man, never appealed to them. Such false principles of social life, turned into politics, seemed to them pathetically homemade and remained incomprehensible. (p. 573)

Love, at least in certain moments, transcends the limitations of character. Once again, it is Lara's pure soul that allows her to feel, alongside Zhivago, as part of the whole, in union with nature, in harmony with the cosmos—immune to the aspirations, ambitions, and promises of the “new world” heralded by political factions.

Though she is devastated by Yuri's death and tormented by guilt over their separation (which was involuntary on her part), as well as by the events that unfolded afterwards, she says: “There's no peace for my soul from pity and torment. But I'm not telling, I'm not revealing the main thing. I can't name it, I haven't got strength enough” (p. 574). And so, she begins “the sorting of papers she had talked about with Evgraf Andreevich” (p. 575).

Once again, she is centered, dedicated to fulfilling what holds meaning and importance for her. But she never gets to finish.

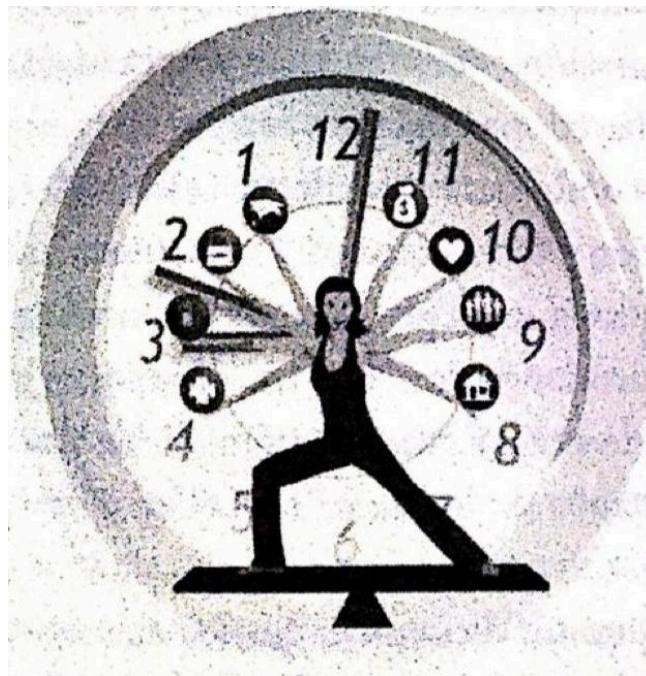
One day Larissa Fyodorovna left the house and did not come back again. Evidently she was arrested on the street in those days and died or vanished no one knew where, forgotten under some nameless number on subsequently lost lists, in one of the countless general or women's concentration camps in the north. (p. 575)

Lara remains in the reader's memory as someone who lived her life and fate with great dignity despite difficult circumstances, who loved deeply, grew, and transcended—at times with extraordinary light—the limitations of character.

XI. A vignette

by Vera Petry Schoenardie

Design of the self-preservation E3



This graphic representation highlights the main characteristics of the self-preservation E3. It's a dynamic figure, suggesting high energy and movement.

The athletic attire doesn't necessarily mean that self-preservation E3 is always engaged in sports, though they do enjoy maintaining a fit and healthy body. Their strong legs give the impression of someone capable of expanding into their environment while maintaining balance. Their grounding in reality comes primarily through the Intellectual Center, as indicated by the bent leg. This position needs to be strong because attending to as many simultaneous stimuli as this subtype does requires significant control to avoid losing balance on the seesaw of reconciliation.

In the background, a clock runs in reverse. Time is both a source of pressure and opportunity. The assertiveness and agility with which self-preservation E3 accomplishes tasks leave a positive impression on others. Being entrepreneurial is central to their dynamic. The value that modern capitalist society places on productivity increasingly drives self-preservation E3s into burnout or self-destruction—victims of their own vanity in proving themselves as the world's best “doers.”

The multiple arms, like the relentless hands of the clock, symbolize action and pursuit, each reaching toward different goals, reflecting their ability to stay focused on multiple issues at once. The icons within the circles represent the major themes in the life of a self-preservation E3. The fact that they are literally in their hands symbolizes the need to control everything around them.

These icons are arranged so that the most significant aspects of a self-preservation E3's life appear at the top. They are also positioned according to inner alignment, whether emotional or intellectual, based on the body's hemispheric reading (right = reason; left = emotion). Thus, at the top

right of the figure is the symbol representing E3's pursuit of acceptance through success, excellence, performance, or social and professional achievement. The handbag (continuing on the right side) symbolizes their attunement to what's fashionable. However, unlike the other subtypes (social and sexual), their style is more understated and elegant. They are mindful of blending in, following what's *in* in the fashion world but always making concessions to practicality and comfort to allow for ease of movement.

Maintaining a modern, well-groomed appearance is an intrinsic part of this type, presenting themselves to the world as *an image*. This concept extends to everything contemporary: cultural elements, sports, science, cutting-edge technology... Novelty captures the interest of a self-preservation E3. If possible and beneficial, they will seek to deepen their knowledge, engage with it, or even become practitioners. Their image of efficiency and high performance is built on being in tune with the times and knowing how to navigate progress.

Self-preservation E3s see themselves as strong, almost untouchable. The truth is, they only slow down when faced with a significant failure or physical collapse. To stay active, they maintain a lean and appealing appearance and tend to eat a balanced diet. Physical activity complements these efforts. Even if the activity is solitary, they will set goals because self-preservation E3s tend to compete with themselves, setting personal benchmarks for improvement. Once achieved, these accomplishments will be shared at the right moment, but with a casual demeanor, as if they were nothing extraordinary.

Their focus on health and well-being extends especially to their family. Organic food, balanced diets, and similar concerns become sources of attention and control.

Continuing on the left side of the figure (right for the viewer), at the top, we see the icon representing the defining trait of this subtype. Conservative instincts are driven by survival, and for self-preservation E3, the keyword is *security*.

A personality built from the outside in—and for external validation—takes others as its reference point. This dynamic leads to an inner emptiness where, disconnected from their essential qualities, they experience intense internal anxiety. Hence the need for control, urgency, and compulsive “doing.” Self-preservation E3s attempt to resolve this existential dilemma by pursuing security, particularly material security. Money, as a concrete element, provides the illusion of vital protection.

Love occupies a constrained space, squeezed between countless responsibilities, with a strong fear of intimacy and vulnerability. Self-preservation E3 dislikes feeling indebted or inferior in a relationship, nor do they want their partner to be beneath them. Being with someone unsuccessful can feel uncomfortable—not only because they crave admiration but also because they tend to see family members as extensions of themselves. Just as they present themselves to the world to be admired, so too must their loved ones. This leads them to idealize not only an admirable partner but an entire family that meets high standards. A family composed of attractive, intelligent, responsible, and capable individuals provides them with great satisfaction.

Family holds great importance for self-preservation E3s. They may even put aside personal projects for it. It is their space of security, where they can exercise their ability to care for and protect efficiently while attending to details. They take responsibility for the material comfort and well-being of their loved ones as a tangible expression of love. However, conflicts may arise due to their anxious need for things to move and happen on their terms and timeline. In suffocating others’ initiative and responsibility, they may paradoxically create dependency—contradicting their idealized image of an independent, high-achieving family.

The final icon represents the home. If possible, a self-preservation E3’s house will be spacious, well-ventilated, and meticulously maintained. The aesthetic aims to project an image of sophisticated simplicity.

Owning a home and other material possessions brings them a sense of security, offering both a refuge in the present and comfort for the future. The underlying anxiety about *life or death* is clearly

reflected in their concern for sustainability and preservation—both of their environment and their belongings.

Why the rooster can no longer return to Paradise (a Sufi tale)⁷

In ancient times, long before the Earth was created, God made the birds, who lived in the Garden of Eden. They came in all sizes, large and small, with beautiful colors and magnificent feathers. The one with the most powerful voice was the rooster.

They soared through the sunlit sky of the garden, which, with its lush trees and flowers, provided them with abundant food. In those golden days, they quenched their thirst in the crystal-clear waters of countless streams.

The fruits and berries were so delectable, and the company of the angels so divine, that the rooster began to feel dissatisfied with such a comfortable life and longed for adventure.

One day, he spoke to the angel who watched over the birds:

“My radiant one, where could I go to find adventure and meaning in my life? I do nothing important in this place where everything is goodness and light!”

“Patience, brave rooster,” the angel replied. “God, the Merciful, is compassionate and has already set things in motion.”

Then the rooster, fluffing and preening his feathers, let out a loud cry and, full of pride, declared to the other birds:

“I am going to be given an important role! Pay close attention! Any day now, I will surprise you all.”

“Brother, what are you saying?” asked the other birds, “Aren’t you happy with life as it is, here in the garden, surrounded by trees laden with the finest fruits?”

The rooster crowed even louder and soared high into the sky, puffed up with pride, for in those times, roosters could fly as high as eagles.

Then the angel approached him and said:

“God, the Merciful and Compassionate, has created the Earth below us and filled it with all kinds of beings: humans and animals. You, rooster, must go there and bring them news of God’s greatness.”

“I will be made a herald!” exclaimed the rooster. “A messenger of incomparable news!”

“No, no,” said the angel. “You must fly down, deliver the message, and return immediately. Tell the humans, animals, and birds that tomorrow, for the first time, the sun will rise. Proclaim the greatness of God, the One, with all the strength of your voice. And then return here at once. That is the message I was sent to deliver to you.”

The rooster flew down to Earth. The first day was dawning, and he cried out with all his might to the newborn world:

“Oh, men, animals, and birds! God has sent me to bring you blessings and to tell you that I, the herald of God’s days, the bird with the most powerful voice in the Garden of Eden, have been chosen for this task.”

Astonished, all who heard him—humans, animals, and birds—bowed before the rooster in awe, paying him homage. He soared through the air to show off his great skill, his heart swelling with vanity.

When night fell, exhausted from all his flying and strutting, he fell asleep, completely forgetting that he was supposed to return to Paradise at once.

⁷ Excerpt from the book VV.AA., *Histórias da Tradição Sufi*, Dervish. Rio de Janeiro, 1993. [no English translation]

Days passed, and every morning, the rooster's clarion cry woke the world at dawn. The creatures of Earth continued to revere him. Because of this, he began to believe that he was the most important being in all of creation. Strutting among the new humans, shaking his comb, he gazed around with arrogance.

One day, he remembered the angel's words and thought, *I'd better return to the garden now, as quickly as possible—I have the feeling I've stayed too long on Earth.*

He let out a mighty crow, gathered his feet, and beat his wings, ready to ascend once more to the heavens. But no matter how hard he tried, his wings had lost their strength. He barely managed to lift himself a few feet off the ground before falling back down.

The rooster's great vanity had been his downfall. Because he forgot God's command, he became bound to the Earth. That is why, to this day, roosters can often be seen beating their wings against their chests, trying to reclaim their former power. But they can no longer fly, not even over the garden fence.

XII. Transformation process and therapeutic recommendations

by Assumpta Mateu, María Teresa Ceserani, Suzana Stroke, Ilse Kretzschmar and Ferran Pauné

In a therapeutic process, the therapist must be mindful of the self-preservation E3 patient's condescension and their "everything is fine" attitude, presenting themselves as the "good patient" and emphasizing the strength of the therapeutic alliance.

This subtype will try to figure out exactly what the therapist wants from them—what the therapist likes or dislikes, and which aspects matter most—so they can align themselves as effectively as possible with those expectations and thereby feel safe.

It's important to keep bringing the self-preservation E3 back to themselves, working on their expectations, on the idealized image of the perfect patient they're trying to become in order to be accepted. Highly skilled at manipulation, they may play on the therapist's narcissism by portraying themselves as the "best patient," which means the therapist must be the "best therapist." Because they idealize the therapist, they can also easily tear down the therapist's self-image.

The greatest difficulty for the self-preservation E3 patient is letting go and showing emotions, especially sadness through tears, which is seen as a dangerous weakness. Any aspect of their shadow that emerges in therapy is perceived as a deeply threatening narcissistic wound.

Their avoidance strategy involves staying on the surface and recounting events in detailed, factual ways, losing sight of the underlying process, dynamics, and symbolic level. It's important for them to recognize their internal timing, to remain present in pain and difficulty without rushing to do something to escape it, and in doing so, realize that pain won't drown them, and that the natural current of life can actually help reveal the path forward more clearly.

When they're in distress, constraining themselves to "just be" without acting helps them become aware of the control they exert over emotional flow, recognizing it physically as tension in the stomach, chest, back, and throat, ultimately identifying it as fear of losing control and feeling pain.

It is essential to work on envy, competitiveness, and feelings of inferiority—denied but central aspects that often drive neurotic behavior when unconscious, and that can become powerful resources for growth when made conscious.

It is also helpful to encourage direct expression of anger and disagreement toward the therapist.

When the idealized self-image starts to shatter, like a mirror struck by a stone, the self-preservation E3 comes into contact with deep pain and the terror of being “nothing,” just an empty vessel. They then realize they’ve been performing a role their whole life and no longer know who they truly are.

They will look to the therapist for solid containment and a sense of safety—someone they can finally trust, who allows them to rediscover their vulnerable self and, at their own pace, reconnect with their genuine human identity. At this point, it’s important that they reclaim the basic permission to exist just as they are, with plenty of physical support and contact (affirmations like: “You’re fine just as you are; you don’t have to do so much to be accepted.”)

At the same time, it’s important to dismantle their tendency toward self-justification and shifting responsibility outward, helping them reconnect with themselves.

It’s also useful to explore their easy enthusiasm for activities (like hobbies or work) and how quickly that enthusiasm can vanish or stagnate, digging into what sparks their passion and what might be holding them back.

Initially, they need a psychologically “safe” environment: ensuring they feel seen, welcomed, heard, and respected. At first, it’s not advisable to confront them too harshly, as the E3 may withdraw. However, at a certain point in the process, they need to find themselves challenged, not just gently affirmed. The following account attests to this:

One of the most healing experiences for me was encountering non-confluence, harsh confrontation, and facing disillusionment with someone I saw as a teacher or guide. In that moment, I realized that healing depended solely on me, that I was enough, and that the fantasy of always having someone to guide me like a kind, unconditional father was unrealistic. I understood that it's impossible to get along with everyone, that being myself will resonate with some people and not with others—and that's okay. I came to recognize my fantasy of wanting to please everyone.

(Ferran)

It can also be healing for men to reconnect with masculine energy. Therefore, direct and clear confrontation, going after what they truly want or need (“penetrating” the world), becomes immensely valuable. For this, it’s vital for them to experience the support of another man, someone who serves as a reference point, and whom they can collaborate with rather than compete against. Ultimately, it’s about rebuilding trust in others and in their own identity.

This approach recognizes that the energetic and sensorimotor base of the E3 is very similar to that of the E8, though in the former, that energy has been suppressed. That’s why contact with men who express masculinity confidently, even with those representing the lustful enneatype, can help the self-preservation E3 rediscover contact, autonomy, and self-trust.

From the perspective of the transformation process, what traits of their subtype can be helpful to the self-preservation E3 therapist in their work?

As therapists, becoming aware of our own neurotic defenses, and understanding that a quality seen as a strength may conceal a flaw (and vice versa), allows us to use these traits as therapeutic assets.

The self-preservation E3 therapist can offer strong containment and a deep sense of security to the client. When in authentic contact with themselves, they inspire and support others in daring to be more genuine. Awareness of their own inauthenticity helps them unmask the mask in others.

Moreover, the drive to “do it well,” when no longer a neurotic need, translates into attentiveness to the quality of their presence and thus of their therapeutic actions. A therapist of this subtype won’t settle for mediocrity.

Finally, their tendency toward control can be channeled into a therapeutic presence with a panoramic vision of the process and the field. One revealing experience illustrates this:

I find that I make use of the qualities I consider positive in my personality, even if I see them as less prominent, like efficiency and quick thinking and action. I've also learned to wait for signs that confirm the validity of my intuition before taking action.

(Susana)

Recommended practices

This section outlines various therapeutic suggestions that can support the growth process of the self-preservation subtype.

Agenda and tasks

- Reduce the number of tasks you impose on yourself.
- Ask yourself what you actually want or don't want to do.
- Schedule time in your agenda to “do nothing.”
- Learn to say “no” when accepting a task isn't right for you. Pay attention to the compulsion to say yes to any request, no matter who it comes from.
- Establish real priorities; an endless to-do list often excludes what truly matters when you stop to evaluate your life.
- Do one thing at a time. Prioritize some. Give up on others.
- Not everything you do needs to be useful or have a practical purpose.

Indulging in pleasure

- Choose a few things that are purely pleasurable and do them.
- Do something enjoyable that is “completely unnecessary.”
- Take care of yourself: become aware of your needs, give yourself a bit more attention, make time for rest, avoid abusing your body, don't eat or drink compulsively, slow down, breathe...
- Engage in activities that require patience and attention to detail, such as gardening, crafts, painting, etc.
- Embrace playfulness, ease, and the joy of being alive (the erotic love of the inner child).
- Adopt an attitude of “making things easier for myself.”
- Waste time.
- Reeducate your *inner child* by affirming their strengths (Antonio Blay's technique of unconscious reeducation).

Acknowledging limits, embracing humility and trust

- Learn to ask for help.
- Delegate—let others contribute (even if they don't do it “perfectly.”)

- Laugh at yourself more.
- Cultivate humility, observe pride. Work on the sense of omnipotence.
- Speak about your needs and ask for them to be met.
- Ask for physical touch.

Relating to others

- Choose a few people you're close with and intentionally talk about yourself, instead of just listening and/or giving advice.
- Respect others as they are.
- Give more from the heart, with less overthinking.
- Recognize unspoken expectations in your closest relationships.
- Be less critical of yourself and others.
- Connect with people of types E2, E7, and E8—those who can most help break your rigid patterns.
- Learn to say, “I love you,” despite the shame or fear of rejection.
- Trust someone completely: “Trusting that a teacher [Claudio Naranjo] could show me a simpler path was the first step in undoing my inner game. I, who was always so independent, entrusted my life to someone!” (Nilda)
- Practice active listening.
- Invite people over spontaneously.
- Refrain from trying to have “the last word.”

Being over Doing

- Stop being constantly available and allow yourself to feel “useless”: “One of the hardest things is to understand and accept that any change in daily habits triggers an immediate and negative reaction from those you live with, because it means you step back from always being available, no longer guessing what others want or need; ultimately, no longer being ‘indispensable.’ This leads to realizing that your worth as a person, as a human being, isn’t in what you do for others. And also to facing a very hard-to-handle feeling: the sense of being useless, having no role in the world. Sitting with that feeling, without immediately filling it with some kind of activity, no matter how silly, is the real inner work.” (Susana)
- Be more, have less.
- Love isn’t in doing, but in feeling.
- Reclaim your gaze. Simply look, and don’t act.
- “I exist even if no one is watching me.”

Connecting with yourself and your truth

- Meditate! Meditate and stick with the practice. (Self-preservation E3 can easily get bored of meditation because they expect immediate results).
- Practice meditation in action, to avoid rushing through life.
- Bodywork: “Definitely, meditation, which teaches us *not to do*, and work that involves the body, so often neglected, are vital for self-preservation E3s to become calmer and wiser. All of us mention our struggle with *touching and being touched*. It’s as if each person works through that with specific therapeutic practices. Touching and being touched requires trust, a quality we must develop.” (Nilda)
- Endure and fully experience emptiness and solitude.

- Focus on the qualities of who you *are* (energy, love, happiness, and intelligence), not from vanity or false modesty.
- Be willing to live with your limitations and feel worthy of giving and receiving. You don't need to *do* anything to receive love. Receive love just by *being*.
- Pray, ask, in a simple way.
- Release negative emotions, your "lower self," such as hatred, anger, resentment, and sadness. Let go of the mask of "everything's fine."
- Don't try to always force a smile.

Security

- Shift away from hyper-stability: "I'll take care of the little things, and the rest is in God's hands."
- Let go of the need for permanence and control.
- Learn to express uncomfortable things without beating around the bush, dropping hints or using sarcasm.
- Dare to say what you're really thinking. Let that "son of a bitch" slip. Get in touch with anger and express it.
- Work less and live more on an emotional level.

Body-oriented work

- Alternate between strong and gentle work—between the intense and the cathartic—to loosen deep tension and release emotional wounds. Use the gentler side to learn to treat yourself more kindly, explore sensuality, tenderness, and touch without "practical goals."
- Engage in some kind of "work," "therapy," or body-based activity. Better than sports are Eastern disciplines like yoga, kung fu, tai chi, or aikido, which help you focus on breathing and internal sensations.
- Create space for spontaneous movement: authentic movement, dance therapy, free-form dance; drawing (à la Anna Halprin); and restorative pauses like Gerda Boyesen's "winning moves" (micro-movements), which build awareness of the passive side of recovery.
- Explore slow, full-body movements: yoga, the Feldenkrais method, eutony.
- Experiment with involuntary movement, vibration, and pulsation: vegetotherapy (Reich), bioenergetics (Lowen), core energetics (Pierrakos), biodynamic therapy (Boyesen).
- Breathwork: Energizing (bioenergetics and core energetics); mindful and exploratory: "experiential breath" (Ilse Middendorf), breathmoves by Juerg Roeffler (spontaneous movement triggered by breath), and different forms of yoga and meditation.
- Activate the parasympathetic nervous system (to reduce sympathetic overdrive). Work toward balancing both systems.

SELF-PRESERVATION E3: BIOGRAPHY

by Elia Gerardi

I was born with a brother; we're twins, but we look different.

My brother was born first, and I stayed longer in our mother's womb. Back then, in a small village in southern Italy where babies were still born at home, it wasn't a given that a woman would know she was expecting twins. I was a surprise to my parents.

That lack of awareness—from the moment we were conceived—of the fact that there were two of us, marked a kind of absence of identity. We were two perceived as one. That's why, deep down, I always thought I was the unexpected child. I believe that left a mark on the development of my character, always seeking visibility and recognition.

I was baptized and named Elia, after my paternal grandfather. My family called me "Elio." I'm not entirely sure why I didn't go by my given name (perhaps as a way to identify, and at the same time distinguish myself from my grandfather, who was a controversial figure due to how different he was from the family's ideals).

I was a model child—well-behaved, obedient, diligent, and studious, in contrast to my twin brother, who was instinctive and rebellious. I gave up the whims and joys of childhood so I could grow up fast: it was the price I had to pay to get the attention of adults. However, that sacrifice made me a sad and lonely child.

From the beginning of school, I was a good student. Whether due to my adaptable nature or my academic success, I became the bearer of my parents' social and cultural expectations (hence the early burden of many responsibilities). Several episodes from my childhood explain the deep sense of responsibility that has characterized me.

The first has to do with my brother. We were three or four years old and still living in the little village. One afternoon, an aunt of ours decided to take us for a ride and had us get into the car while she stayed outside chatting. As we waited, we played around, and without realizing the danger, I released the handbrake.

The car was parked on a downhill slope and started moving, picking up speed. When my aunt noticed what was happening, she clung to the car in a desperate attempt to stop it. The vehicle crossed an intersection, hit a house wall, and bounced back, hitting my aunt.

My brother and I miraculously came out of the accident unharmed. My aunt, on the other hand, suffered multiple injuries and spent several months in the hospital. The relatives scolded me harshly, but I don't remember my parents ever defending me.

My reaction was to withdraw into silence, showing nothing; I was eaten up by guilt, feeling entirely responsible for my aunt's condition and everything that had happened. The emotional turmoil came out days later in the form of a high fever (likely a consequence of the distress I felt).

I think that episode heightened, in me as a child, the need—more than that, the *obligation*—to give up play and increase control over my actions. During my childhood, play took on a fairly marginal role because it wasn't part of the educational regime imposed by my grandmother (the true head of the household we lived in), which was made up of rules that couldn't be broken and left no room for fun or amusements. I remember only one birthday party, at a cousin's house (I was seven or eight): I was so thrilled that for a long time I considered it the happiest day of my life.

My sense of responsibility grew even more with the arrival of my younger brother. Two episodes stand out. The first: my brother, who was four or five years old, disappeared while we were playing outside, only to reappear hours later. The second: during a game with other kids, we put a rope around his neck to simulate an execution. Even though I wasn't directly responsible in either case, I still felt guilty for not having protected him.

I believe my early development of a protective instinct, both towards others and myself, stemmed from a loss of trust in adults. In another episode, I was in the car with my family; my father was driving and suddenly realized the brakes weren't working. We were close to home, but the road ahead was downhill. My mother was terrified, and I also remember feeling panic. We could have gotten out of the car since we were still on flat ground, but my father decided to continue slowly. The sensations of fear and lack of protection are still vivid in me. The accident that followed—fortunately not severe—confirmed that perception. Even today, my dreams often take place on steep descents, cliffs, ravines, and all kinds of vehicles.

Obviously, I loved my parents very much, although I was aware of a certain emotional distance. My father, due to his mindset, didn't involve himself with his children; we were entirely in my mother's care, who in turn did everything she could to maintain a good image in front of her mother-in-law, who lived with us. My mother often complained to me about the distress caused by my grandmother's mistreatment, how she didn't feel at home, and the heavy workload she had to take on.

Ironically, when an earthquake destroyed our homes in the 1980s and there was talk of moving north, I trusted that a change of house might finally bring me the love I so longed for.

I remember that during that time, I was an anxious child, buried in schoolwork. Not knowing how to express my discomfort with words, I would often get sick. My health was fragile, and my weak point was my throat. I think that's how I began to act out my personal script, my way of dealing with distress: unable to express my needs, I delegated to illness the task of getting attention and affection.

A simple cold would knock me down: I'd spend entire days in bed with tonsillitis, and that would guarantee me care and visibility. Then I had my tonsils removed, and during my hospital stay, my mother moved into the hospital. She dedicated herself entirely to me. It was one of the few times I managed to have her all to myself!

It was during that time that my paternal grandfather, Elia, passed away. It was the first loss I experienced in my life. Although I had lived many years with my grandfather, I don't retain many memories of someone who had been pushed into a marginal role within the family: he was always alone, buried in magazines, newspapers, and books, or out on walks that lasted for hours. My grandmother, his wife, implicitly kept us from having contact with him. There were rumors that my grandfather would rummage through trash bins. I felt both curious and drawn to him, though he also frightened me. When Grandpa Elia died, I had a dream that haunted me for a long time and that I even confused with something that might have actually happened:

On the night of the funeral, during dinner, I notice that my father is missing; I decide to go look for him at the cemetery. To get there, one has to take a dark and isolated path. I see myself walking and arriving at the cemetery. Everything around is very dark. I reach the cemetery and see a shadow approaching. I'm afraid, though I think it could be my father. I don't know where I find the courage to go forward instead of running away. As I get closer, I realize it's not my father but a boy who lives nearby. He asks me what I'm doing there and how it's possible that my parents allowed me to go alone to the cemetery at night. He takes my hand and walks me home. I feel that he's affectionate toward me.

It took me a while to understand the meaning of that dream. It happened after my father's death and after meeting Claudio Naranjo, with whom I began my personal work. I believe I had foreseen what would happen to me much later, when, after my father's illness, I fell ill myself. Like in a vicious circle, the men in my family, over several generations, unable to form healthy bonds in life, became united through death. I was part of that cycle. Only the loving intervention of a man from the

cemetery—a place I was already very close to—brought me back “home” so that I could make a true change in my life. I have no doubt that this loving man was Claudio.

After my grandfather Elia’s death, I completely forgot about him. His memory wasn’t kept alive in the family, and so I lost all traces of him in my mind. Thirty years later, shortly before a therapeutic process with Claudio, while writing part of my biography, particularly about my family, I recovered memories of my grandfather and a deep bond with him. During a therapy session, through a night dream, I experienced an intense connection with him as the result of a journey to the underworld. This was the journey:

I find myself on the banks of a river. There’s a snake with the head of a dragon that devours the souls of anyone who tries to cross. I don’t feel in danger and have the courage to go through.

After a journey that takes me into the Earth through caverns and tunnels inhabited by animals, I arrive at a pool with the help of a pair of wings given to me by a butterfly. As I emerge from the water, I glimpse a round, bald face and recognize in it my grandfather, who physically resembles a panda bear and walks like a penguin.

In the encounter with my grandfather, I see myself once again as a child—I’m eight years old, the age I was when he died. I feel very happy to see him again and eagerly move toward him to hug and kiss him. He welcomes me and plays with me; there is much love between us.

At a certain point, I realize he has a dagger lodged in his back.

I feel deep despair, but I sense something dark, like an insight. And I scream: “What did they do to you?”

I understand that my grandfather had been metaphorically murdered by the loneliness the family had condemned him to, by the shame his relatives felt, and by the coldness, lack of understanding, and little love he received.

It was the contempt he endured that kept him imprisoned in that place and in that body that wasn’t truly his, a body that wouldn’t allow him to free himself from the weapon embedded in him. He carried that burden without complaint.

Instinctively, I climb onto his back to pull out the dagger, but a child’s strength isn’t enough to free him. Still, my motivation is strong, and though the task is far beyond my capabilities, I manage to find new resources and begin to draw the blade from his body.

When I pull it out completely, my grandfather, like a deflating balloon, loses his animal-like appearance and regains his human form. He comes to me, his face radiating an indescribable joy, a true feeling of liberation. He says goodbye, hugs me, puts on the butterfly wings I had been wearing, and flies upward. During our encounter, my grandfather doesn’t speak—he communicates his love to me only with his heart.

As he ascends, he throws rose petals toward me. Although he doesn’t say it, I know I must eat them.

Our encounter ends as I nourish myself with the petals he offers me.

This dream holds significant meaning for me because with my grandfather’s liberation—someone with whom I had clearly identified with—I began a process of personal liberation, returning to my natural state and shedding the heavy and painful burdens that had prevented me from being myself.

After my grandfather’s death, they had me sleep with my grandmother, in the spot he had left behind. The hidden message was that I had to take his place. With my grandmother Angela, I had a love-hate relationship. On one hand, I loved her because I felt drawn to her magical and wise side.

She was a healer: she used her hands to set bones and was visited by people whom even doctors would send to her.

On the other hand, I hated her rigidity toward play and fun. I also disliked her authoritarian attitude; I saw it as the cause of my mother's suffering and of the little attention she showed me. And she had a dark side that scared me.

She used to tell me the story of the owl and its song. She would say that whenever one heard the owl sing, it was an omen of death, because it had come to take the soul of the person living in the house it perched upon. The owl was both a messenger and a companion to the beyond. Many years later, I dreamed of my grandmother, lying in the bed beside me, with the face of an owl.

And then came the year of the tremendous earthquake. It was devastating and caused many casualties. At first, I felt calm; I didn't realize how serious the situation was. Then things started getting more and more difficult: we couldn't wash regularly, we didn't have access to a bathroom, we had to make do to eat, and it was starting to get cold.

That's when the first tents arrived, to provide shelter for those of us who had lost our homes. Our house wasn't completely destroyed—it hadn't collapsed—but it had a lot of cracks, and the constant aftershocks made it too dangerous to enter.

After a few days, we went to live with an uncle in Modena. Overnight, I was uprooted from a world I knew well and dropped into a completely different city and environment. For nearly a year, seven of us lived on the ground floor of my uncle's small house. We had one bedroom, a kitchen, and a bathroom.

Everything was new: the school, the classmates, the city, the culture, the dialect, the customs. It wasn't easy, but I remember it as a time when I received a lot of support, both at school and at home. For the first time, I felt close to my mother—even physically close. That change shook me: contrary to what had been the norm in my life, I was receiving affection and attention freely given.

I think those events left a kind of imprint on my life: as if I had learned that only in the face of dramatic and catastrophic events could I receive the loving attention I longed for.

That year I was in the first year of middle school. I adapted quickly, and thanks to my ability to adjust, I soon became a good student. After the school year ended, we returned to our hometown. We settled in a container home, and later in a prefab house.

I managed to stand my ground: I had asked not to sleep with my grandmother, and I got my way. Family life returned to its usual patterns, which I had only briefly escaped. I started isolating myself, went to church, served as an altar boy, and felt very lonely and sad. I did well in school, but it didn't nourish me.

All in all, the atmosphere at home, while still not good, had improved. The figure who was still missing was my father. During the time we lived in Modena, he hadn't come with us, and when we returned home, he went back to his usual ways.

When I went back to school in my hometown, I was ahead of my classmates—probably due to the lack of consistent classes while the school buildings were being restored. I don't know if this had anything to do with it, but my classmates began to exclude me. I then poured my anxiety into food. I gained a lot of weight, and along with the feeling of exclusion came shame about how I looked.

Halfway through middle school, our whole family moved permanently to the North. Compared to my siblings, I was excited about the move: I thought the family would finally come together!

My father spent more time with us, mainly because he had no other options. But the quality of our time together was still missing. The city I found wasn't as welcoming as the one I remembered; it felt more hostile. Being from the South was still a reason to be discriminated against.

That's when a devastating period began: I felt inadequate, inferior, humiliated, and hurt. To cope with the situation, I decided to "deny myself" and completely adapt to the new environment. It felt like there was no other choice. In just a few months, I completely changed my dialect and built a castle of lies: I was no longer Southern, but Modenese in every respect.

I was attending science high school. My classmates were financially well-off, so I made up a story that my father owned the business where we lived. Obviously, to keep this a secret, I couldn't let my friends meet my parents or siblings—and certainly not visit my home.

I built two parallel lives: a private one—at home—and a public one, at school and with friends, where I wore a mask. I was deeply ashamed of my parents because of the kind of work they did. Paradoxically, I had set out to live a better life and instead found myself trapped in a whirlpool of lies and shame that seriously reduced my quality of life.

I worked hard in school: if before, studying had been a way to earn my parents' love and approval, now that I had in some way turned my back on them, even my studies lost their meaning.

Everything seemed to be going backward, and the only moments of peace came when I returned to the village, taking a break from all the lies.

Even my name caused confusion: in my family, where I didn't need to lie, I was Elio, while among friends, where I wore the mask, I was Elia—my real name. I think that identity chaos helped me take on many different personas. Sometimes I even believed them, but deep down I knew I was just a copy of myself.

Around that time, my twin brother was very popular with friends and girls—maybe because of his looks or his interpersonal skills. So, I decided to follow his example: I started a diet to look like him. Once again, I felt the need to become like someone else.

Confident in my newfound physical appeal, I started to take an interest in women. In Modena, I couldn't form romantic relationships, but I did when I went back to my hometown. Having a romantic relationship in Modena meant putting my castle of lies and my mask at risk. I felt inferior, not good enough.

In women, I was looking for my mother's love, and it was easier to find that in Southern girls because they were more like her in culture and mentality. The constant in my relationships with women was that I would make them fall in love without ever having intimate relations—neither sexual nor, most importantly, emotional. For me, the important thing was that everyone believed I could have any woman I wanted; it was essential for preserving credibility and image.

When I started university in Modena, I also began dating girls from the city. I fully immersed myself in the phase of falling in love, of getting closer to someone; I felt capable of carrying on a relationship, but then I would end it quickly, even just to avoid them meeting my family—something I hid from my friends as well.

I had only two significant romantic relationships in my life. The first was with a girl with whom, for the first time, I managed to build a more honest relationship. Yet I never acknowledged the value of that relationship. I didn't do anything to keep it alive—I leaned on it, depended on it.

The breakup was painful because I experienced rejection. I probably suffered more from losing the image I had of myself than from losing the person. That's when I started the relationship with the woman who would later become my wife: I poured all the pain, anger, and frustration from that breakup into her. I took advantage of the fact that Antonella was in love with me: I'd reach out whenever I felt like it, and when I got tired, I'd walk away, fully knowing she'd be there again, waiting for me whenever I wanted.

I kept telling her that what we had wasn't a real relationship, which served as justification for getting involved with other women, even though I knew her feelings for me weren't fleeting. That's how I behaved for many years. Anyone else in her position wouldn't have stuck around. But she did—she stayed and waited for me, even though I'd given her every reason to leave.

Things went on like that for a long time, even when our relationship had already become more stable. Eventually, she gave me an ultimatum. I agreed to marry her, even though I wasn't entirely convinced. Deep down, I was afraid that if we ended up separating, I'd be forced to confront myself, to face my own solitude, and undoubtedly, new women and new relationships.

And yet, our wedding day was one of the most beautiful days of my life. I felt it was something good for me. After getting married, I felt I had truly fallen in love with my wife, and a new phase of my life began: just when I started truly loving her, I inflicted on her the great pain of my illness.

At university (I enrolled in the School of Engineering), I regained some self-esteem—even if it was superficial, since it was based on the good opinion others had of me. I spent a year living and studying in Milan. Leaving home gave me a sense of relief. Once again, I was searching elsewhere for a peace I couldn't find within myself.

When I returned to Modena, I described my time in Milan to my friends as a period full of parties, fun, and excess—which was far from the truth. In reality, I remember it as a time of deep loneliness and sadness.

I started hanging out with new friends. For the umpteenth time, I invented a new story and crafted an image completely at odds with reality. I put my best qualities at the service of my neurosis. In order to prove I was capable and well-off, I learned to carefully manage my money just to make it seem like I had plenty of it. At the same time, I managed my studies strategically.

I began putting in more effort and getting good results despite relatively little work, and that helped boost my ego a lot. Challenge and competition were my fuel, and so I gained a reputation for being super intelligent.

Unfortunately, I didn't use that ability to speed up my academic path. On the contrary, knowing I could pass exams with minimal preparation led me to take long breaks between one exam and the next.

During those years, I always kept my family, my friends, and university life separate. These worlds came together for the first time on the day of my graduation—a day I dreaded because of the anxiety I had around image.

In reality, no one cared about my family or all the lies I had told. Or maybe many had already figured it out, and I was the only one convinced I had everything under control. I remember with deep emotion my father's tears when I graduated as an engineer, as if in that moment, I had rescued him from his humble and simple life. Witnessing his emotions opened my heart, and for the first time, I felt genuinely loved. I felt that my father was finally proud of me.

I got married on December 8, 2003. The following months were happy ones: I was satisfied with both my romantic and professional life. I had just started working as an engineer at Ferrari, the famous car company.

That year we allowed ourselves a few trips and extra expenses, which felt like a luxury. The honeymoon period lasted only a few months, though—life was preparing a hard blow. In October 2004, my father was diagnosed with stomach cancer. He underwent surgery immediately, but it quickly became clear that the situation was serious.

I took care of my father while he was in the hospital and during the (palliative) treatments that followed. It hurt to see his resignation: he had stopped fighting. It was as if nothing in the world could give him the strength to battle on, to keep going.

The thought that he might die was unbearable for me. That period was terrible: I worked all day, then went to visit him, weighed down by anxiety. I would come home exhausted and fall asleep on the couch, without sharing anything with my wife. In doing so, I drained energy from the relationship, because I had to conserve all my strength for being there with my father.

My family's way of dealing with things had always been to stay silent about the truth: with my father, they pretended everything was fine, that he wasn't in danger. Around him, we had to maintain a calm and cheerful attitude.

In May 2005, I also fell ill. The same diagnosis, in a different place: the mouth. It felt like life had punished me by striking the very part I had misused—using it only to lie.

Unlike what had happened with my father, I decided to tell my family everything clearly, without omitting anything. That day is etched in my memory: we were in the living room of my parents' house; my father was lying in his bed. I clearly remember everyone's reaction: my siblings frozen still, petrified; my mother in utter despair; and my father, who, as soon as he heard my words, stopped looking at me and turned his gaze to the wall. That reaction wounded me deeply; I had hoped for more empathy, affection, a word of support. Later, I reinterpreted it: I came to understand his desperation, his silent cry.

It seemed as if life had never given us the chance to feel united while living and was now giving us that chance in the face of death. I began my own Calvary: hospital, surgery, therapies, chemo, radiation. I felt like a leaf blown by the wind—at the mercy of the doctors, without the slightest will of my own.

Paradoxically, during that time my father started to get better: the metastases had diminished and they even announced the possibility of stopping treatment.

The illness forced me to stop and reconsider my life. I knew I had to change, but I had no idea what to do, where to go; I needed help. So I clung—though skeptically—to the self-discovery path my wife had begun, which was light-years away from my rational mindset: I attended SAT I, where I became aware of my childhood suffering and realized that my deceit was driven by the search for love.

I was even able to glimpse a deeper reading of my illness: falling ill like my father, in a delusion of omnipotence to save him and, through that ultimate gesture, earn his unconditional love. When I worked through that, I saw how absurd my thinking had been and understood the need to take responsibility for my own life, and mine alone.

By the end of SAT, I felt physically and internally healed. The work on forgiveness opened up a state of compassion in me—towards myself and towards my father—that I had never felt before.

I returned home just in time to see him one last time, when he was already nearing death. I spent his final hours with him, holding his hand, with a feeling of reconciliation and forgiveness, and with the sense that I could let him go with nothing left unsaid between us.

After that first period of grace, my personality reasserted itself with force. Even though I wasn't fully convinced, I decided to continue with the SAT, this time in Brazil. During a routine check-up before the trip, I was diagnosed with a recurrence and couldn't go. The return of the illness threw me into a state of total confusion. I had been convinced I was on the right path, that I had broken the unhealthy cycle. All of it made me doubt the therapeutic process. My rational, controlling mind had led me to believe that the path of self-discovery could save me, like an antidote to a poison. Clearly, I was still very far from grasping the true meaning of an inner journey.

From that moment on began a process that calling a Calvary feels insufficient: long hospital stays, my mouth rendered useless for both eating and speaking, trapped in total silence. For added assurance, the doctors performed what they called a “preventive” operation—excessive even by their own admission—that gave me more guarantees: they removed a large part of my jaw. I spent countless days immobile in bed and, as a result, developed sores all over my body.

Entire nights passed without sleep, filled with harrowing thoughts. I especially remember one vision that couldn't have been a dream: I saw a battlefield after the fight; I saw figures, half spirits and half human, struggling not to be swallowed by the earth. It felt like I was witnessing the suffering of

the transition into death, and I perceived it as a preview of the fate that awaited me. I also saw my father lying on a grave, watching the scene with an expression of profound sorrow.

Only later did I understand the subtle meaning of what I'd seen: I hadn't been watching others struggle to avoid being swallowed by the earth; that was a lie I told myself to avoid admitting that I was watching myself in the moment of transition. My father's look of sadness and helplessness was because he saw that I was dying.

When I was discharged, I had a nasogastric feeding tube, but no real prospect of ever returning to normal. Thinking back, I believe the doctors discharged me so I could spend my final days at home. My wife decided to transfer me to another hospital. What followed was a period of physical pain so intense it brought on a true inner despair; I longed for death as a release.

After five months of total isolation and silence, I went to SAT II, full of shame over the state I was in—disabled, disfigured, and unable to speak. It was deeply important for me to be among people again, to feel accepted, loved, and to overcome the shame my appearance caused me. A new feeling of tenderness and compassion for my body washed over me—for all its torn, aching parts.

From that moment on, a new phase began: I felt the will to live again. Through Claudio, I recovered the feeling of love, peace, possibility, and hope. Even though returning to daily life wasn't easy, something very deep had changed: now there was an inner drive.

I had to learn to eat again, going through the stages of a child: liquid foods, purées, then solids. I also had to learn to speak again, letter by letter, word by word. It was like being born anew.

That event led me to a different way of living, to reinvent my priorities. I discovered a sense of well-being made of normal, simple things—like eating slowly and savoring the food, listening, observing.

I continued on my path of self-discovery with growing trust in the process and in Claudio. I took part in the SAT in Brazil, which turned out to be a liberating experience—a catharsis and a reclaiming of my instinctual side. And not only that. I felt surrender. Surrender, to me, meant letting go of obsessively controlling my actions, trusting others and their ideas and intuition. On a physical level, I came to understand how I had suppressed my most vital part—instinct—by subordinating it to the rational mind, which postponed my needs in favor of others', thereby cutting off my connection with myself. My body came back to life.

Many things have changed since then—not just externally, but (and more importantly) within me. In the beginning, the magical atmosphere, abundant energy, and numerous intimate connections I was finally able to form with my fellow travelers had made me feel somewhat out of sync. Naively, I aimed to live forever in that state and believed that a life led by instinct would allow it, while also leading me to healing. But in truth, I was neglecting the deeper work on myself.

I had undoubtedly become too attached to the intense emotions I experienced during the SATs. Over time, I realized how even normal emotional contact felt magical to me—such was my disconnect from my emotional world and from the ability to recognize my inner state.

I have considered and still consider my inner path and growth as something absolutely essential and non-negotiable. I never missed the opportunities where I could experience the authenticity of emotions and enjoy Claudio's presence and energy.

Those were important years, though it's only recently that I've recognized my difficulties and the "neurotic" effort behind them. The idea of personal growth greatly appealed to me, and I felt the importance of the path, but for a long time, I deceived myself, trying to prove I deserved to be among the seekers and that I was up to par.

In trying to meet those inner demands, I always felt the need to demonstrate something (for example, deep insights or extraordinary experiences), falling into a whirlwind of self-imposed expectations that kept me from enjoying the SAT and from working honestly on myself.

My motivation, once again, came from a need to show the results of my efforts and to make them visible. Deep down, I felt that if I didn't receive public recognition, the fruit of my labor didn't really exist.

It has been and still is difficult for me to recognize my self-deception. For someone with a character like mine, the process of self-knowledge leads to a profound sense of disorientation, because it exposes the many masks we've built up. But once those false faces begin to fall away, it becomes inevitable to ask: who are we really?

Through the SATs, I discovered a quieter kind of personal work that went hand in hand with a genuine interest in self-knowledge. The more honestly I looked inward, the less urgency I felt to express it outwardly. Learning to trust my own feelings has been a long process, because I always had to keep an eye on my desire/mechanism for self-deception. The desire to be someone I'm not and to appear better plays a subtle and increasingly refined role inside me, and at times it's very hard to uncover.

I'm an electronic engineer; that's been my profession for many years. After my illness, I let my career slide. At first, I believed my work had caused my illness due to the excessive effort and heavy responsibilities. I searched rationally and in vain for the causes of the illness, and even for hypothetical remedies (here too, my "problem-solving" nature followed its usual pattern: problem-solution). I took a long vacation.

For rehabilitation reasons, I worked for several years with reduced hours. I fully used my convalescence as an excuse for my performance. The truth was, I had no interest in what I was doing; it only nourished me financially, and I used my condition to keep things light. Paradoxically, the illness brought great advantages. It's not easy to admit manipulation, even in extreme circumstances. But recognizing it helped me identify which aspects of my life I needed to withdraw my energy from.

Regarding my family of origin, the illness allowed me to let go of the role of the "responsible one" I had always taken on in solving any problem. I had always been the pillar, the go-to person for advice. That role, which I had created for myself and which was actually difficult to maintain, gave me a place, visibility, and recognition. But now, I was finally able to turn toward myself, to rest, and to feel less burdened. Truth be told, I had neither the time nor the desire to maintain that role anymore.

Recovery, as I mentioned, took a very long time, especially when it came to speaking and eating. On the other hand, I felt entitled to expect help from those around me—especially from my wife, from whom I expected attention, care, and to make me her top priority. I can't deny that those expectations were met. I also knew that what I was really demanding was maternal love. I had suffered from the lack of attention, care, and unconditional affection from my mother, and now I wanted some sort of compensation by taking advantage of my situation.

The illness allowed me to completely let go of responsibilities—toward myself and others. I no longer handled family matters, my marriage, work, or day-to-day finances. It was a long period of inactivity.

After spending a large part of my life trying to ensure security for myself and my loved ones—taking on collective responsibilities and putting myself at the center of every situation—a single traumatic event caused this carefully constructed way of life to crumble like a house of cards.

The numerous operations, devastating and debilitating, had disfigured me, deeply undermining my apparent confidence and sociability. I had to start relying on something other than my looks. I felt as if my body had betrayed me.

Because of this, the work of self-knowledge became something very important. The initial motivation was to find a path toward physical salvation. To that, a less obvious and more insidious motivation was added—one that at times deceived me: not having an attractive appearance I could

count on to face the world had created the need to turn inward. It might seem legitimate, if it weren't for the fact that I used the depth of inner experience as a substitute for outward appearance. It was practically like saying: *I can no longer count on my "exterior" to be in the world, so I replace it by selling my interiority.*

Even though the inner search genuinely fascinated me, its strategic use made the self-knowledge process largely insincere. Obviously, all this happened without me being aware of it.

At the same time, I needed self-consolation: it was so painful and humiliating not to recognize myself in my own face that I urgently needed to find something beautiful to show and to show myself. I was too afraid of myself and of what I had become.

Behind the deceit, the manipulation, and the strategic use I made of myself, there was deep despair—despair felt by someone who believes they have no possibility of ever being loved. And honestly, I thought I had nothing that could make me lovable, and the fear of that becoming evident was so intense that the only way forward was to invent something—or better yet, manufacture it like a product to be sold. Only when, through the work on the traits of my character, I began to feel a bit of love for myself, did that mechanism become clear.

It also took a long time to recognize the anger within me. I was good at hiding it, denying it, and projecting it onto others, especially the childhood anger I still harbored towards my family. It was as if I couldn't allow myself to feel it; I saw it as an act of betrayal against them. After all, I was raised in the cult of sacrifice.

My parents moved to the North after the earthquake. For my father, the change was especially difficult and painful. He never missed an opportunity to emphasize that everything he did was for the sake of his children. I always felt indebted. But I also felt that I had to repay that debt—that it was a demand. After graduating, as soon as I started working, it was normal to hand over my salary for the household and to invest it in building the little house my parents had always dreamed of.

At that time, I had already been dating my current wife for several years. Instead of building a life of my own, I was financially contributing to the family's efforts. Naturally, this created conflict with my girlfriend. But back then, it seemed completely normal: I was the model son who took care of his parents.

I couldn't yet see something very subtle, which only later revealed itself in all its madness: a kind of family mandate, a task I had taken on, which could be translated as a warning not to abandon the family. My parents, by constantly emphasizing the support they gave their children, were asking us not to leave them alone. Their inability to integrate into the new community also stemmed from their inability to cut the umbilical cord with their roots: the village, the customs, the dialect... all those elements that guaranteed them identity and survival. They never really assimilated into the place they had moved to.

It wasn't just a geographical issue—it was, perhaps, a way to keep the family system intact. Just as they had not strayed from their own system, the same was expected of me.

In truth, I had already broken that rule years earlier when, in order to assimilate, I quickly lost the accent that would have marked me as an outsider. That was surely a crude way of expressing a desire to distance myself. I was the only one among my siblings who repeatedly attempted to integrate. I was, for example, the only one who pursued higher education, earned a university degree, and had friends from social and economic backgrounds very different from mine.

I suppose that at the time I was seeking a different kind of visibility at the social level, which brought me closer to other worlds, other mentalities, and into a more intellectually stimulating environment.

Looking back with today's eyes, it's clear that there were two souls living within me: one eager to soar, to assert itself through effort and a longing for redemption, and the other, staunchly loyal to

the family. I tried to keep my balance between two diametrically opposed feelings that demanded different behaviors.

They were two souls, just as many things in me were dual: being a twin, having two names. It's as if everything had led me toward a kind of splitting that made me lose myself in a maze of identities. On one hand, my family had given me the opportunity to become independent through education and the move to the North; on the other hand, I felt they were demanding that I not use those opportunities. It was a kind of double message: "Go, but don't go; rescue us from our origins, but don't actually do it."

I felt anger about that, too—for having found myself in that situation, and for the fear of taking a stand. It's an unexpressed, stifled anger; I feel it could make me completely lose control, and I fear not being able to handle it. I feel that in it, too, there's a twinge of envy. Observing it, I understood that it was an emotion directed toward those who know exactly what they feel, what they want—those who know how to express themselves, regardless of the *quality* of their feelings, whether positive or negative. Toward those who, in practice, manage to keep a direct channel, a coherence between the "inside" and the "outside." I wanted to be like that, but to do so, I first had to reexamine my defense mechanism of denial, which manifests itself through actions and thoughts that justify me.

Every time an inner discomfort arises in me that could turn into anger, I start a mental process through which I try to justify whatever caused that discomfort. This way, I ease the negative feeling, establish empathy with the person or thing that triggered it, disconnect from myself, and manage to block the anger by keeping it inside. That self-castration involves not only anger but many other aspects of my emotional experience. It's as if there were an insurmountable boundary between the "inside" and the "outside." I came to understand that difficulty through dreams.

I've always been a "dreamer," in the sense that my dreams are rich in details, unfolding into long, complete stories. Dreams have been a channel for delving into myself and discovering the depths of my unconscious. I believe that such abundant nighttime production might correspond to daytime castration. Leading a life within the limits of control, adhering to external demands, means stifling the inner movement and, above all, blocking its expression. By preventing anything from coming to light in my daily life, I think I used dreams as a place where unexpressed feelings and emotions could converge.

I find this parallel plausible because, as the work of self-discovery progressed and brought my hidden parts into awareness, the nature of my dreams began to change, with the previously repressed content disappearing.

Becoming aware of my unpleasant and painful inner dynamics has led me to greater self-awareness, to an inner alertness. My personality is active, tied to productivity, constantly in motion. The change wasn't about becoming inactive, as I had believed for a long time, but rather about acting in line with what I feel and want. The compulsion to act certainly became an obstacle, but what contributed even more was my lack of awareness of my feelings. The disconnection from myself had been so profound that it prevented access to them.

Now, I try to act in a way that is real and authentic. In the past, I acted to attract attention and gain recognition. That action came from deep insecurity and low self-esteem. I needed someone else's gaze to validate my existence. The shift has moved toward an action that reflects an inner state that is less needy, less externally focused. My actions now simply aim to express what I experience internally.

From the moment I began to feel a bit of trust, self-esteem, and, most importantly, love for myself, I noticed less need to behave theatrically. At a certain point, it happened: I could stop, and it caused no discomfort, no difficulty. The absence of that pressing need to stay in motion—as if I were activating a mechanism of self-doubt—and the newfound ability to stop, made me feel that I had a center, a support I could lean into.

This inner process—opening myself to honesty, seeing my shadow and limitations, engaging in behavior free from judgment, allowing space for acceptance and understanding—has not only brought me more peace but also connected me to a luminous and genuine part of myself.

Practicing honesty with myself is a difficult path. My deep capacity for adaptation often allowed me to live without ever asking myself what I liked, what interested me, or what I wanted.

Adaptation served the purpose of integration, of gaining acceptance from others. Just the thought of standing out terrified me—either because of the responsibility it implied or the fear of conflict. Now I’m discovering the courage to say no to what I don’t want, whether it’s a situation, a behavior, or a person.

It’s as if I had to learn that I could have the right to my own opinions, ideas, behaviors, and feelings, even if they differed from others’. No matter how obvious that might seem, for me it wasn’t. Only after discovering that I had an inner world did I gain access to a first form of identity. I believe that’s the meaning of the long process of separation from my twin brother—not just physically, but from the “other” I had thought was myself.

Consequently, it also became a chance to open myself to conflict and, above all, to be able to withstand it (something unthinkable for my personality until not long ago). I wouldn’t have known how to express disagreement if I hadn’t first come to feel that I was someone, that I had a functioning mind, that I had rights, and that I could see myself as a distinct person.

Since coming into contact with my feelings and thoughts, I’ve been able to express them, defend them, and explain my reasons. In conflicts, especially at work, I realized that it’s possible not to flee, that conflict is a way of relating in which I feel present. That has been a revelation, and I don’t rule out that it might become a form of liberation.

The fear of conflict isn’t just the fear of losing the other person; it’s mainly the fear of not having enough inner depth to endure it. It’s as if I weren’t “whole,” and the fogginess was evident not only to me but also to them. In fact, it’s as if the person (someone I hadn’t managed to build a real relationship with for many years) couldn’t even become important enough to justify a fear of losing them. I think the key was self-protection, avoiding risk. Adaptation proved more functional for my survival.

I’ve often chosen a mediocre life over a risky one. And by risk, I mean truly questioning myself. That choice has created many obstacles to my growth, on a human, professional, and spiritual level.

Only after beginning the path of self-discovery, and thanks to trust in the SAT process and in Claudio, have I gradually been able to do the work of dismantling my most false parts.

In my life, the rational mind always prevailed. I never believed in anything that wasn’t pragmatic and grounded in experience. Spirituality, for me, was nothing more than a ritualistic practice tied to the Catholic model—something deeply childish. Illness, by marking a significant shift in my lifestyle, has played a crucial role. Falling ill and facing the possibility of death inevitably prompted me to ponder life’s bigger questions: where would I go? Does an afterlife exist, and if so, what is it? At the beginning of my path of self-discovery, I went through moments that I can only describe as magical because of their intensity and insight they provided. I also know that I fed those experiences with narcissism and fantasy. However—and now I see this clearly—that doesn’t negate the fact that the seed of the search was already present in me, even if still rough and clumsily disguised. I couldn’t bear, nor even imagine, what it meant to search for myself. My personality had filled all the empty spaces, all the things I came across that had no name for me. Now I look back with compassion, realizing that I couldn’t have done otherwise; that I had to go through all of that in order to leave it behind.

The illness, for a long time perceived by me as a punishment or a form of injustice, ended up having the merit of opening me to the search for myself and allowing me to step out of a small, self-referential mindset to see life from a broader perspective. Life has handed me surprises, opportunities, falls, and comebacks, as if it were orchestrating every event—whose reasons and goals I couldn't understand—but which simply asked to be lived.

This gave rise to a new desire in me: to live with enjoyment. The parallel with food holds special meaning for me. Starting to eat again after so long meant rediscovering the pleasure of food itself—of chewing, savoring, enjoying, tasting flavor. In the same way, I feel like I'm now discovering how to live my life (which I definitely don't take for granted!).

The greatest gift Claudio bestowed upon me, through the path of self-knowledge he proposes, was teaching me how to connect with myself.

Celebrating life, feeling gratitude, remembering myself, being present, and cherishing each moment—these are the pillars that make my days feel genuine.

To conclude my biography, I want to share a metaphor I really love, one that beautifully describes the transformation taking place within me. I spent most of my life resembling a planet that reflects the light of others; I was too preoccupied with my emptiness and had to steal that light from those around me. Now I too know, like everyone else, that I have a light of my own which, albeit faint, uncertain, and sometimes flickering, is uniquely mine.

Now I feel an inner North Star that guides me, brings me back to myself when I get lost, and helps me accept the personality I had long seen as my enemy. I've finally realized that embracing and understanding the personality, rather than fighting it, is a new phase in the process of self-discovery and transformation.

BOOK TWO: THE SEXUAL SUBTYPE

I. Passion in the sphere of instinct: How Vanity works in Sexual

When vanity infiltrates the sexual instinct, the focus shifts to seeking approval and becoming an object of desire. From a young age, the sexual E3's sense of worth is tied to being an object of lust and attracting the attention and desire of others becomes an obsessive pursuit.

The passionate drive for vanity is channeled into romantic relationships. The sexual E3 strives to be the perfect partner, seeking an ideal mate who can provide the validation they crave. They believe that by being the ideal companion, they can soothe their anxieties, insecurities, and existential fears. This leads them to repress their own needs, focusing entirely on their partner to find a sense of existence. As a result, they often neglect personal growth, both professionally and socially, as independence is not a priority for them. They expend their energy on suppressing and controlling their emotions and thoughts, rather than developing their own individuality. This perpetuates a cycle where they increasingly strive to remain attractive, as only a partner can provide the security they seek, both in terms of survival and emotional connection.

I've noticed that I feel much more secure and at ease in the intimacy of my family or with my husband. In these situations, I can express myself freely without self-judgment and show tenderness, openly conveying my affection with gentleness. However, when it comes to social situations, my shyness takes over. Even the mere thought of speaking in public can leave me paralyzed; a wave of fear courses through my body and my mind goes blank. Deep down, there's a nagging feeling that I have nothing valuable to say, that others are more articulate, smarter. I find myself comparing and succumbing to fear. The intense craving to be liked and loved is so overwhelming that I'd rather remain silent. There's also the illusion that merely being present might lead others to acknowledge me because I'm not a burden but rather a feast for the eyes.

By channeling their efforts into captivating and pleasing only one person, they find themselves with less to offer to the world at large. They can become clingy with this significant other, as their world revolves predominantly around them. They live for themselves or for this idealized family union, with their emotional realm completely entwined with their partner's. A mere conflict can be sufficient to disrupt everything. Despite their fervent desire to be viewed as a unique individual, this character has yet to fully grasp that the dynamics of a two-person relationship, common among the sexual subtypes, extend beyond just romantic partnerships and encompass any significant relationships, be it friendships or others.

Within this context, the sexual instinct loses its *natural* function as a pursuit of pleasure and activation of the sexual impulse. Instead, it becomes an *automatic* seduction in the pursuit of intimacy with another. This intimacy, unfulfilled in their intimate relationship with both their mother and father, becomes something the sexual E3 *sells*, akin to a product or a promise both to themselves and to the other person. It lacks the depth of an emotional or existential experience. Naturally, this illusion eventually yields disillusionment—specifically, the disappointment of not being able to attain the envisioned *complete* loving union. And this disillusionment fuels their vain passion to persist in marketing themselves, their bodies, and their uniqueness to others.

The sexual E3 excels at projecting the facade of perfect love, leading you to believe that they'll remain affectionate forever. A true expert in simulating affection, they convey warmth through their smile, convincing you of the idea of unconditional and everlasting love. Yet, when they let their guard down in intimacy, their true self emerges—cold and rigid:

I find myself often caught in fantasies of an ideal love, always envisioning a future relationship as something wonderful. This habit prevents me from fully engaging with my current partner and appreciating the present. I've been in two simultaneous relationships, cheating on both, and I continuously catch myself idealizing either connection, convincing myself that it will bring happiness or resolve my dissatisfaction. Yet, ultimately, I can't commit to either; I've become addicted to this pattern. I can see it, but I can't break free from it.

After leading my partner to believe I'll be there forever, being the ideal man, seducing her, and consciously or unconsciously doing everything right, I often find myself shifting into a phase of criticism and constant demands. It's as if I start to present a bill for all my past actions. It's like making her pay for having relaxed. Having already achieved what I wanted, it's paradoxical; it feels like something is lost or missing. This leads to a significant increase in criticism and demands regarding my partner's actions and words. It almost turns into a competition, a strange and unhealthy notion that my partner can hardly measure up to my expectations. And so, the passionate search continues.

I sometimes feel like I was destined to get married, take care of a family, and have a man in my life. Despite my desire for independence and autonomy, I struggle to break free from this dependency on men. I become entangled in confusion, unsure of what I truly want.

I recognize that there was a certain swagger in my past behavior. I believed that being seen with different women elevated my status in the eyes of others, making me feel special, unique, more attractive, and enigmatic.

Sexual E3s, who often confuse their genuine self with appearances, derive their self-worth from the reflections they receive from others. They fall in love with the image projected back to them, which leads them to become overly accommodating and highly dependent.

In their relentless pursuit to be liked, they share with the other E3 subtypes the peculiar notion that one must be useful to earn affection. This idea takes a specific form in the sexual E3s, as they are willing to be used as objects. They often replicate an infantile pattern of caretaking, stemming from their own childhood experiences. In their early years, they might have been seen as the “long-awaited” child – the one who needed to be good, charming, and cute, the ideal partner that the parent desperately wanted. Today, they often still embody this role.

In a more or less explicit manner, this may involve becoming a sexual object if it's necessary to be loved. As a consequence, they often blur the lines between love, tenderness, and sexual attraction. They associate sexuality with the requirement to earn affection and learned, in their primary relationships, to link sexual contact with emotional intimacy. Many of them were children who were seduced by a parent, often of the opposite sex. This shaped their behavior and taught them to fill their insatiable emptiness with seduction, which became their primary form of connection – it permeates every aspect of their being, from their gestures to their looks, tenderness, and mannerisms. Consequently, they may lean into complacency and sexuality, driven by the idea that they must be desired to be loved and to exist.

They don't invest themselves emotionally in sex and even consider it rather dull, although they'll always put on a façade to suggest otherwise. What truly arouses them is the chase. The sexual E3 delights in the thrill of being appreciated for who they are. Selecting a target and successfully winning them over offers a fleeting respite from the perpetual emptiness experienced by depending so heavily on the approval of others.

I derive my worth from the ability to be liked, to be found attractive, and to be admired by others. This is where the aspect of being a sexual object comes into play, although it was somewhat concealed for me. I wasn't always conscious of the allure of my seductive qualities, gestures, and posture. All these tools were at my disposal to attract women and secure my place in the world.

I remember that, particularly during my adolescence and early adulthood, although there was an element of seduction in my behaviour, it was somewhat subtle. What motivated me more was being chosen, specifically by the opposite sex. Being noticed and validated by the woman in question provided the security I craved. I felt, in a way, indebted, which I believed I had to repay through sexual intimacy and indulgence.

With their instinctual energy subdued, they find it difficult to pursue their own desires. They remain fixated on being desired and chosen, a need they must convince the other to fulfill by portraying a carefully crafted image—a better version of themselves they can superficially present to the world. In their own words: “I claim they’ve chosen me, but little do they know about the elaborate performance I’ve put on.”

A shared theme among sexual E3s is a profound sense of loneliness. Many of them have experienced a deficiency in genuine loving connections with their parents. Their relationship with the parent of the opposite sex, in particular, may have been tainted by manipulative seduction, leaving the child confused. The enduring, unconscious inner experience stemming from this lack of parental support is one of sadness, fear, insecurity, and anguish:

I experienced a lack of care from my mother and father during my childhood, leaving me feeling incredibly vulnerable and unprotected. I was all alone, overwhelmed by insecurity and fear. It was only when I began to take care of my mother that I started to sense recognition.

What's evident to me is that when we yearn for support due to a lack of it, we instinctively transform this need into usefulness for others. We end up taking care of others with the hope that they will return the favor, thus satisfying our own longing for support and protection. We become a means to fulfill their expectations and can go to great lengths in the process. In doing so, we utterly forget ourselves and lose sight of our own identity.

The inner child remains fixated in an Oedipal stage, where it desperately seeks the love of the parent of the opposite sex, driven by an unconscious desire mixed with guilt for what the child interprets as incestuous urges. In this internal paradox, the sexual E3 begins to suppress their erotic energy, perceiving it as a threat to their inner balance. They learn to repress their desires, attempting to tame the inner passions until they are transformed into something more socially acceptable, akin to a well-groomed poodle pleasing its owner. This fixation becomes particularly apparent when they find themselves ensnared in a love triangle with their partner.

With a lack of internal reference and self-love, they delve into a third facet they confuse with love: fantasy. Lacking internal security, they search for love externally, often through indulgence and obsession. They become excessively dependent on anyone who makes them feel loved.

Being desired and loved by someone intoxicates them, and this feeling of inebriation represents a form of narcissistic self-eroticization through the enchantment of the other. They experience it like a daily-needed drug to fill the void of not truly being themselves. The dependence sexual E3s instill in others to secure their continuous surrender and admiration is so intense that they find themselves trapped in their own game.

Realizing the impact I have on men or when I walk into a room full of people is what fuels me. I love it, it propels me forward, and it gives me strength. With this, I conceal my deep-seated insecurity and the fear of not truly being myself. I forget the robot-like feeling inside me, which results from losing touch with my spontaneous emotions and genuine needs. However, nobody notices this because I present myself as a gift to others. The desire to charm has turned into a sport, an obsession. It's where I put in the most effort, where I feel a sense of accomplishment, almost as if I'm earning trophies.

Vanity has become the primary avenue for experiencing emotions. Without a mirror that reflects not just an image but also emotions, sexual E3s find it challenging to get in contact with them. They eroticize to experience their own eroticism through others. They captivate, delving into an intimacy that would embarrass them if a third party were to witness this entanglement, all in an attempt to feel their nuanced inner world.

I have a tendency to eroticize everything, making it so captivating that it's bound to be admired. At times, I even convince myself that there's an invisible thread behind everything I do, unifying and making it harmonious, precise, and almost exquisite.

The moment someone shows interest in me, I become entrapped, setting the stage for my own deception (and, of course, the other person's). I begin convincing myself that I do love her, even if I don't feel it at the moment. I persuade myself that it will develop over time. Despite an inner voice telling me otherwise, that there's no genuine desire for that woman and that I've simply been swept away by her interest, I become oblivious and deaf to this inner voice, only acknowledging it once I'm already completely enmeshed in dissatisfaction, burdened by the lie I've constructed, and enduring it for far too long.

Once they're in a relationship and no longer feel the need to chase after their prey, they switch off their sexual charm, giving up on trying to be attractive for their partner. Instead, they start testing their significant other, revealing their own flaws, mistakes, and a whole array of negative qualities they wouldn't show to anyone else. They once presented themselves in the best light, but now they drop all pretense to see if they're still adored.

Now, they're the ones withholding affection. They've already achieved what they longed for: attention and love. As a result, they begin to degrade their value. They stop being sexually available – well, deep down, they never truly were, even though their performance might have suggested otherwise. No longer concerned with catching the attention of their current partner, their focus shifts towards conquering someone else.

The sexual E3 is scared witless when it comes to desire. They struggle to initiate any contact and may go to great lengths to completely ignore their object of lust out of sheer fear. When they do acknowledge it, they feel incredibly vulnerable and panicky. Their apparent lack of resources to

establish any genuine connection leads to physical, emotional, and mental paralysis. It's a triple barrier that results in freezing and distancing because anything more would imply genuine interest, a prospect they find utterly terrifying.

II. The characteristic neurotic need

Claudio Naranjo explains:

The key word is masculinity or femininity, depending on the gender in question. If we were to translate this into the context of a neurotic need and wonder about the driving force behind this personality type, it would be something along the lines of the need to attract, the need for self-validation, and the desire to feed one's vanity by being sexually appealing to a partner or others. It's quite straightforward. This suggests an identification with a somewhat arbitrary image.

It's as if the development of this image compensates for a lack of attention, creating a backdrop of insecurity about one's own value. There's a desperate attempt to be likable to escape the feeling of worthlessness, as if what one truly is defies categorization or price in the realm of personalities and personal preferences.⁸

The neurotic need of a Sexual E3 is to attract through what can be seen as an existential endeavor. Since most individuals of this type are female, we quote Lola Hoffmann's⁹ description of the *myth of femininity*:

The woman grapples with two significant voids: a sense of sexual emptiness and spiritual hollowness. This leads her to energetically enter a man's life, aiming to assert control and exploit him in an attempt to alleviate her own frustrations. I refer to this as the myth of the mermaid or femininity, which causes significant suffering. The mermaid, driven to captivate men, is, from the waist down, a fish—completely cold, embodying both femininity and frigidity. She may allure the man, but she fails to truly satisfy him. Instead, this piscine aspect compels her to seek retribution, sinking the man, dominating him, and ultimately destroying him by subjecting him to her will.

This myth of femininity seduces men and women alike. It offers the woman a form of power over the man, derived from what she has absorbed from a patriarchal society. However, the tragedy lies in her “triumph” over the man, which comes at the cost of her own identity—of her personhood. Conversely, the chauvinistic or patriarchal man does not appreciate a woman as an individual and is, therefore, significantly enticed by the siren, who he later realizes seeks to undermine him.

Patriarchy is not solely the “fault” of men; it's a pervasive societal phenomenon involving all of humanity. Women, consciously or not, work against their own interests, inadvertently supporting patriarchy. They have been conditioned to desire family, prioritize child-rearing, and create comfort for their partners. This conditioning encourages individualism, selfishness, and self-isolation.

⁸ C. Naranjo, personal notes taken at the SAT program

⁹ M. Sierra, *The beginning of the end of patriarchy. Interview with Lola Hoffmann*, Clan magazine, <http://www.morfonet.cl/secciones/conocimiento/006.htm>

The concepts of femininity and masculinity have been historically influenced by family dynamics and cultural factors. Attractiveness in a man or woman has been associated with qualities aligned with their traditional roles. Femininity embodies attributes such as understanding, vulnerability, affection, child-care, and compliance. In contrast, masculinity is linked with virility, strength, sexual appeal, competitiveness, and dominance.

Sexual E3s engage in flirtation and actively seek the attention of others, all while maintaining distance upon encounter. This pursuit of seduction is primarily focused on gaining validation for being attractive rather than seeking physical pleasure. They are aware of being observed but often pretend not to notice. They may even believe they are desired without any effort on their part. The hallmark neurotic need of pleasing others exudes a considerable amount of energy towards attraction. Their seduction is largely unconscious, and they may not recognize their efforts to mold or transform themselves according to others. These adaptations manifest physically through body modifications, emotionally by keeping feelings at bay, and behaviorally by making one's actions entirely functional for the sake of being alluring.

In matters of courtship, they typically remain passive and await the other person's advances. They do not proactively engage but instead present themselves as approachable. They may even lead the other person to believe they are a passive and innocent party in this seduction. In this "passivity," they delude themselves into feeling secure as a kind and interesting individual, though this security is often a facade.

In the bedroom, they strive to be the best to the point where they're willing to go as far as performing acrobatics just to please their partner, completely losing sight of their own needs and desires:

In my own sexual experiences, which have often felt frustrating and paralyzing, I've struggled to fully engage in the intimate aspect of a relationship. When I first began having sex around the age of fifteen, I was so consumed by my desire to impress my partner, to seduce them, and to create a captivating and enchanting atmosphere that I lost touch with my own presence (a paradox indeed!). I found enjoyment in my partner's pleasure and their admiration of my charms, unknowingly feeding my vanity to the point where it became repulsively inflated, akin to that of a diva.

By marketing their sexual skills, they seek acknowledgment, focusing not on pleasure but on gaining acceptance. In their unexciting lack of genuine engagement, the sexual E3 openly admits to faking orgasms and feeling like an object used for the other's enjoyment... the sooner it's done, the better. The fear of experiencing an orgasm stems from the surrender, vulnerability, and loss of control it entails.

At the age of thirty-two, and after being in a committed relationship for eighteen years, I experienced my first orgasm. It happened while I was alone, through masturbation, a skill I learned from a book on sexuality. I was utterly terrified, not understanding what my body was going through; it was convulsing uncontrollably. "I'm dying!" I thought. The only instinct I had was to quickly get dressed and run away; running felt like the only way to escape from something I couldn't control, a sensation that simultaneously brought me satisfaction and fear. Orgasms made me feel vulnerable, and I was frightened by that vulnerability, so I began to fake them. Faking became my crutch, and I continued simulating orgasms for a long time

because I was still emotionally absent in my interactions with others and, as a result, couldn't genuinely feel anything.

When it comes to sex, they prioritize the satisfaction of the other over their own pleasure, even when it borders on abuse. The sexual E3 often struggles to acknowledge aggression due to their difficulty in recognizing it. They have this notion that their body exists for the other's pleasure, and their emotional disconnection serves as a protective mechanism against potential harm.

This disconnection is linked to a reluctance to fully surrender, manifesting as a mindset of, "Even if you touch me, you won't truly have me. My body is one thing but my heart and soul, another." Deep down, there's a fear of physical contact, leading to a distancing through deceptive actions like faking orgasms.

It's not uncommon to hear stories of abuse among sexual E3 individuals. Some women, from an early age, have unintentionally attracted older men, often misinterpreting their attention as a substitute for the love they may have missed from their fathers. This pattern of seduction, disregarding potential consequences, often traces back to formative years, where the seeds of these bonds, driven by attraction and sexual pleasure, have their origin in the relationship with the father. Sadly, in some instances, the result has been experiences of violence and even sexual assault.

By the time I was eleven, my body had already developed to the point where it resembled that of a sixteen-year-old. I was attracting the attention of older men, but this precocious physical development didn't lead me toward exploring my own sexuality. Instead, it pushed me into a systematic and somewhat unconscious pattern of seduction. I often confused the way others looked at me with the feeling of being loved. Back then, this gaze felt nurturing, and I didn't want to be held responsible for the desire it might awaken. In fact, this confusion about how others looked at me led to some problems, including an attempted rape and, later on, a real one. Even during those incidents, I was in a state of confusion, and didn't fully grasp what was going on... Something within me, thirsty to love and be loved, made me believe that any attention was love; the mistreatment too, because I forgave my aggressors.

Faced with aggression, the sexual E3 disconnects from the physical pain and empathizes with the abuser. They channel all their energy into pleasing them and ensuring that they don't consider their actions wrong. Moreover, they strive to keep these actions hidden, fearing exposure. They are willing to endure a relationship with the abuser out of a fear of losing what they perceive as "love." Deep down, there is a profound need for affection, and they believe that any negative attention or withdrawal of affection from the other person means they are not loved.

Sometimes, they can sustain toxic relationships simply because they work sexually. In some cases, constant conflict intensifies the sexual bond because reconciliation becomes a way to regain the other person's love. It becomes a cycle: with conflict, the other person temporarily withdraws their affection and, consequently, the sexual E3 feels compelled to engage in a conquest to win it back.

I felt such despair due to my husband's sexual and emotional rejection that my conclusion was clear: he no longer found my body appealing. This, in my mind, meant he no longer cared for me as a person. I was prepared to do anything to regain his love; I would have jumped in front of a train if he had asked me to. In a moment of profound disconnect, I impulsively turned to a plastic surgeon for breast reconstruction. I was in the throes of my neurosis, driven by a madness for vanity, where I blurred the lines between self and body. I equated love, both giving and receiving, with physical appearance. I firmly believed that by having an attractive body once again, I could win back his love!

Their seductive game, driven by the desire to captivate their prey, is largely unconscious. When confronted with a mirror, a genuine innocence emerges; they don't fully comprehend the impact of their allure.

Over time, I experienced some discomfort because I was often pursued for sexual encounters. I began to realize that I didn't want this, but I couldn't grasp why everyone sought it with me. I wasn't accountable for the desire I unwittingly stirred. I encountered instances of sexual violence, which I repressed as I feared losing the possibility of feeling connected. What would I have left? How would people perceive me if I wasn't attractive and didn't offer what seemed to interest men?

In the case of men, once they have the object of their conquest within their grasp, they often lack the courage to express their intentions clearly. This can stem from uncertainty about their true desires, the fear of being with someone they genuinely like, leading to a compromise of their authentic needs, or the realization that the chase wasn't what they truly wanted.

The women, on the other hand, tend to seduce driven by a lack of commitment and shyness, creating an air of mystique that fulfills their neurotic need to be seen as special and unique.

Throughout my personal journey, I came to realize that my heart had been closed and was frozen to its core. It was an internal sensation of coldness and a lack of genuine empathy, concealed beneath the facade of love. Rooted in the wound of the Oedipal triangle is a belief that an inherent hideous flaw and ugliness make me unlovable. This division of bodily energy into sexuality and the heart leads to emotional and bodily blockages and a disconnect between the heart and the genitals. There's a deep-seated fear of true intimacy and a lack of surrender in both the heart and the sexual act.

The reputation of the sexual E3 as a "hottie" stems from their inclination to relate primarily through seduction. In this intricate game of maintaining the other's gaze, they can lead them to fall in love, keep them fooled in the hope of reciprocal affection and intimacy, and often depart when they feel cornered or end up in bed with someone they didn't genuinely desire.

Of course, they excel in this game of conquest. The initial protagonism ignites the flame of desire with intensity, making them feel as if the other's eyes are exclusively for them. They adorn themselves for seduction, and donning their best attire and perfumes makes them feel alluring. Like a chameleon, they adapt to meet the other's needs, transforming themselves to fulfill various needs. They can modify their ideals, suppressing their authentic selves to become what they are not, all in the pursuit of conquest. Once achieved, it typically leads to sexual encounters, but there, the initial desire and arousal often begin to wane.

I wanted to be the best lover, and my entire life revolved around sensuality. This is when I became highly competitive, striving to outshine others, to be extraordinary, even divine. I sought the most exquisite things, like Christian Dior lingerie, fragrances, essences, and creams. I dedicated myself entirely to this pursuit. I longed to have this man at my feet, and I achieved it. It made me feel incredibly significant, unique, and loved. Finally, I felt like someone; when he gazed at me, I was captivated and loved myself through his admiration. In bed, I embraced every suggestion as if it were my own; I couldn't distinguish between his desires and mine. I melded completely.

As for the man:

For me, the true conquest was earning the admiration of women. This is what aroused me the most, what I found most erotic, and where I invested most of my energy. I became a master of gestures and appearances. Every movement I made was delicate, measured, bordering on the exquisite.

During my time as a swimming instructor, my graceful interactions with the children earned the admiration of mothers. Word about the instructor quickly spread in the neighborhood, and the demand for lessons grew. Mothers wouldn't move from behind the window panes during their children's classes. It was all about seduction and conquest.

In terms of my sexual journey, the pinnacle was reached when I starred in a play, portraying none other than the Marquis de Sade. The play was highly erotic, and with pre-recorded video sequences, we convinced the audience that we were engaging in live intercourse. I reveled in absolute glory; it made headlines. I could feel the audience's gazes, and I could boldly return their looks; I was the Marquis, which granted me permission to be the most sensual and voluptuous.

It's important to note that it's not precisely a sexual seduction. The sexual E3 woman isn't a femme fatale. She promises something more subtle: intimacy. Her soft, tender gaze appears to convey, "We've known each other in the depths of our souls for an eternity. I truly see you."

Tolstoy's character Anna Karenina, featured in his eponymous work, is an exemplary sexual E3. She lives with a husband twenty years her senior, having settled into a passionless yet prestigious marriage with a prominent figure in high society, whom she doesn't love. However, she realizes this emotional void when she falls in love with Vronsky, a young and handsome man.

She becomes pregnant by her lover and moves in with him. Between this relationship not fulfilling her as she had hoped, the loss of her son, who stays with her husband, her ostracism from Russian society, and the growing inner resentment, she ends up committing suicide to take revenge on Vronsky.

Anna and Vronsky, her future lover, meet for the first time at the Moscow train station. We witness a magical moment: how Anna manages to bewitch Vronsky.

Vronsky followed the conductor; and as he was about to enter the coach, he stood aside to allow a lady to pass him. With the instant intuition of a man of the world he saw that she belonged to the very best society. Begging her pardon, he was about to enter the door; but involuntarily he turned to give another look at the lady, not on account of her beauty, her grace, or her elegance, but because the expression of her lovely face, as she passed, seemed to him so gentle and sweet.

She also turned her head as he looked back at her. With her gray eyes shining through the long lashes, she gave him a friendly, benevolent look as though she had seen in him a friend, and instantly she turned to seek someone in the throng. Quick as this glance was, Vronsky had time to perceive in her face a dignified vivacity which was visible in the half smile that parted her rosy lips, and in the brightness of her eyes. Her whole person was radiant with the overflowing spirits of youth, which she tried to hide; but in spite of her, the veiled lightning of her eyes gleamed in her smile.

Tolstoy masterfully captures the essence of the magical atmosphere created by a sexual E3. While Anna possesses fascinating physical beauty, it's not so much her body that draws Vronsky in;

it's the grace of her personality, her manners, and especially her "infinitely gentle and sweet" demeanor. This hints at the direction their relationship will take, one not primarily focused on passionate sensuality but rather a quest for complete love within the context of a partnership, an attempt to heal their emotional scars and the feeling of inner separation.

She doesn't promise unbridled sensuality but a tenderness that will reach straight into Vronsky's heart. It's an intimate connection between two souls: "She gave him a friendly, benevolent look as though she had seen in him a friend." It's like being seen in one's soul with eyes of tenderness and love. The question that arises for the sexual E3 is this: Is there anything more intimate than this?

Tolstoy directs our attention to the inner light of the spirit that resides within each individual. This inner light can shine forth unintentionally when a moment of connection with someone piques their interest, "which was translucent in spite of herself, either in the brightness of her gaze, or in her smile." In the longing to be loved for who we truly are, we glimpse the complete love that is experienced when we feel one with everything, loved simply for our existence. Anna appears to be in touch with this inner clarity when she meets Vronsky's gaze. However, this inner light can also recede, as seen when she sleeps with her husband on their first night at their home in St. Petersburg: "But what had become of that radiant glow that animated her face in Moscow, making her eyes sparkle and giving radiance to her smile? Now that glow seemed to have been extinguished, or at least, hidden."

This reinforces the idea that a sexual E3 feels whole, feels truly *alive*, when immersed in that "intoxicating elixir of enthusiasm," which is the delight of being admired. It's a confirmation of being loved, albeit arising from a neurotic need that merely deepens the chasm between them and their true self, as beautifully depicted by Tolstoy in the following scene:

She had not been near Anna again since the beginning of the evening, and now again she saw her suddenly quite new and surprising. She saw in her the signs of that feeling of success she was all too familiar with; she saw that she was intoxicated with the euphoria of the delighted admiration she was generating. She knew that feeling and knew its signs, and saw them in Anna; saw the quivering, flashing light in her eyes, and the smile of happiness and excitement unconsciously playing on her lips, and the deliberate grace, precision, and lightness of her movements.

"Who?" she asked herself. "All or one?" [...]

"No, it's not the admiration of the crowd that has intoxicated her, but the adoration of one. And that one? Can it be he?" Every time Vronsky spoke to Anna the joyous light flashed into her eyes, and the smile of happiness curved her red lips. She seemed to make an effort to control herself, to try not to show these signs of delight, but they came out on her face by themselves. "But what of him?" Kitty looked at him and was filled with terror. What was pictured so clearly to Kitty in the mirror of Anna's face, she saw in him. What had become of his always self-possessed resolute manner, and the carelessly serene expression of his face? Now every time he turned to her, he bent his head, as though he would have fallen at her feet, and in his eyes there was nothing but humble submission and dread. "I would not offend you," his eyes seemed every time to be saying, "but I want to save myself, and I don't know how." On his face was a look such as Kitty had never seen before.

Tolstoy doesn't imply that Anna is consumed by passionate love for Vronsky; it's not that she's deeply infatuated with this man. Rather, she is intoxicated with the feeling of *being liked*, intoxicated with her success. A sexual E3 describes this phenomenon as follows:

With each person, we offer something special that aligns with their interests, a part of ourselves that resonates with their desires. When conversing with a poet, we become the most poetic and sensitive beings in the world. With someone of different characteristics, we adapt accordingly. Always highlighting what matters most to the other.

An unconscious idea of the sexual E3 is that they can be liked when they forsake their individuality, self-realization, and inner growth, transforming themselves into the person the other desires. While it's true that they can gain affection this way, they lose touch with their essence, their unique tastes, and instincts. This loss leads to a sense of robotic behavior as the sexual E3 desperately craves being loved and returning that love. The title of the play "Silicone or Life" succinctly encapsulates how this subtype's ego is managed, illustrating the opposing forces that divide them in their existential struggle: the desire to live, synonymous with the desire to love, and the self-denial of those same impulses.

Anna Karenina appears to possess the capacity for feminine, maternal, and tender love. At her higher self, the sexual E3 can exhibit true *loving-kindness*, as described in Buddhism—compassion and gentle love that isn't judgmental or indulgent but connected to one's own experience of another's suffering. The madness lies in the belief that such love can be found in a romantic relationship, where being liked and feeling loved equate to personal value. Thus, in the quest for unification with the forgotten source, the sexual E3 projects the divine into the relationships with others. This is how Anna Karenina perceives this complex emotional state:

She thought he had ceased to love her, she felt close upon despair, and consequently she felt exceptionally alert.

She rang for her maid and went to her dressing-room. As she dressed, she took more care over her appearance than she had done all those days, as though he might, if he had grown cold to her, fall in love with her again because she had dressed and arranged her hair in the way most becoming to her.

This reaffirms what many sexual E3s obsessively believe: by appearing desirable both inwardly and outwardly, they will finally receive love from their partner, the person from whom they've felt the most rejection. They tend to confuse surface presentation with their core identity.

Sexual E3s are essentially love seekers, and their tragedy lies in their failure to comprehend that true love cannot be found externally, in their appearance or being desired. They blur the lines between surface and core. They've lost faith in their core, severed their connection with their true selves, and erroneously believe that their essence is merely what's on the outside.

Norman Mailer describes, in his famous biography of Marilyn Monroe, the phenomenon of the *art of pleasing* of the sexual E3. The secret to Marilyn Monroe's success with men lay in her ability to make anyone believe that only he could bring out her best. This compulsion to prove one's impact on another originates from a loss of inner value. The underlying narcissistic need is to be unique to someone, as if it were possible to suppress the pain of feeling insignificant, hidden deep within.

III. Interpersonal strategy and associated irrational ideas

~Martin Buber

Drawing from Martin Buber's words, it's crucial to delve into what an *encounter* means for a sexual E3. Who are they meeting, and who is meeting whom?

For the sexual E3, an encounter is the wellspring of life. It's the moment when they meet their beloved, who will hopefully acknowledge the dignity of their existence. To achieve this, they believe they must present 'something' that's acceptable to the other. They can't approach the encounter just as themselves because they've *learned* that what truly matters is being "as the other desires." Essentially, they project their imagination of the lover's desires onto themselves, based on the conditions their parents placed upon them for acceptance: to be an "attractive person," the perfect man or woman.

This early experience shapes their core perspective, becoming the lens through which they filter all interpersonal interactions. Their fixation revolves around the *self-deception* of wholeheartedly identifying with the facade they've created.

E3 genuinely believes in the image they aim to portray, whether it's that of a confident, successful individual or, in the sexual E3's case, the ideal partner. This subtype forgets that they've crafted a mask of attractiveness, sweetness, and affection, and they come to genuinely believe that this mask is their absolute truth. They deceive themselves, even before they deceive anyone else.

Once they begin the process of self-discovery and become aware of this distorted self-image, it's as if they discover emptiness and nothingness behind the mask. This marks the pinnacle of an *identity crisis* where the quest for authenticity can commence. However, it's not without traversing a desert where the sexual E3 not only loses sight of their true self but also struggles to trust their own feelings, emotions, or thoughts.

Thus, the sexual E3 believes they must transform themselves to encounter the other person. But who is the other? The other represents someone who can affirm the constructed image of being "right," someone who buys into this portrayal. Consequently, the person they encounter also wears a mask, becoming another counterfeit. The sexual E3 needs to project these idealized expectations onto them, losing sight of both the other and themselves.

To delve deeper into understanding how the sexual E3 has built this cognitive distortion, it's enlightening to explore a peculiar mechanism of this subtype: the unconscious mimesis and all the irrational beliefs or *irrational ideas* associated with it.

"Differentiating oneself from others is the most difficult thing to do; being different provokes rejection"

The personal relationships of sexual E3s typically follow a predictable pattern rooted in the irrational belief that they lack the autonomy to hold their own opinions, ideas, or values. They tend to be *conflict-averse* and prioritize maintaining harmonious relationships. In essence, they feel the need to absorb what belongs to others if they cannot assert their individuality. This is akin to *valuing others' opinions over their own* and denying themselves the right to stand firmly with their unique truth.

Mimesis, in the context of human behavior, represents an innate inclination to imitate or incorporate qualities from others, driven by the instinctual desire for interpersonal bonding and survival. Sexual E3s unconsciously engage in mimesis to avoid rejection and the distressing sense of inner loneliness, stemming from their experiences of lacking secure and nurturing attachments. This pattern is exemplified in the following scenario:

I deeply care about someone, and I desire their love in return. When this person strongly expresses an opinion that contradicts my own, I find it immensely challenging to voice my disagreement and assert my own opinion. Engaging in this disagreement sparks an argument, and the person becomes angry, possibly even refusing to talk to me. I enter a state of crisis without fully understanding what is happening.

I experience intense discomfort, confusion, and a nagging question in my mind – ‘Am I wrong? Did I miss something? Maybe the other person is right?’ My thoughts become entangled in an attempt to comprehend. I even start to adopt the other person’s viewpoint, unable to grasp the rejection I’m experiencing. This self-denial triggers self-accusation, shame, and anxiety, like a fear of impending punishment. This cascade finally leads to depression and sadness.

The ensuing sadness is linked to a childhood sense of abandonment, the belief that I am unlovable for being inauthentic. I’ve encountered this pattern repeatedly in my life, and it takes me weeks to regain my inner equilibrium and escape the emotional abyss created by the rejection. This ‘hole’ represents a recurring mental and emotional state, shaped by an underlying belief that I can’t be loved as I am, causing people I care about to distance themselves. It’s an automated, unconscious response, a pattern of interpretation activated by specific situations.

In essence, the sexual E3 becomes a mirror of the values held by others, losing their sense of self and strength, ensnared in the trap of self-denial. They adapt to the values of different individuals, experiencing the world through varied lenses based on who is before them.

The experience of rejection is like being abandoned, serving as a painful confirmation of perceived inner flaws and ugliness. The pursuit of validation and confirmation for their idealized self invariably ends in frustration. Instead of regaining the strength to assert themselves, they tumble back into self-doubt, subjecting themselves to self-inflicted torment.

Questions such as “Who am I, where does the other’s influence end, and where do I truly begin?” plague their self-reflection as they embark on their personal journey. Before embarking on this voyage of self-discovery, they often grapple with an inherent lack of understanding about their own identity, and their self’s fragility leads them to form symbiotic bonds with their partners, using these relationships as a way to explore their own sense of self. As one sexual E3 articulates, “I find it challenging to maintain a differing viewpoint from my partner or to establish my own boundaries; it instantly triggers a void filled with anxiety.”

“Being disliked by someone is very threatening, but if I’m a good mother, partner and daughter, I’ll earn a place in heaven”

In the realm of human existence, friction, conflicts, competition, and territorial disputes are inevitable. Sexual E3s prefer not to engage in this fight; they are not the wolves, but the innocent and adorable lambs, willingly subjecting themselves to exploitation. They see themselves as the Lamb of God, the sacrificial figure offering themselves for the sake of world peace.

In their quest to avoid involvement in the tumultuous nature of human interaction, the sexual E3 assumes a stance of helplessness, embodying the innocence of a child who avoids causing any trouble. They deftly manipulate their relationships, striving to achieve their desires through complacency and projecting an aura of benevolence. They willingly become the sacrificial offering, feeling a sense of superiority through their imagined divine goodness and apparent powerlessness, thereby inviting those

with ill intentions to abuse them. The inner warrior is held captive within a metaphorical cage, disarmed to prevent any missteps, all driven by the misguided belief that pleasing everyone will provide protection and validation. Here is how one sexual E3 describes it:

I fear conflict because I perceive myself as an easy target as soon as I'm confronted. To avoid reaching a point where I can't defend myself, I strive to sidestep trouble. Given my insecurity, I can't engage in confrontations, allow myself to get upset, or let others feel discomfort because, in my mind, if I don't, I'll be obligated to make amends, ensuring that such conflicts never occur with me. I market myself as someone who never causes problems.

In the following statement, you can sense the enormity of their efforts to avoid conflict and deny their own humanity. This character's profound insecurity appears to cast a spell over their environment, creating a bubble of pathological contentment.

Driven by the fear of the patriarchal world, characterized by aggression, abuse, and the exploitation of nature and individuals, especially the vulnerable, such as children and women, it's become apparent to me that, as Claudio elucidates in his book "Healing Civilization," this environment fosters inverted values. I reluctantly admit that my unconscious motivation for marriage was to seek protection from a man who adeptly spoke the language of aggression and competitiveness. His strength promised me security, yet it came with the unspoken understanding that he could offload his aggression onto me whenever the need arose. As a result, I admired his power, projecting strength onto him, and at the same time, I hated him for abusing other people and myself.

How did I manipulate him? Firstly, I concealed my true self, feigned understanding and interest in his worldview, and adopted his values as my own. This included matters relating to child-rearing, where to live, how to dress, what to think... I even began doubting my own values, questioning my authenticity, and disregarding the anger and rejection stemming from the relationship and my impostor persona. I redoubled my efforts to love him from a self-centered perspective, enduring this façade with the hopes of finally obtaining from him the love I had dreamed of.

But of course, the growing resentment and frustration caused by self-denial and unmet expectations led to my shifting blame onto him, accusing him and holding him responsible for my pain.

My most prominent fear during my marriage, one of which I was fully conscious, revolved around the idea of being left alone and struggling to sustain myself. This fear was fueled by my apprehension of entering a competitive world and a deep-seated belief in my own inadequacy. I hesitated to confront the abuse that unfolded within my marriage, dreading the specter of abandonment and the loss of my innate strength. It was this apprehension that led me to perceive my inherent weakness as a manifestation of goodness, an inability to harm others.

At the same time, I started to take revenge on my husband by closing off my heart, simulating affection, speaking ill of him to my girlfriends, thinking about other men while we were making love, threatening him with separation, and convincing myself of my superiority.

An array of passive-aggressive behaviors progressively grew in intensity over the years. Catastrophic thoughts consumed me – thoughts of accidents, wars, tragic events, my children's demise, a desire not to continue living, or fantasies of his death as an escape from my suffering. Today, I can acknowledge that my repression of vital energy and the denial of my own anger transformed into a sadistic form of resentment projected onto perceived

horrific events or individuals I deemed ‘bad.’ My disconnection from myself and the mask of benevolence prevented me from recognizing my own manipulation and aggression, from confronting that dark, vengeful side.

“If I expose the conflicts I have with someone I love, the relationship will come to an end”

In their quest to establish intimate and secure connections, sexual E3 individuals tend to view others through rose-tinted glasses. This perspective represents a vain disconnection from reality, where they deny both their own flaws and those of others. Lacking a well-developed intuition to guide them, they struggle to discern between people with good and bad intentions. Consequently, they lack a conscious alarm system to alert them when they are in potentially unsafe scenarios. When anxiety about their own safety arises, they begin to question their perceptions, straining to find signs of validity in the other person or situation while denying their own instincts. They often create idealized fantasies of people and experience profound disappointment when they become aware of human limitations.

The elevation of the couple as the epitome of absolute love serves as a substitute for their deep yearning for a loving union. Their admiration for strong and powerful individuals represents a denial of their own aggressive and humiliating tendencies towards the weakest. These idealized relationships promise, finally, an entry into paradise.

Sexual E3s often find it challenging to admit that there are people they genuinely dislike and reject for who they are. Their idealized self prevents them from acknowledging these feelings. They often feign excessive generosity in an attempt to garner sympathy and to avoid their deepest fear – being disliked.

Reflecting on my past, I remember a time when I presented myself as naturally friendly to anyone I encountered. My friendliness was driven by a desire to uphold the image of being good-natured and also by the mercantile utility of deriving value through associations with others. There was a phase in my life when I was fixated on establishing connections with individuals of high societal status. Being friends with influential people provided me with a sense of glamour, importance, and value that I did not feel within myself. I bought into the illusion of my own charisma through association with others, despite secretly acknowledging that I might be shallow and uninteresting.

These fantastical self-deceptions obstruct genuine connections with others. The sexual E3 fails to truly engage with the person in front of them, preferring to engage with their own idealized notion of a perfect person or an ideal world.

Since they deny their own experiences, they also remain disconnected from themselves. If they get angry, of course they don’t let it show. Fear of consequences, disguised as fear of being wrong, inhibits anger. They tend to question their own feelings and often suppress their authentic emotions. Their ability to idealize themselves, a coping mechanism developed during childhood to alleviate the anguish of disconnection, continues to shape their relationships. This idealization promises something that seems to have been missing or is still missing in their lives. And so they sacrifice genuine connections between two real individuals in favor of the irrational ideas that *their true selves are not worthy of love, they cannot have a place in this world; that what they are by the virtue of being themselves is not enough.*

Their tendency to respond with “As you wish” characterizes their automatic, thoughtless reaction. These three words are uttered without a genuine consideration of their own desires or

resistance. They embody both a denial of their own needs and a keen desire to please. The belief here is: “If I show my true self, I will be abandoned, because I do not deserve to be loved.” Only when they’re certain the other person is already emotionally invested and firmly within their grasp do they reveal the frustrated and demanding facets of their desire for love and acceptance.

“If I am desired, I exist.” “Revealing my pleasure will lead to humiliation.”

The sexual E3 represses instinctive, spontaneous and erotic pleasure, often criminalizing the expression of Eros. This repression leads to guilt and shame, preventing them from fully experiencing life. Shame becomes a self-control mechanism that keeps them from surrendering to pleasure. Deep down, they are ashamed to live.

While their sexual instinct drives them toward union with a partner, they often eroticize their relationships subtly. They may unconsciously do this, intensifying their seductive tendencies to please and gain affection. Their primary awareness is the need to connect with their partner through sexuality to feel alive:

It’s really important for me that my partner desires me sexually. I can feel his yearning for me in those intimate moments, and that’s when I might trick myself into thinking he’s truly interested and in love. But when he doesn’t show that desire, I start to question whether he really loves me.

This character seeks confirmation and love through sexual encounters, even if those encounters aren’t necessarily pleasurable for them. Their focus is on fulfilling their partner’s needs at the expense of their own.

The heart remains distant because it closed itself off long ago due to the pain of having its vital, loving energy rejected. It ends up inculcating its inner child, which still holds an innocent and erotic essence. This inner child isn’t interested in seduction or manipulation but in expressing itself through pleasure and the expansive joy of life. The belief “If I am desired, I exist” reflects this deep loss of vital energy, connected to the childlike innocence (their link with Enneatype 8). This leads to a strong need to feel desired, as a way to unlock repressed desires suppressed by an overbearing superego. This need reinforces the conviction that they *have to be in a relationship*, often forming codependent bonds to avoid the *fear of being left alone*. It is this same neurotic need that prevents them from breaking off frustrating and unhealthy relationships.

Despite appearing as experts in intimacy, it is not true intimacy that this frozen and anxious heart knows. Sexual E3 individuals remain in a state of longing and may mistake it for genuine intimacy. However, true intimacy arises when two individuals reveal their authentic selves, with all the vulnerability involved in the sexual encounter.

“What is expected of me?,” “If I manage to seduce you, I can rest”

The sexual E3 lives under the illusion that they can mold themselves into what others desire, whether it’s their partners, colleagues, close associates, or even momentarily interesting strangers.

At work, I easily grasp what’s expected of me or the unspoken philosophy of the company. If the situation demands that I appear stressed and loaded with work, I can effortlessly adopt

that role. If it's more appropriate to admit my lack of knowledge as a form of humility, I can do that as well. If, on the other hand, the expectation is to be knowledgeable, I can seamlessly pretend to know things I don't. I have a natural talent for discerning what will make others accept me. There's a strong need in me for their affection and approval. I'd even go so far as to say it's not so much an effort but a reflex, as instinctive as breathing.

For the adaptable sexual E3, the art of fitting in is so ingrained and automatic that it becomes second nature. *In order to be liked, they are willing to put others and their wishes first.*

If my partner didn't approve of my friends, I gradually distanced myself from them, eventually cutting off all contact. If he didn't like my haircut, I would change it. If he didn't like the way I spoke, I made a conscious effort to alter it, striving to mold myself into the person he wanted, all in pursuit of satisfying my desperate need to feel desired at any cost.

In this regard, I became like a Barbie doll who had no life of her own, and existed only through the vain image she produced: what her man desired, which she had learned through societal and educational influences.

Sexual E3s permit humiliation as a part of the steep price they pay. Their pact with the devil costs them dearly, causing life itself to turn bitter and desolate as they accumulate repressed anger, drifting further away from their inner radiant source. Presenting themselves as mere objects distorts the childlike yearning for self-validation, acceptance, love, and belonging. The deep-seated belief, "if I'm not pleasing, I'm not worthy," echoes an age-old wound where the vital drive failed to meet anticipated responses.

IV. Other characteristic features and psychodynamic considerations

Dependent on the gaze of others

The sexual E3 often imagines that there's a camera constantly watching their every move. They become an actor, rehearsing movements they pick up by carefully observing their environment or the person they want to seduce or impress. They later deceive themselves into believing those gestures are natural.

This inclination towards performing often originates in early life, particularly in the primary relationship. When the mother's emotional attention was absent, the child learned instead to value the *surface*, catering to her narcissistic expectations. The lack of genuine maternal support, of feeling truly *seen* by the mother, subsequently turns into a pathological need to see oneself reflected in the eyes of another. That other must value this perfect surface and, in doing so, offer the illusion of recognition that allows the sexual E3 to feel they exist. The gaze of the other person momentarily covers the emptiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, and loneliness.

From a very young age, I associated physical beauty with goodness and heroism. I couldn't help but notice that the heroes in the TV shows I watched were handsome, while the villains were always ugly and scarred. At the movies, I would over-identify with the protagonist. I was

fascinated by how Elvis Presley made women scream with his movements; I unconsciously took note of each inflection and gesture.

When I walked down the street, I imagined I was inside my own film and made sure to control my movements in case someone was watching. I always assumed someone was observing me; even if it was just a glance, it mattered because being noticed meant existing. What isn't seen doesn't exist, and what is seen "exists more."

I also admired the cool, collected demeanor of James Bond or some Japanese anime characters, who never flinched, which I found very elegant. I tried to imitate them. I suppose a visually-oriented person like me fit well into a visual society; I was skilled at reading the codes and used them to my advantage with good results. That fed my ego.

Because the sexual instinct is impaired, the gaze of the other must be one of infatuation, a sexually enchanted gaze. That's why the person with this structure expects others to affirm their worth by desiring them.

Sweet/maternal

Highly attuned to what the other person wants, the sexual E3 tends to be nurturing. They love to give, to please, and to create a maternal environment where they feel useful and safe. Their attitude is very tender and sweet, making them the most accommodating of the three subtypes.

They are passionate about family. If one of their dreams is ideal love, the other is the perfect family. One of the roles that most allows this dynamic is being a mother and homemaker. There, the sexual E3 feels in their element and is willing to subordinate almost anything. Being a mother and wife is a core value in their life. Even if they're not happy in the role, it can be hard to let it go. In this role, they feel secure, capable, and efficient—cooking, caring, solving problems.

This is someone who seems not to ask for anything and instead offers care. Yet they have a deep need for contact, tenderness, to feel loved and protected. There's a strong yearning for intimacy, and when they give it, they silently expect it in return, even though they won't ask. When this need builds up without fulfillment, they may lash out or become upset. They're hypersensitive to rejection and can regress into a demanding childlike state when feeling fragile or when their efforts aren't reciprocated. It's as if the maternal care they lacked has been compensated for by identifying with a maternal role, which meets the other person's practical needs while connecting to a sweet, loving form of seduction.

There is a healthy order and a distorted one, and it's natural in life for the mother to meet the child's needs. In this case, the order is disrupted and reversed. The mother, and sometimes the father, was the one cared for by the child. These children were valued for being attentive to Mom or Dad, or for taking care of siblings or managing things at home. Being sweet, compliant, and maternal seemed like the only way to earn affection.

Pleasing

Pleasing, in this case, is a false kind of being there for the other person. The sexual E3 may seem to please without asking for anything, but their requests are hidden, and any repressed aggression may surface passively if they feel unreciprocated. They remain available to secure others' dependence and avoid loneliness. The thirst for love is quenched through dependent and codependent relationships. On one hand, they believe they will be loved through pleasing, but this veers into servility and false

kindness. And since they know this on some level, they never fully trust that the love they receive is real. They suspect it's as false as their own persona.

They put so much energy into pleasing that they lose touch with what they truly want. They are highly attuned to what their partner wants, often to the point of mistaking those desires for their own. And since they usually go along with the other person's wishes, they are left with a lingering feeling of dissatisfaction, because what they give isn't authentic; it doesn't come from their own desire. They are also aware of how much effort it takes to please, and this is one point where they differ from the sexual E9, who becomes so disconnected from themselves they're numb to their own exhaustion. The sexual E3 does adapt and conform, yes, but always with the expectation that the other will acknowledge their "hard work."

When I was born, I was given the name of my paternal grandmother, who died when my father was a child. To him, she was everything. I felt special to carry the name of someone my father loved so much, but it seems this also meant he didn't really see me. He saw her in me. I did what I could to keep my dad from suffering, since his childhood had been so full of pain. I tried to be good and sweet with him and always knew exactly what he wanted and how he felt. I became an expert in reading his emotions and responding to his needs. I couldn't bear to see him sad or angry, so I tried to keep him comfortable and please him however I could. This pattern carried over into my relationships with men.

Ambiguous in sexuality

The sexual E3 woman, in particular, seeks to attract and please, but when the other person approaches, she gets scared and doesn't know what to do. The phrase "Look at me but do not touch me" suits her well. Just being seen and desired already makes her feel valued, and sometimes that alone is enough. She may trigger a dynamic of provocation so that she is pursued. She trades sex in search of protection and a tenderness she sexualizes, replacing it with sex. Her sexuality serves the pleasure of the other person and is used as a performance. It's a combination of erotic arousal and a shy little girl act.

She tends toward frigidity, as using her sexuality to please leaves little space for her own enjoyment. Spontaneity is difficult for her. There is repression of eroticism, rigidity, and a lack of play and expression of her own needs. She seduces from an erotic place but is disconnected from it. Sexual desire becomes transformed into a plea: "Love me."

She invests significant attention in maintaining her appearance, not to feel better but to *look* better. It's a fundamental part of her image. Yet she doesn't identify with her body; she's dissociated from it. The sexual E3's body is something she controls and uses to serve her image. It's no surprise that she may find it hard to let go, even during orgasm. There is a disconnect between her genitals and her emotions.

The sexual E3 woman may be strongly attracted to hyper-masculine, even abusive men. It's common to find sexual E3 women in relationships with men of Enneatype 8. She provokes, resists, submits... Being treated with force or even violence makes her feel alive, and at times she may even provoke the aggression. She can go from a violent man who scares her to a gentle, sensitive one, whom she then dismisses as weak and finds boring.

She uses sexuality to get close, to fix problems, to please. She may tolerate mistreatment just to avoid conflict or rejection. She splits off her emotions and may fall into such a panic that she gives in and endures a lot, until she feels overwhelmed and reacts with destructive fury. She can fall into a

cycle of pleasing → feeling used → getting angry → exploding → feeling guilty → and once again submitting and pleasing. She can only break this cycle by becoming aware of what she provokes and taking responsibility for it, by allowing herself to face the feelings of emptiness and desolation, by letting go of the things she clings to in order not to confront herself.

In the absence of real feelings, and in order not to touch the void, the sexual E3 spends life chasing intense sensations. They get into tumultuous relationships and are drawn to danger because it makes them feel alive in some way. They seek intensity as a way to *feel*, and to escape sadness, boredom, and dissatisfaction:

In my life I've sought out intense relationships where there's an element of risk. I'm able to do this because I have my stability with my husband and kids. It's a paradoxical situation, because what I want most is to be loved by my man and to feel the stability that comes with having him and the family we've built. And yet, that bores me (because it's just the illusion that I'll be happy with my husband and kids).

That's where I touch my dissatisfaction, and I look for someone outside my relationship to find that intensity again, where the conquest begins, the feeling of being desired, feeling alive through it.

At first, this can be alluring and effectively fills the void. However, it always leads to a dead-end where I no longer know what I really feel. I feel dishonest and like I'm hurting others. And I end up facing what I most wanted to avoid: sadness, emptiness, confusion.

As for the sexual E3 man, he might project a confident and aggressive exterior, although deep down he feels insecure.

My sexual interactions with women are a complex matter; they encompass a spectrum of emotions, ranging from a sense of utilitarianism and even elements of disdain. Some aspects are so dark that they resemble the unhealthy pleasure of a buzzard-wolf, sticking his snout without respect into the dismembered body of a female. And there are also bright sides, some artificial (like those related to conquests) and others more subtle, when I've genuinely appreciated the unique beauty of each person's body. And even more, that invisible light, an ineffable sense of euphoria that accompanies a post-ecstasy sensation, like saying, "Thank you, God, now I can die," after reaching the heights of pleasure.

I've never regularly had sex; in fact, if it had been left entirely up to me, I might still be a virgin. Behind the mask, I'm still insecure, fearful of rejection.

Devalued

The sexual E3 tends toward depression. They are sadder and feel less worthy than the other two subtypes, trying to compensate through charm, image, smiles, and loving expressions, through being the “nice” one. It’s as if they had to pay for existing, as if they didn’t deserve it. They often feel guilty just for being, like a burden to their family. So they try not to cause problems, to help, to avoid being a nuisance.

When the sexual E3 falls apart, they look at themselves and realize they don’t have the necessary ego strength to support them. This can lead to hopelessness and self-destructiveness. They can’t bear the truth that their life feels like a failure and everything feels like an illusion. They need personal work to connect with something greater and to learn to trust. To learn to value themselves simply for

existing, even though they have long felt unworthy. When they regain more freedom to go after what they want, the desperation to be loved lessens. The instinct returns, as if to say: “Now you take interest in me, because I can’t focus on you anymore.”

There is a background of sadness and a sense of fragility. The person feels a constant inner loneliness, which they try to escape by seeking connection, especially with the opposite sex. It ends up feeding their narcissism but not their true emotional hunger. The very low self-esteem, rooted in childhood, is unlikely to be healed through a romantic partner.

As a child, they learned to bottle up their emotions, to cry in solitude, and to solve things on their own; to endure. Not feeling entitled to express what they feel makes them believe their emotions don’t matter, leading to a sense of hopelessness. As if they didn’t deserve anything, or owed something to the world. The feeling is that they must give without receiving.

When I was little, I remember not being allowed to express emotions, especially not sadness. I acted like everything was fine and went to the bathroom to cry. There, in solitude, I could finally release the pain of not feeling loved and not feeling good enough.

They learned to devalue themselves and constantly compare themselves to others, as evidenced by this testimony:

If someone criticizes me, I feel like I’m dying. But I also believe them. I feel like I’m stupid, like I don’t know anything. I put the truth in others and get confused; I give more weight to what they say and believe them, especially if it’s my partner. When we argue, I always end up convinced they’re right about everything. It’s so easy for me to devalue myself.

They tend to idealize those around them: friends, teachers, and above all, their partner. They can’t help but place them on a pedestal. It’s hard for them to notice this extreme idealization, since being blind to others’ flaws and seeing only their shining side feels completely normal. Their virtues seem dazzling, worthy of admiration and imitation—a desirable goal and proof that perfection exists and can be reached (probably through work and effort).

This tendency to beautify others masks a deep need to be treated the same way. The sexual E3 idealizes others in hopes of being idealized, of being seen as special and unique, of having the other person notice only their virtues and praise them. This attitude hides a double deception. First, a refusal to recognize their own hunger for unconditional love and admiration. Second, by treating the other person in a way that doesn’t actually match who they are, they leave them confused and in unstable, puzzling territory.

When the true nature of the other person breaks through, the sexual E3 views it as sudden and treacherous. It can trigger a major crisis, a complete rejection of all the virtues they once admired. They may bolt from the relationship, accusing their partner of having deceived them.

They’ll then turn their attention elsewhere and seek out someone else (a friend, teacher, or a new partner) who will finally live up to their expectations. In doing so, they avoid facing the hard truth: the deception was their own doing.

Shy and insecure

Sexual E3s often seem shy—especially women, who were generally good and quiet girls growing up and still carry an inner sense of being eternal little girls. Their shyness is more pronounced in groups or around someone they see as an authority figure.

This is the most insecure of the three subtypes, because their self-devaluation is more exposed. Having invested so much in physical appearance, they have fewer inner resources. They often seem spaced out, as if the emptiness inside becomes evident and turns into not knowing what to say and going blank. When connection starts to stir feelings, they get scared and withdraw.

In front of an “audience,” they feel extremely vulnerable. Not having felt seen as children, they don’t know what to do or say when they’re exposed as adults. They want to stay invisible but also long to be the center of attention.

Freezing up, going numb, and not knowing how to act is typical of this subtype. Not knowing the “right” way to behave, they remain still, watching others to figure out the best approach. These are moments of intense suffering and helplessness. They defend themselves by not committing to anything or anyone, especially not to themselves or their feelings. In this tense waiting, they adopt a distant, stoic pose, which, thanks to their bent for beauty, they might dress up with a pretty smile or kind words while they try, in a quiet inner desperation, to figure out what’s expected of them.

I was having coffee at university when my math professor, someone I admired deeply, walked in and asked if he could sit with me. A tremor ran through my whole body, but I said yes. I went completely blank, feeling dumb, not knowing what to say or how to behave. I thought everything I said or did would be wrong, or worse, ridiculous. Learning to control that trembling felt like a huge achievement. Inside, I was still shaking, but on the outside, it didn't show.

I studied the Stanislavski method for six years and later trained in other acting techniques to be better prepared as an actor. On stage, I could feel at ease. Offstage, though, in daily life, I played a more timid character. But I knew inside what I was capable of. Theater let me explore parts of myself like anger, violence, or vulnerability.

Getting up on stage meant immense self-demand, a drive to do it perfectly, to look good, which translated into endless hours of preparation. I went to bed and woke up with the script and the character's leitmotif. All of it, of course, to be liked.

Naive

The sexual E3 denies both their intuition and their sensitivity, having experienced these traits as sources of emotional chaos and relational confusion. They learned not to trust themselves and turned those qualities into fake confidence and sweetness. They are perceptive but suppress their impressions or disconnect from them, so it seems like they’re not aware of what’s happening. They deny both the internal and external worlds in order to maintain the smile and receive love, because expressing what they truly sense risks confrontation, dislike, and the fear of rejection.

My lab professor asked me to train a little rat, telling me I was his best student. I was thrilled. I felt seen, important. The training involved stroking the rat's paws. I didn't pick up on his seduction at first, until I noticed a wet patch on his pants. I was in shock and didn't know what to do. I thought, "Is he coming on to me?" He said I'd be teaching others the process, and I just nodded and stayed silent.

As the sexual E3 begins to discover and work on themselves, they start to reconnect with their desire and listen to their intuition. The wall that blocks their awareness of what they feel begins to dissolve. They start facing reality and eventually become very intuitive and perceptive, with a sharp ability to see what's going on in others. Their hypersensitivity then becomes a strength, allowing them to sense not only what others need, but also what they feel, making them deeply attuned, empathetic, and compassionate.

Chameleonic

Being for the sake of others (kind, helpful, accommodating, and understanding) seemingly guarantees them affection and prevents possible rejection. It also helps them sustain the image of that ideal person everyone wants. Or it allows them to go unnoticed, which saves them from having to feel, be confronted, attacked, questioned, and so on. They can rest.

The sexual E3 was raised to be like a dog, rewarded for doing things well and for obeying. As loyal as a dog to its owner, they never make a fuss, never get angry and always wear a smile, wagging their tails to show they're eternally happy. One of their worst fears is confrontation.

I always talked about myself as if I weren't really there. I effortlessly expressed feelings that I knew were socially acceptable in any given context. If the moment called for anger, I got angry. Always within bounds, never leaving room for my spontaneity, and especially, without knowing what I actually felt.

The sexual subtype was rewarded only when they met others' expectations, never for showing initiative, much less for being someone who stood up for their own ideals. A natural at reading others from a very young age, they were left without inner reference points and with a hollow feeling they tried to fight by reinforcing the idea that one cannot live without external models.

They were applauded for being attractive and seductive, and came to feel that they only existed because they had a body. Hence the deep fear of aging and deterioration, and the realization, when awareness begins to dawn, of having been just a piece of flesh that others used.

A friend of mine says that I can be the outdoorsy Barbie one day, the intellectual Barbie the next, or the plugged-in Barbie some other time.... whatever the moment calls for. This gives my life meaning, and I don't feel disconnected. On the contrary, I've never felt more in touch with my deepest desires. My whole life gains meaning when I adapt to others, becoming a bit like them. I have an intense urge to almost completely merge with my partner, and I'm willing to give up my life for it. It's a joyful and desirable sacrifice that I'll reap the benefits of later, but not now, because now is the time to be full of enthusiasm and feel like I have wings for whatever the relationship demands of me. (The worst part is, I'm thinking now... I don't see it as that bad—isn't it a good way to be?)

Frivolous and superficial

The sexual E3 trivializes painful emotions and situations from their life. The surface they cling to is a permanent childlike state, used as a defense mechanism to avoid taking responsibility for their own life.

At times, they struggle to engage in situations that require intellectual depth and prefer to stay on the surface, within their comfort zone, where they feel accepted for their beauty, like a lovely vase. Assuming this role of man/woman/object makes them feel safe; they don't need to question themselves or look within to figure out who they are. It's a terrifying prospect, since they don't have much sense of self to begin with.

I remember being at a dinner with my boyfriend, Luis, when I started noticing he was turning to look at my friend Laura, who had become the center of attention in a group of men with her interesting take on the latest Woody Allen film and romantic relationships. I started to feel so stupid. I envied her, and I wanted to kill Luis. But I acted like nothing was happening and started chatting with Carlos, the most handsome guy at the party. While Carlos was talking to me, I overheard Luis telling Laura he felt a deep connection with her, like they'd known each other before. I couldn't take it anymore. I got up and said I had an early meeting the next day. I said goodbye and left, hoping no one had noticed my state, and that Luis would come after me. But he didn't. I cried all night. The next day I went for coffee with Verónica and helped her shop for a dress. In the store, I started fantasizing about how I'd look in the dress in the window. I forgot my pain by imagining Luis's face when he saw how sexy and irresistible I looked. There was only room for fantasies of winning my boyfriend back.

Controlling

One of the sexual E3's greatest fears is losing control and going mad. They exert so much control to maintain their ideal self-image that they stiffen both body and mind. Anything that escapes their control and might threaten their image terrifies them. As a bodily defense mechanism, they maintain a rigid posture, like a steel tube supporting their ego structure. Faced with childhood chaos, that structure gave the child a sense of safety and support.

At my home, as a girl, there was no structure like in other families. My dad was a drug user and an alcoholic, and my mom was always focused on him or depressed. I learned very young to do things on my own and not to be a bother because there were too many problems. I became independent and very structured. That structure gave me security as a child, but over time it became mental rigidity. I'm constantly making schedules I must stick to perfectly. I'm afraid of my body's spontaneity, so I stay tense, held in.

In the first few months of my life, my mother controlled everything about me, to the point where I wouldn't even soil my diapers. She would spend ages with me, holding me seated on a "little pink pot" until I did my business. Then she'd wash me and put on a clean diaper again. Later she used to brag about how clean her daughter was. Some of her friends, even when I was older, would remind me of those moments, sighing with admiration.

Through personal work, I've come to understand why I've always suffered from constipation, water retention that bloats my belly, and why I have such a high pain tolerance.

For years I've felt ashamed when I needed to pee (I've always found those words hard to say); I'd hold it in completely without saying anything until I couldn't anymore. If I was at

someone's house or a public restroom, I'd clench hard so no sound would be heard. It felt dirty, shameful. It was as if I wasn't allowed to have those needs, or that having them meant I wasn't clean and perfect. Having needs made me feel imperfect, vulnerable, and therefore unworthy of love.

This control extends to many areas, based on the illusion of being able to manage everything without becoming vulnerable. This is how the sexual E3 prevents themselves from truly surrendering in their relationships. Meeting their partner's needs becomes a strategy to avoid being in touch with themselves, where nothing seems worthy of love or value.

At the moment of orgasm, I notice I clench in the same way I used to when holding in my sphincters. It took me a long time and a lot of work to learn to let go, which meant overcoming the shame of feeling, and the fear of being absorbed by the other person.

Self-control blocks the ability to recognize basic needs and desires, making the parents' needs more important, and prioritizing the preservation of the constructed false image. This learned way of controlling threatening bodily impulses gives them a sense of power over themselves.

In this light, the multiple eating disorders seen in this subtype can be interpreted not only as an attempt to shape a perfect body according to an idealized fashion image, but also to control emotions and sexual impulses, avoiding surrender to pleasure.

Anorexia in sexual E3 women could be seen as a way of saying "No" with their bodies, because they lack the voice to say "No" to abuse (emotional or sexual), dependency, and the plasticization and castration of feminine energy in our culture. In this way, they express through bodily control a message of "I don't want to, I won't take you in," depriving themselves of nourishment or vomiting out what is nourishing, while also sending the message: "Give to me, I need," because they cannot nourish themselves from their own energy. This allows the daughter to maintain control over her physical and psychological space, while also holding power over the mother, who demands she meet her expectations—with a silent "No" that can even reach the point of death.

It's also about controlling the other person. Just as the mother controlled them to become the child who would match her ideal image, the child learns to control the mother: not only sensing her needs and desires, but also monitoring her movements and actions to be ready for any threat or to act preemptively. This control also serves to block the fear underneath, from which arise many misinterpretations of the other's motives, including jealousy, envy, and competition.

Cold, harsh, insensitive

People with this character can appear cold due to their emotional repression. Although fear is one of the most deeply repressed feelings in the E3, the sexual subtype is the one most in touch with it, as well as the most sensitive and vulnerable. One of their deepest fears is conflict.

They often avoid fully engaging in life, because life involves conflict. They may resemble a plastic doll. They fear that if they acknowledge conflict with someone or in any area of their life, everything they've built will collapse. As if the scaffolding holding up the fantasy that "everything's fine" were so fragile that any movement would bring down the whole structure.

Aggression is seen by the sexual E3 as catastrophic, and they repress it even to the point of enduring aggression from others. Often, they don't even recognize another's aggression as such, or

convince themselves it's not a big deal. Sometimes they struggle to distinguish what's real and what's not, as if they didn't quite believe what they're perceiving.

When I'm having relationship problems with my partner, I generally lean towards avoiding the issue altogether. But when the situation becomes truly dire, and I can't ignore it any longer, I feel a lot of fear. It feels like I have no inner tools to get through the crisis, and I think the relationship will end, so I end up telling myself: "It's not that bad... They're exaggerating." I do this out of a deep fear of going back to places in my personal history where the only way to survive was not to feel, not to see.

They have a high capacity both for alertness and for calm in extreme situations like accidents or serious acts of violence, due to their excessive control and emotional coldness. Often, having lived through unbearable situations in childhood led them to this emotional freezing, as a way to survive and distance themselves from pain. They split off from their emotions, watching their life like the spectator of a movie.

Pain doesn't exist for me. I put up a barrier, a wall ("nothing's happening here"), I stay in control and I can come across as quite cold. For me, it helps to slow down a little, and instead of telling myself that it doesn't matter if someone hurts me, if they say this or that, to connect a bit more with that part of me that does feel the pain.

Perfectionist

The sexual E3 tends to channel perfectionism into their physical appearance. The motivation is to attract, be admired and desired; that's how they feel they exist. With perfection focused on the image, aging and losing beauty becomes terrifying. They touch up their outer image, and also their inner one. They present themselves as the ideal mother, the unconditional friend, the perfect partner. If they feel bad inside, they fix up their appearance to hide their emotions. They invest time and money in clothes, makeup, and anything that helps them look good. A certain level of exhibitionism masks their shame, insecurity, and fear.

There was a time when I was obsessed with making my dance movements perfect. I spent extra hours rehearsing, injected myself with vitamins to keep up the pace, and it was so frustrating when the teacher said there was no expression, no projection... I'd repeat it again and again until I got it right, but the price was very high.

My drive came from imagining that my boyfriend was watching me, that on the day of the performance he would see how wonderfully I danced and love me more, fall even more in love with me. Every movement I made during rehearsals, I imagined him watching me.

Now I see the perfectionism with my kids, how I want to create an environment for them where they don't suffer, where everything is orderly, and in harmony.

Much of their perfectionism is rooted in a fear of failure. Falling short is one of their most haunting fears. Doing things wrong feels threatening. Sometimes it's easier for them to give up than to risk making a mistake. They find it hard to admit their errors or accept that someone points them out, as if there were no room for flaws in their image of perfection. And it's painful for them to connect with failure, out of fear that it might reveal the falseness, that the world they've created isn't perfect.

The sexual E3 defends their image. To protect it, they may justify anything: painting a rosy picture of their childhood with supposedly wonderful parents, or downplaying things in a romantic relationship, even justifying aggression. If they expose someone else, they reveal cruelty, and in doing so, their own ugliness. They cannot tolerate chaos or the rupture of the image they've built, because it would cause everything to fall apart.

Critical/demanding

Achieving such an image requires a great deal of self-demand. There's also a strong expectation placed on others, as if anything less than perfection were unbearable. This isn't immediately visible; it lies behind the mask. The sexual E3 makes an effort to maintain a harmonious world because anything that's off causes them deep anxiety.

I see my demanding nature as tied to wanting things to be just as I imagined, just as I planned because that way everything will be in harmony. I also think that if I do things perfectly, if I am perfect, if I have the perfect partner, the perfect family... then everything will be in order. I'm very afraid of chaos, and the fantasy is that everything will fall apart if it's not perfect.

I spend so much energy on this that I end up placing immense pressure on myself, and being very demanding of others, especially my partner. I catch every little flaw and point it out like a sharp, fine diamond; I turn into a kind of governess, trying to "fix" whatever it is that's disrupting the harmony, so that he'll be perfect. I become a nightmare, constantly scanning for mistakes.

Outside intimate relationships, it's difficult for them to voice direct criticism. Instead, they resort to gossip or leave their critiques unspoken. Often, hidden behind the criticism is an envy they won't admit to feeling, tied to their low self-esteem. Acknowledging another person's value feels threatening, as if it undermines their own worth and image.

Efficient

Efficiency is a key part of their strategy. While the sexual E3 isn't as naturally efficient as the self-preservation subtype, they can achieve their goals if doing so helps secure a relationship. Their efficiency is directed toward shaping the image they want to project to someone important in their life:

I'm efficient when it comes to order. I'm effective, have everything perfectly arranged, placed just right. My house has to be spotless, immaculate, and I expect the person I live with to uphold that too, though I never directly ask them to help. I expect them to notice on their own that this matters deeply to me.

Since this efficiency, like their perfectionism, is in service of a dual romantic relationship, it doesn't really help them feel self-worth through independent accomplishments, nor is it especially useful in achieving professional success like it is for social or self-preservation E3s. For the sexual E3, efficiency is aimed at sustaining the idealized surface image of being the perfect man or woman to love.

Competitive/envious

The sexual E3 can be quite competitive when they perceive rivals who might threaten their hold on someone's affection. In romantic relationships especially, they can be very jealous and envious, though rarely expressed openly. It's a covert competition, carried out with subtle tactics. They try to be the most attractive, the most kind and helpful, and act as if it all comes naturally, when often it's about winning the contest for someone's affection.

Feeling lacking in worth, they constantly compare themselves to others, feeling inadequate yet yearning to be like the one they admire and envy. Their gaze turns outward, as if there were nothing within to hold onto, nothing grounding them. There's often intense competitiveness toward others of the same gender.

Anger and rage

As with all type Three personalities, anger in the sexual E3 is denied and repressed. In childhood, they couldn't express it due to the controlling demands of parents who expected a lovable, well-behaved, perfect child. Expressing anger would have meant revealing an inner world of their own—something taboo, whether due to a lack of space to be heard or in order to uphold the ideal of a perfect family that must never be questioned.

This is why the sexual E3 projects aggression onto others, provoking them in order to then play the victim and blame the aggressor, without owning their own anger. They can repress rage so deeply that they don't even feel it, until it finally explodes in an outburst that's hysterical and overwhelming. That kind of breakdown is the only form of rage they allow themselves, because it feels like something outside their control and therefore not their responsibility.

Another way this anger gets displaced is through panic attacks, which are common in sexual E3s. These often express their suffering and fear, and become a paradoxical way of expressing discomfort within a relationship. Paradoxical because, while trying to communicate that something is wrong in order to be noticed, the attacks actually worsen their sense of helplessness and insecurity, increasing their dependence on the other person.

Somatizing

Physical symptoms serve to reveal what isn't conscious. The sexual E3 is disconnected from their body and denies their emotions, which then surface as physical symptoms. It's as if the body is shouting out what the person refuses to see or accept.

There are often serious issues with expression, such as throat problems, or jaw tension due to unexpressed anger. Skin eruptions are common and tend to reflect discomfort with contact (whether with people or situations) as well as colitis and intestinal problems. Emotional repression shows up as an inability to "digest" things well. No matter how much the body speaks, the sexual E3 tends to believe everything is fine, until a crisis or breakup forces them to face the truth, most often in the context of romantic conflict.

Disconnected

This character uses dissociation and denial to keep dangerous emotions at bay, and thus learns to disconnect easily. They detach from reality and live in an idealized world. In relationships, this makes them insensitive to their own feelings and those of others.

At the beginning of my therapeutic process, I believed I could easily access deeper aspects of myself and confront my darker side, like my perfectionism, manipulation, and the games I played with my partner (the reason I started therapy). Over time, I've noticed I have a hard shell. I enter these disconnected spaces where a block appears, and I go blank. This can be frustrating because I take intensive workshops and struggle to integrate what I've learned. It feels like my growth gets stuck, and it's largely due to this disconnection. It stems from my fear of growing up, of leaving behind the little girl I still give power to. I'm afraid of embracing the imperfect woman I am and falling into the abyss of imperfection.

Anxious

Anxiety arises from the fear of their emotions spiraling out of control. It's more of a hysterical threat than a narcissistic one. The sexual subtype may also feel guilt; they fear being wrong and will blame themselves to avoid conflict. Intense anxiety arises at the thought of someone, especially their partner, getting angry.

I often find myself 'doing things' and then realize I'm highly anxious. If I dig a little deeper, I see that I'm angry at someone or that something in an intimate relationship is off, and that's what's causing the anxiety. I try to control what I feel because I'm afraid of exploding, of being overtaken by my emotions like I often am, where I lose all clarity and am then left with a sense of guilt and unworthiness for not having done things right. So I swing between controlling, the anxiety that creates, and trying to learn not to give in to my impulsiveness.

In my case, I recognize anxiety as the constant need to get somewhere. It's like an internalized race that wakes up with me every morning. A kind of frenzy that keeps me busy, with a perpetual thought that I have to get everything done. The crazy part is, I'm the one who gives myself all these made-up obligations.

Proud/arrogant. Doesn't show need or ask for help

The sexual E3 learned to manage on their own and not to ask for anything. Often, the woman competes with her mother due to a “privileged” bond with her father; at the same time, she might take on the role of mother to her own mother, responding to her mother’s need for care. She assumes a role that was never hers to take. Even when she feels the need, pride won’t allow her to step into the role of daughter and ask for help.

Asking for help also tarnishes the perfect image the sexual E3 wants to present to the world. Asking means something is lacking or wrong, which is exactly how it felt in their family. It’s a threat not only to the self-deception of being perfect but also to the relationship itself, which has been built on the illusion of being the ideal partner who promised eternal love and happiness.

Throughout my life, I've often talked about problems while already offering the solution, so I've come across as someone who doesn't need anything or anyone. And that's how I've lived: alone, without support, encouragement, or help. That's how I learned to live, locking away what's truly mine, giving it no chance to surface, and developing an image of self-sufficiency and control that only made it harder to connect with myself.

I've had serious problems many times. As a teenager, I went through an abortion on my own, and later had a lot of relationship issues, but I never said a word at home or to my parents. I never asked for help, never showed my struggles, fears, pain, or mistakes.

V. Emotionality and fantasy

The sexual E3 is hypersensitive but has become an expert at hiding socially unacceptable emotions like anger and disgust. They've developed strong control mechanisms to mask this hypersensitivity and their own vulnerability. Where they do express emotion most freely is in private or with very trusted people, such as family or a partner. In those safe spaces they feel comfortable venting their anger, complaints, and frustration.

They're extremely sensitive to any kind of criticism and go to great lengths to avoid it by pleasing others. Criticism is perceived as an unavoidable and terrible threat, and when it comes, it triggers a cascade of defensive systems, rooted in their fragility, inferiority complex, and fear. They can't stand being doubted, nor can they tolerate living with fear, which they view as an entirely forbidden emotion. Having grown up needing to be self-sufficient, their irrational belief is that no one will love them if they're afraid or weak. Allowing themselves to feel fear is painful but also freeing. The fear of fear itself causes more suffering than facing it, and doing so brings relief, because they can finally drop the mask. Their deepest fear is actually experiencing true love and being able to fully surrender to it.

As a little girl, I projected the image of being a very good child and I learned not to bother anyone, not even with emotion. I have this feeling of having been a very sad and unprotected child, who felt that sadness but never expressed it when others were around. I had lots of fantasies that helped me escape the sadness, especially ones about having a normal and loving family. These fantasies were absolutely secret and I acted them out with imaginary friends when I was alone.

The inner child's sadness remains ever-present, but concealed or avoided. Sometimes a hint of it may surface, wrapped in a mysterious aura used to seduce. When romantic fantasies aren't fulfilled, the sadness becomes more visible and turns into a kind of chronic depression, often leading to drug use or anything else that can blur emotional awareness.

Their repressed rage is somatized, manifesting as physical illness. What they show most is joy, and they always have a positive response to their own problems and those of others, even when they feel the opposite inside. The prevailing message is: "*Everything's fine.*"

When I feel down, fragile, and helpless, I can somehow summon strength from God knows where to keep it hidden. And I jump onto the bandwagon of enthusiasm, whether it's someone else's project or my own, as a way to escape pain and suffering. That's why many people see me as cheerful and fun.

There's a disconnection from the emotional world and a delay in emotional response. Because they live in a world of enthusiasm where everything's supposed to be okay, they disconnect from any painful or "ugly" emotions, like rage or feeling hurt. There's a vain belief that they must not fall apart in public. Enthusiasm is admired, while pain is shunned. Coexisting with this perspective is the idea that if they show what's "ugly," they'll be abandoned. This is the lie that hurts the most once they start becoming aware of it.

During my teenage years, I mostly remember a kind of hysterical emotion: I started expressing all the rebellion and anger I'd kept bottled up throughout childhood. I expressed it at home through lots of shouting and hysterical crying. In public, I expressed nothing. I was almost like an autistic teenager. I could go out with friends and not say a word all afternoon. That's when the fear of saying something wrong really showed up.

Their excessive self-control comes from living constantly under the imagined gaze of others. They fear madness, yet they're also drawn to the idea of losing control. There's a strong pull toward drugs or alcohol; these individuals are easy prey for addiction due to the rigid control they live under and the matching need to let go of it.

I used to get high a lot to feel intense emotions, or at least that's what I told myself. In reality, what I was looking for was not to feel anything at all. And I found my drug: heroin. It made me happy because nothing mattered, not even death. I could be at a social event and not care about how I looked. That was a huge relief.

In group settings, they yearn to be the most liked and appreciated person, but their fear of saying something inappropriate often makes them come off as shy and withdrawn. This shyness is painful because it makes them feel invisible. And when they finally manage to loosen up, they're plagued by long-lasting fantasies that they've said or done unforgivable atrocities that will lead to severe consequences, like criticism or loss of affection. Underneath it all is the belief that people can't love them as they truly are, which is why they have to control themselves so much.

Fantasy holds a significant place in their lives and takes up a lot of space. The most common one is romantic: to find that ideal love who will see how special and unique they are, someone who will rescue them from all the pain and sadness they've endured. They dream of a love straight out of a romantic movie, complete with family, children... During adolescence, this fantasy takes up even more space, especially the fantasy of winning the most unattainable love.

When I was thirteen, I dreamed one night that I was waiting at the bus stop to go to school and a man arrived on horseback, dressed in clothes from another century. He asked me to climb on, and he flew me to a planet far from Earth.

I knew instantly he was the man I'd always waited for, and that he would take me to our home and free me from suffering. And that's what happened. We arrived at our little house, and I felt so loved and fulfilled that I never wanted to return to Earth. The dream felt so real that I cherished it like a jewel. Whenever reality felt unbearable, because of the sense that no one loved me, I would conjure it again in my mind. It was a way of comforting myself, and I

was left with the certainty that one day I would meet a man who loved me like the one in my dream, and that would be the end of my suffering in this world.

The sexual E3 has enormous difficulty living in the reality of the present. Their expectations of themselves are so inflated, so grandiose, that they repeatedly escape into fantasy. Part of their tendency towards daydreaming comes from the belief that they *should* be somewhere else, some better place they absolutely deserve, because what the present offers is so terrifyingly vulgar and unworthy of interest...

Since they feel life *must* offer them something more (that they deserve *just because*), something exciting and fitting for the huge hopes they've nurtured, they take little initiative to change their circumstances. The inevitable frustration often turns into contempt for ordinary people and situations, and a rebellious rejection of anything lacking intensity, beauty, or harmony. Eventually, this leads to a kind of selectivity: they distinguish some people from others, and the "chosen" ones are those who can bring beauty and distinction.

The sexual subtype will continue compulsively feeding their fantasies, even if they can't or won't make them real, and this can make them seem like dream addicts—when in fact, they're deeply absent in the emotional world.

VI. Childhood

As various accounts and reports reveal, sexual E3 individuals tend to prioritize their parents' needs over their own. The family atmosphere is often charged with tension and emotional deficiencies, rather than being a nurturing space.

Their tendency to override their own needs stems from a continuous effort to be a good son or daughter, so that things go smoothly. They often conform to societal norms, attempting to fit into predefined gender roles and ideals of a perfect family. The belief is that by becoming what others desire, they will gain love, so they become astute observers, highly attuned to fulfilling the needs of others, mastering the art to perfection. Little by little, their genuine and spontaneous selves are replaced by a facade of conformity. By sacrificing individuality, the drive for personal growth, they lose their intrinsic value. This self-denial, renouncing life, pleasure, and Eros, plunges them into anxiety and persistent feelings of worthlessness and guilt.

The child thus identifies with the values of the parents, and makes them their own. Most of them recognize that they have internalized the values, desires, and unfulfilled expectations of the mother, unconsciously taking on the impossible task of giving her back the satisfaction, happiness, or fulfillment she was unable to experience. In women, this often results in a complex bond with the mother, oscillating between identifying with her aspirations and fearing her as a potential rival for the father. In men, identification with the mother can lead to a conflictual relationship with the father, as they position themselves as the ideal man by her side.

Parental relationships become even more intricate due to the significant role of seduction from the mother to the son, or the father to the daughter. Sensual, sometimes sexual attention directed by one of the parents blurs the line between the child's desire for confirmation and love and the parent's own desires, often tinged with a sexual element. The child learns to be invaded, manipulated, or abused and, most importantly, learns to use their body to gain privileges.

This way, it already becomes apparent that in the childhood of a sexual E3 two central elements coexist. On one hand, there's the seduction aimed at shaping the child into what the parents desire—a vessel for their needs or a trophy. On the other hand, there's control and authoritarianism from one or both parents. Within this context, there is room for humiliation, abuse, disqualification, and aggression.

This maternal or paternal need for control and possession diminishes the child's sense of self. By being seen as someone who fulfills others' needs or voids rather than as an individual, the child ends up developing a narcissistic personality, confused between who they truly are and the image they represent to others. They create the image their parents dictate as ideal and become experts at suppressing anything that doesn't reflect it or contradicts it. In public, they are made to feel special and superior, serving as a showpiece. In private, they are discredited, as it is easier to control an insecure and ashamed child.

I was a dependent and submissive child, unable to say "No," protest, or express my dissenting feelings. There was too much at stake. I was put by my mother between herself and my father, to emasculate him and show him that his son could provide what he couldn't for her. So I stopped being a happy child. I guess my mother had a big void to fill, because her sadness eventually overshadowed my joy.

I couldn't bear to see her cry. My only older brother and I were in a competition for her attention. But he has no qualms about letting her down, and that got me closer to her. This also created a rift between us, and we didn't play much together, lacking a strong bond in childhood and youth.

Sexual E3s typically didn't have a secure mother-child relationship, and as a result, they faced the process of individuation and a longing to go towards the father. There is a deep sense of oral dissatisfaction. The primary bond with their parents was unsatisfactory, and they continue searching for that missing connection in their romantic relationships. They remain stuck in a triangular dynamic, unable to fully embrace their mother or trust their father who may have been an absent or exploitative figure. The feeling of having been seduced and betrayed by the parent of the opposite sex carries over into their romantic relationships, where they maintain a longing for dependency.

Without realizing it, I was gradually becoming my mother's husband during my adolescence. My father was absent, effectively nonexistent, and I assumed his place by becoming responsible and efficient, making decisions that were beyond my role as a son or my age. From that point on, I adopted a more serious, rigid personality, with little sense of humor and sometimes even embarrassment about laughing, having a good time, or enjoying the moment. The message was clear: there's no time for pleasure, pleasure is unproductive.

Sometimes in the family of a sexual E3 there is chaos; sometimes rigidity, authoritarianism, and repression. However, a consistent theme is that the parents are emotionally unavailable to meet their child's needs for affection and connection. It creates in them a feeling of guilt for existing; there are things more important in the family than themselves, so they have to adapt, listen, be obedient, and please.

In chaotic family situations, which can involve issues like alcoholism or violence, they learn to adapt to avoid creating additional conflicts, and resolving situations allows them to be seen and feel "loved."

From a very young age, my needs were often overlooked, and the family setting, far from being a place of refuge, was a constant source of tension, fear, and suffering. I was born the seventh of seven children, after a string of three girls and three boys, so my birth tipped the scales. I soon learned that to be loved I had to pay “my dues,” and take on tasks that were not typically expected of a girl.

As far back as I can remember, from around the age of five or six, when my father overindulged in alcohol, my mother would urge or even force me to mediate and resolve conflicts between the two of them, which generally took place during weekend meals. During these episodes, my mother delegated to me the responsibility of convincing my alcoholic father to go to sleep. I spent many long Sunday afternoons trying to calm him down and distract him, or acting as a confidant for their grievances. I soon realized that I had to use my childhood playfulness and innocence to take care of the adults in my life, hoping to be seen, to matter, or to be worthy of their love. My mother knew that I was my father’s favorite daughter, and, in her ignorance, she took advantage of this by involving me in extinguishing the fires of their disputes. Many weekends were dedicated to enduring and witnessing their arguments. On those occasions, I wanted to free my mother from the suffering she dramatically expressed through prolonged cries that instilled a sense of guilt in me and my brother. Thus, I made a vow to myself never to disappoint or disillusion her again, to avoid disobeying her, and never to give her problems or worries. I took on the responsibility of taking care of my father during his moments of alcoholic imbalance to spare my mother and the entire family from suffering. Sundays became heavy days, full of sadness.

I embraced the role of being responsible for everyone’s well-being. I was always at the forefront of dealing with economic and health problems, which were constantly present in my family. I grew up not seeing much money and learned to survive on very little. Early on, my professional work allowed me to live with dignity, and I see that in romantic relationships, I tend to place myself in a certain economic dependence, as if I were projecting on my partner the role of the provider I lacked in my early life.

The child may exaggerate emotions or experiences just to finally be seen. The absence of contact and emotional containment can lead to submission that, in adolescence, transforms into rebellion towards the family unit.

I became subservient and lost my self-respect. I remember when I was seven or eight years old, I fantasized about being in the radio obituaries – that way, they would finally see me, even if it took my death for them to notice me for who I was and not what they wanted me to be.

I used to read my parents’ faces (especially my dad’s) to know how they were doing, and what they needed from me. Now, I find myself doing the same with my partner – a sign of affection can make me idealize a perfect life, a dream that many times is not real, and a sign of rejection triggers intense panic, leading to a persistent fear of abandonment and anxiety that drives me to take action, so that everything is fine again, and he loves me. But then, I get angry that I had to submit, and I harden myself, I think, as a form of revenge and protection from being hurt again.

In authoritarian families, a repressive upbringing stifles the development of the ability to listen to one’s own signals, like knowing when you’re satisfied or understanding your own desires and preferences. Children learn to tell themselves, “Don’t cry, don’t feel sad; you have to be happy,” “If

you do that, you'll be disqualified or excluded." The rules become more important than listening to their own body signals, which must be ignored to survive; "If I obey, I am loved."

In the childhood of a sexual E3, stories of punishment and disqualification by parents are common, undermining the child's self-worth: "For solutions, I rely on myself," "what's mine is not important."

Desire is often suppressed as it's viewed as wrong or dangerous. The following examples demonstrate how such repression in childhood carries over into adult life.

I stopped validating my feelings and began hiding what I considered negative. I struggled to see the shadows in people, things, and within myself; the abuse, the dark side. I repressed my fears.

Now I can see how much energy I spend on maintaining an image, hiding my insecurities, and covering up what I don't want others to see by presenting myself as nice. I had, and still have, a deep fear of being ridiculed and a constant fear of disappointing others, leading to a strong need for control. It's like putting on makeup or fixing what I don't like. Then I start believing my lies, which leads to self-deception.

If I ever tried to voice my protest or anger, whether directed at my brother or for any reason, I would meet with my mother's sternness, the belt, or other severe punishments.

I remember that my mother, highly demanding, intended for me to be a "perfect" child, just as she had been taught. I had to be a model daughter, simply for the fact that I was hers. She wanted me to be so perfect that she wouldn't even allow me to use the bathroom when I felt like it. When I was a newborn baby, she would spend hours holding me down on a potty, waiting for me to do my business. I wouldn't even wet myself.

From a very young age, I openly rebelled against her, although it was difficult due to her covert, underhanded tactics, involving threats to tell my father. With him it was different, our confrontations were more direct and straightforward. Although, it felt like he wasn't too involved, and that it was my mother who called the shots at home; I felt unprotected. My mother yelled at me a lot when there were no people around. She did embroidery at home, and on many occasions when I asked her to take me to the garden, and she couldn't due to her work, she would slap me so I would shut up and stop insisting. Such scenes repeated numerous times, and I couldn't comprehend why sometimes they praised me, laughed with me, told me how funny I was, while other times, for no apparent reason, I would receive slaps, shouts, and furious glares.

To the outside world, I was the model daughter, earning people's affection with my kindness, warmth, and constant readiness to help everyone, often allowing others to take advantage of my excessive tolerance. But at home, it was a different story; there, I was rebellion personified.

The sexual E3 has a hard time opening up about their experiences. Shame serves as a barrier, making it difficult for them to access and then articulate their painful memories. Instead, they bury them, planting a sense of emptiness and a history that feels lacking.

The important thing is to be faultless, and the fear of acknowledging and feeling these experiences disrupts the connection between what they've been through and their ability to talk about it. This can result in confusion, leaving a *blank* space that they sometimes fill with fantasies to make sense of their past.

Repressed instincts and shame surrounding their needs make them feel ashamed of their very existence. They believe that when their instincts surface, they become tainted and flawed. All of this must remain hidden, unable to be expressed freely:

When I was nine years old and in school during an exam, I knew it was forbidden to use the bathroom at that time. My fear of needing to urinate grew, but I couldn't pluck up the courage to ask the teacher for permission. My heart raced, and my body felt paralyzed and unresponsive. I ended up peeing in my chair but couldn't bring myself to confess it to anyone. It was a moment of tremendous shame, and I kept it to myself. I felt as though everyone was watching me, yet no one spoke to me, and I felt completely alone. After many days of fear, sleepless nights, and a reluctance to attend school, I finally mustered up the courage to confess the incident to my mother, and it provided a sense of relief. I experienced similar situations of hiding something dirty or shameful. Additionally, a moment of sexual play with my cousins felt like an inexpressible sin, leaving me with a feeling of being dirty and tainted.

The sexual E3 woman possesses a combination of fragility and strength that can be surprisingly paradoxical. She is very feminine and sweet, but competes with strength, something she developed during childhood in response to her male siblings and father:

I envied the freedom and privileges enjoyed by my three older male siblings. I had a lot of energy but had to submit to my brothers, which was encouraged by my mother. I felt oppressed by the older ones. I believe this envy of my brothers motivated a competitiveness that I recognize in my interactions with men to this day. In my relationships with the opposite sex, I consistently adopt a more defiant attitude, even though I acknowledge some level of dependence on my partner. For a long time, I've concealed my feelings and needs in my marital relationship, so as not to show weakness or vulnerability.

In general, individuals of this subtype often didn't feel good about their appearance, so they constantly try to improve it or look better to feel secure.

My appearance was never praised in childhood; quite the opposite. Inside me, there was always a freckled and ugly girl, often subjected to criticism, who wanted to be respected and accepted by the family. I can't recall my mother ever bolstering my self-esteem or offering any words of praise. The family environment wasn't nurturing or supportive enough. I felt alone and unprotected, at the mercy of everyone's scrutiny and criticism. No one cared much about my well-being.

My efforts to maintain physical attractiveness weren't only driven by the desire to attract attention or seduce; they almost felt like a necessity for survival and validation. One of my fondest memories of my mother involved sitting beside her as we pored over fashion magazines while she sewed. I was so happy, and felt so loved when she made new outfits for me.

If knowledge is valued in the family, the sexual E3 tends to embrace and identify with these values, often striving for academic growth to prove their worthiness and seek love. For many, education becomes a sanctuary, offering solace from family tension and the pervasive sense of loneliness.

One defining moment was when I overheard my parents admiring my brother's schoolwork. I vividly remember how I felt at a disadvantage. I also wanted to be the object of my parents' admiration, and I understood that for that to happen, I had to learn to read and write. From that day on, I relentlessly pushed to start school. Even though I wasn't yet of age for formal enrollment, I didn't rest until my mother secured a special enrollment for me.

To cope with distress or anxiety in tense situations, they often employ denial to paint a rosy picture of their family, or they resort to fantasy, play, or even lies to escape from an uncomfortable environment. Many sexual E3s, prior to embarking on a journey of self-discovery, tend to portray their childhood and family as perfect, free of shadows, sometimes even forgetting specific events. This self-deception can go to the extent of believing that this idealized version was their lived reality. It is very difficult for individuals of this character to open the doors to their own history, and gain self-awareness. When they finally do, they confront experiences of suffering, various forms of abuse, physical mistreatment, humiliating behavior, and psychological torment. For women, the facades of the martyr mother and overly affectionate father are discarded, revealing a different truth. As for men, images of the enigmatic, seductive mother, too closely attached to her son, and the competitive, authoritarian father are exposed.

Initially, I clung to the ideal image I had constructed of my family. One day, when I was in line to get my identity card (I was fourteen years old), I started talking to an older man. I found myself talking about my family in a way that I had never done before. I presented them as the perfect family: always attentive to my needs, understanding, loving, supportive of my decisions, etc., etc. I don't know how many other things I told him, but his response was that he would love to have a daughter who spoke of him like that. I think that's what solidified for me that this image was both well-received and successful. With it, I won over older people, and earned the envy of those my age. Clinging to it made me feel less lonely and anxious; it seemed to give me a sense of identity.

When I was thirteen years old, my mom couldn't afford to pay for my dance classes, so I sold candy at school to earn money to cover the costs. I felt embarrassed at the thought of others discovering the chaos and financial struggles in my family, so I pretended in front of the other kids that selling was just a game for me, not a necessity. At the same time, I worried that they might see through me, realize that I was a liar, that I wasn't as I appeared or as happy as I seemed, because then they might stay away from me. I would hide the dark aspects, thinking that all the other families were happy and had no problems. I only showed what was socially accepted.

VII. Persona and shadow: destructive to themselves and others



Portrait of an Unknown Woman by Ivan Kramskoi (1883)
representing Tolstoy's character

Anna Karenina, the novel by Tolstoy that served to illustrate the seduction of the sexual E3, is also a powerful literary example to understand the shadow, with its destructive force, that inflicts so much pain and separation upon this character.

Over the course of the novel, Anna, initially portrayed as a feminine goddess of wisdom and compassion, gradually reveals herself to be a cruel, obsessed, vengeful, and destructive woman. Her mind becomes increasingly unstable, shifting from one emotional state to another like a small boat caught in an Atlantic storm. Trapped in a web of delusions and self-deceptions that fuel her rage, her destructive impulses intensify until she sees no other option but to annihilate herself in a suicide that promises the ultimate triumph: the love of her lover and revenge at the same time.

The novel begins with her arrival in Moscow to save her brother's marriage. It's the mission of a big-hearted woman who values family: to convince her sister-in-law to forgive her unfaithful husband for the sake of everyone involved.

Her style of dress reflects noble, subtle, feminine, and modest elegance; never flashy. The same could be said of the impression she gives as a person: soft, compassionate, maternal, and gentle. "She could read sympathy and the sincerest affection in Anna's face," is how Dolly, her sister-in-law, beautifully describes her.

The impression that Kitty (Dolly's younger sister) has of her shows the charm and sympathy she evokes in others, the effectiveness of her mask:

[Kitty], on her part, immediately fell under the charm of Anna's gracious manner; as young girls do when brought into relations with women older than themselves. Besides, there was nothing about Anna which suggested a society woman or the mother of an eight-year-old son; but to see her graceful form, her fresh and animated face, one would have guessed that she was a young lady of twenty, had not a serious and sometimes almost melancholy expression, which struck and attracted Kitty, come into her eyes.

Kitty felt that she was perfectly natural and sincere, but she did not deny that there was something about her that suggested a whole world of complicated and poetic interest far beyond her comprehension.¹⁰

Kitty still idealizes Anna, sensing something mysterious in her, when she suddenly realizes Anna's unexpected insensitivity to her pain: Anna, who is openly captivating the man Kitty loves and expects a proposal from at the ball, turns her back on her, ignoring Kitty's discomfort in order to continue her charming act:

She was charming in her simple black velvet; charming were her round arms, clasped by bracelets; charming her exquisite neck, encircled with pearls; charming her dark, curly locks breaking from restraint; charming the slow and graceful movements of her feet and hands; charming her lovely face, full of animation; but in all this charm there was something terrible and cruel.

(part 1/ch. XXIII)

This cruelty seems to stem from the disconnect between the idealized image she projects—a goddess of beauty and wisdom—and the vast emptiness inside her that cannot resonate with another person's experience:

As she approached, Kitty gazed at her in dismay. Anna looked at her with drooping eyelids, and smiled, pressing her hand. But, noticing that Kitty only responded to her smile by a look of despair and amazement, she turned away from her, and began gaily talking to the other lady.

“Yes, yes,” said Kitty, “there is something strange, beautiful and, at the same time, diabolical about her.”

(1/XXIII)

This is the first time Tolstoy lets us glimpse Anna Karenina's shadow, reminding us that the imitation of an idealized divine image is both an illusion born of ignorance and a denial of human nature and its intrinsic light.

It's still unclear what this dark side truly is, but the author is already preparing us to witness something unexpected that will gradually manifest in Anna's behavior, causing great suffering in her and those around her. This “diabolical” element carries enormous destructive potential, due to the repression of Eros, the prohibition against connecting with her own pleasure and expressing it freely. Throughout the novel, we see a growing effort to uphold her vain, idealized self-image and a parallel desire to punish herself for failing to live up to it.

This self-destructive potential becomes tragic when suicide appears to be the only solution, a recurring thought and act in desperate sexual E3s. As one person with this structure puts it:

In those moments when I lived in chronic frustration, when I felt most desperate for not being able to feel loved by my husband, suicide seemed like the most logical option: it was either my death or his, to free myself from a dead-end situation where I lacked the strength I would have needed to escape my golden cage.

¹⁰ (T/N) The excerpts from *Anna Karenina* in English don't come from one source; I used some from the 1887 translation by Nathan Haskell Dole, some from the translation by Constance Garnett, and other times I left it at the machine translation from Spanish, since I felt like it encapsulated the message conveyed a little better — needless to say, I picked the version of the translation best suiting the scene.

After a year of secret liaison, when the long-awaited sexual encounter between Anna and Vronsky finally happens, we are struck by its dramatic charge:

That which for Vronsky had been almost a whole year the one absorbing desire of his life, replacing all his old desires; that which for Anna had been an impossible, terrible, and even for that reason more entrancing dream of bliss, that desire had been fulfilled. He stood before her, pale, his lower jaw quivering, and besought her to be calm, not knowing how or why.

“Anna! Anna!” he said with a choking voice, “Anna, for pity’s sake! . . .”

But the louder he spoke, the lower she dropped her once proud and gay, now shame-stricken head, and she bowed down and sank from the sofa where she was sitting, down on the floor, at his feet; she would have fallen on the carpet if he had not held her.

“My God! Forgive me!” she said, sobbing, pressing his hands to her bosom.

She felt so sinful, so guilty, that nothing was left her but to humiliate herself and beg forgiveness.

Shame prevents Anna from enjoying the moment she so deeply longed for. The guilt she feels, triggered by an internal accusation, poisons an intimacy that could have offered deep connection and pleasure.

And as now there was no one in her life but him, to him she addressed her prayer for forgiveness. Looking at him, she had a physical sense of her humiliation, and she could say nothing more.

Held captive by shame, Anna feels exposed before her lover. Humiliation is activated by the vain demand of “I must be...” and the now-visible “I am not...” The person before her has seen the “I am not”—the unwanted, denied image long hidden within.

Humiliation in childhood creates existential stress that becomes a form of social control and a source of power, as it suppresses the child’s spontaneous, vibrant impulses, which the sexual E3 has lost. By repressing the strength of their real emotions, sexual E3s cut themselves off from the vital energy needed to pursue their desires. That lost vitality is sought externally, and as a result, they come to manipulate others through the mask of compliance, like a child who learns to seduce by smiling sweetly at their parents to get what they want, to be protected.

Anna’s self-accusation presses on her, and the guilt compels her to beg forgiveness for what she perceives to be a humiliating act. Before her internal judge, she deserves harsh punishment and desperately needs Vronsky’s forgiveness. Yet this plea for forgiveness appears less as a genuine admission of guilt and more as a desperate attempt to restore her “good” image in the eyes of her lover. By playing the victim, she controls Vronsky’s behavior.

He felt what a murderer must feel, when he sees the body he has robbed of life. That body, robbed by him of life, was their love, the first stage of their love. There was something awful and revolting in the memory of what had been bought at this fearful price of shame. Shame at their spiritual nakedness crushed her and infected him. But in spite of all the murderer’s horror before the body of his victim, he must hack it to pieces, hide the body, must use what he has gained by his murder.

And with fury, as it were with passion, the murderer falls on the body, and drags it and hacks at it; so he covered her face and shoulders with kisses. She held his hand, and did not stir.

"Yes, these kisses—that is what has been bought by this shame. Yes, and one hand, which will always be mine—the hand of my accomplice." She lifted up that hand and kissed it. He sank on his knees and tried to see her face; but she hid it, and said nothing. At last, as though making an effort over herself, she got up and pushed him away. Her face was still as beautiful, but it was only the more pitiful for that.

"All is over," she said; "I have nothing but you. Remember that."

"I can never forget what is my whole life. For one instant of this happiness . . ."

"Happiness!" she said with horror and loathing and her horror unconsciously infected him. "For pity's sake, not a word, not a word more." She rose quickly and moved away from him. "Not a word more," she repeated, and with a look of chill despair, incomprehensible to him, she parted from him. She felt that at that moment she could not put into words the sense of shame, of rapture, and of horror at this stepping into a new life, and she did not want to speak of it, to vulgarize this feeling by inappropriate words.

(2/XI)

We would expect joy and happiness after such a longed-for romantic encounter, but instead Anna appears as a shattered woman, as if she had just received devastating news.

We can see her intrapsychic conflict: she hasn't granted herself permission to seek erotic pleasure; her vanity won't let her surrender, and now, having done so, she feels she's failed. She has betrayed her self-image as an impeccable woman because she has, quite literally, stripped herself bare. Perfect women, according to the dictates of a patriarchal society, don't sin.

With her surrender, the mask that she presented to her beloved also falls. By having shown him her most intimate desires (her *moral nakedness*), she now seems to depend on Vronsky's forgiveness for this "sin" (which involves harsh self-judgment), and gradually begins to resent him. A deep-seated belief is triggered: that now that he has seen her *ugly* side, he can no longer love her. She says goodbye with a "look of chill despair"—the shame she feels provokes an unconscious rejection of him. Or perhaps she projects the blame onto him, for having led her to such degrading behavior.

Her vanity prevents her from expressing her own confusion, fear, and shame, and Anna once again reaffirms her inner prohibition against living in joy. A common trait among sexual E3s is the denial of unwanted emotions, especially anger, envy, sadness, disagreement, and, most of all, shame. This denial stems from the neurotic belief that feeling threatens the desired union. One must therefore fake it, become a charming, self-assured version of oneself.

But later too, and the next day and the third day, she still found no words in which she could express the complexity of her feelings; indeed, she could not even find thoughts in which she could clearly think out all that was in her soul.

Sexual E3s don't know themselves. They live in a dimmed state, disconnected to the utmost from their souls. They truly believe in the cheerful, pleasing, beautiful masks they have created to face the world. So focused on being liked, they lose touch with their deeper emotions and the vast inner world of lived experience. You could say that someone this detached from their own soul is like a "corpse," or a robot that plasticizes life to produce a sterile image.

It's striking how Anna deals with her inner turmoil. She cannot share it with her partner; from her limited awareness, she can't find words, afraid of saying something wrong. This is what the sexual E3 does: they allow themselves to show only what is "correct" and hide what isn't. As if an emotion or feeling could be right or wrong.

Anna cannot speak of her experience because doing so would mean revealing her inner self. Her idealized self-image stops her, acting as an internal censor who controls her through shame and

judgment. She is unable to speak about herself, and as her tragic path unfolds, this will become even harder. Her vanity forbids her from removing the mask of being charming and beautiful and becoming a real woman, with fears, conflicts, frustrations, anger... What she's truly avoiding is intimate connection with her beloved, and a wall begins to rise between them.

Tolstoy makes it clear: the sexual E3 goes all in on the romantic partner. They overload the relationship with fantasies, as though it were the only way to recover a lost existential connection. The romantic illusion, built on idealizing both themselves and the other person, requires denying any signals that might threaten that perception. In their neurotic quest for romantic love, this personality type excludes their children, family, friends... This cruel abandonment of those to whom they once swore so much love inevitably leads to abandoning themselves, and to profound pain in the soul. Anna becomes pregnant by Vronsky, and when she tells him, he asks her to leave her husband. But she's afraid of losing the child from her marriage.

Vronsky had several times already, though not so resolutely as now, tried to bring her to consider their position, and every time he had been confronted by the same superficiality and triviality with which she met his appeal now.

It was as though there were something in this which she could not or would not face, as though directly she began to speak of this, she, the real Anna, retreated somehow into herself, and another strange and unaccountable woman came out, whom he did not love, and whom he feared, and who was in opposition to him.

This is a recurring theme in the book: Anna is darkened by some inner force. She appears split, and her superficial approach to handling conflicts reveals deep self-denial and the deception behind her display of empathy and love.

In whatever position she might be placed, she could not lose her son. Her husband might put her to shame and turn her out, Vronsky might grow cold to her and go on living his own life apart (she thought of him again with bitterness and reproach); she could not leave her son. She had an aim in life. And she must act; act to secure this relation to her son, so that he might not be taken from her. [...]

She was weeping that her dream of her position being made clear and definite had been annihilated forever. She knew beforehand that everything would go on in the old way, and far worse, indeed, than in the old way. She felt that the position in the world that she enjoyed, and that had seemed to her of so little consequence in the morning, that this position was precious to her; that she would not have the strength to exchange it for the shameful position of a woman who has abandoned husband and child to join her lover; that however much she might struggle, she could not be stronger than herself.

This is the first time that Anna becomes aware of the consequences of her forbidden relationship with Vronsky, which now threatens her high social standing. There is a moment of contact with reality: "She would never know freedom in love, but would remain forever a guilty wife, with the menace of detection hanging over her at every instant; deceiving her husband for the sake of a shameful connection with a man living apart and away from her, whose life she could never share."

This line is significant. "She would never know freedom in love" means she does not give herself permission to fully live. It expresses her inability to surrender to her own life.

She still hasn't told Vronsky that her husband knows about the affair. She begins to imagine his rejection, which only deepens her distrust and anxiety. Behind her suffering over not being "free to love," we can see her neurotic desire to maintain social security and the fear of losing her good image.

She finally shows Vronsky the letter in which her husband threatens to take away her son. Once again, she hands over the responsibility for her decisions to her lover:

But this interview was still of the utmost gravity for her. She hoped that this interview would transform her position, and save her.

If on hearing this news he were to say to her resolutely, passionately, without an instant's wavering: "Throw up everything and come with me!" she would give up her son and go away with him.

But this news had not produced what she had expected in him; he simply seemed as though he were resenting some affront.

Anna is looking out for signs on Vronsky's face, and all she can see are affirmations of her own belief that she cannot be desired. This is the root shame shared by all sexual E3s: the mad idea that they carry something so ugly inside that it must be locked away at the bottom of the soul—so as not to risk yet another rejection that might force them to let go of the fantasy that someone will one day love them the way they long for. In Anna's eyes, it's already a foregone conclusion that Vronsky does not love her as she'd like him to, because her interpretation of his reaction is based on such a distorted self-perception.

The sexual E3 has developed so many outward-facing antennas to read every signal from their partner, to control, to respond to imagined demands, but sadly, so few turned inward.

In the next scene, Anna once again hides her shameful truth and begins to insist on her mask of self-assurance, pretending everything is under control, even as she feels the opposite inside:

"But, for God's sake, which is better?—leave your child, or keep up this degrading position?"

"To whom is it degrading?"

"To all, and most of all to you."

"You say degrading . . . don't say that. Those words have no meaning for me," she said in a shaking voice. She did not want him now to say what was untrue. She had nothing left her but his love, and she wanted to love him. "Don't you understand that from the day I loved you everything has changed for me? For me there is one thing, and one thing only—your love. If that's mine, I feel so exalted, so strong, that nothing can be humiliating to me. I am proud of my position, because . . . proud of being . . . proud . . ."

She could not say what she was proud of. Tears of shame and despair choked her utterance. She stood still and sobbed.

This is how this personality type works: they deny their inner experience, performing outwardly in order to hide from their “cruel and ugly” truth. They simply state the opposite of what’s felt, just to avoid seeming “insignificant,” all while their longing for passionate love promises them some kind of blissful elevation.

Anna is paralyzed in a loveless, frustrating marriage and waits for Vronsky to free her. Sexual Threes often wait for the partner to make decisions for them, and look to others (therapists, psychics, friends...) to fix their lives. They don’t look for answers within themselves, because they lack a stable internal compass.

Not feeling sufficiently desired by Vronsky, Anna decides not to leave her husband, thus unconsciously deepening her resentment towards her lover, even though she has already become dependent on his love and approval. She lives in a romantic fantasy, and her refusal to see Vronsky as an ordinary man is another facet of the madness of the sexual E3:

She laid her two hands on his shoulders, and looked a long while at him with a profound, passionate, and at the same time searching look. She was studying Vronsky's face, looking for any changes that might have occurred during the time they had been apart. For, in all her encounters with Vronsky, she confused her imaginary impression of him (incomparably superior, too good to be true) with the real impression.

Tolstoy captures in just a few words how Anna deludes herself by projecting her self-image of superiority: she paints her partner as the ideal man, placing him on a pedestal where he too is no longer allowed to be human. The vain person cannot open their compassionate eyes to the reality of others and empathize, because they cannot truly see themselves. No matter how much they long to love, they cannot. It's the tragedy of Narcissus, in love with his own reflection in the water. That's all he sees, and not knowing himself, he remains paralyzed and dies from the sheer disconnection from his own soul, from a lack of nourishment. From an inability to truly love.

Since for Anna Vronsky represents everything she longs for and idealizes, everything that fills the void and conceals her inner lack, she begins to feel jealousy and a destructive passion that will ultimately push him away:

These fits of jealousy, which of late had been more and more frequent with her, horrified him, and however much he tried to disguise the fact, made him feel cold to her; although he knew the cause of her jealousy was her love for him. [...]

Now he felt that the best happiness was already left behind. She was utterly unlike what she had been when he first saw her. Both morally and physically she had changed for the worse. She had broadened out all over, and in her face at the time when she was speaking of the actress there was an evil expression of hatred that distorted it. He looked at her as a man looks at a faded flower he has gathered, with difficulty recognizing in it the beauty for which he picked and ruined it.

She is slowly beginning to succumb to her obsession: "See? I have driven away the fiend. (The fiend was the name they had given her jealousy)." It's in this same encounter that, for the first time, her longing for death becomes visible, seen as the only way out of a situation that overwhelms her with frustration and rage:

"It won't come as we suppose. I didn't mean to say this to you, but you've made me. Soon, soon, all will be over; and we shall all, all be at peace, and suffer no more."

"I don't understand," he said, understanding her.

"You asked when? Soon. And I shan't live through it. Don't interrupt me!" and she made haste to speak. "I know it; I know for certain. I shall die; and I'm very glad I shall die, and set us both free."

Anna has a dream in which an old woman tells her she will die in childbirth. This doesn't seem like a prophetic dream, but rather a projection of her shadow, now running wild. Confronted with a build-up of unbearable, uncontrollable emotions and the repression of Eros, her psyche signals that death will be the only escape. Emotional instability, the gap between her inner and outer experiences, and her inability to express herself bring on a kind of depression that leads to dependence on drugs and barbiturates. This is common in extreme cases of sexual E3s, who, unable to access the aggressive energy repressed within, lack the strength to break free from the stagnation and fight for life.

The more she accumulates jealousy, anger, and suspicion, the more her desperation to feel loved and her effort to make it happen grow, especially as her trust in Vronsky and in his devotion fades.

Anna eventually gives birth to a baby girl, nearly dying in the postpartum period. Her husband forgives her when he sees her so open and affectionate, thinking she is close to death:

He still went on struggling with his emotion, and only now and then glanced at her. And each time he glanced at her, he saw her eyes gazing at him with such passionate and triumphant tenderness as he had never seen in them.

"Wait a minute, you don't know... stay a little, stay!..." She stopped, as though collecting her ideas. "Yes," she began; "yes, yes, yes. This is what I wanted to say. Don't be surprised at me. I'm still the same... But there is another woman in me, I'm afraid of her: she loved that man, and I tried to hate you, and could not forget about her that used to be. I'm not that woman. Now I'm my real self, all myself. I'm dying now, I know I shall die. [...] Only one thing I want: forgive me, forgive me quite. I'm terrible... [...] No, you can't forgive me! I know, it can't be forgiven! No, no, go away, you're too good!"

(4/XVII)

She feels divided, the “two women” living inside her reflecting her unresolved inner struggle. The woman who has loved Vronsky, who wants to live and feel, is putting her at risk, because the inhibited wife, the one who does not allow herself to desire and who lives according to society’s rules by denying herself, is the “good” woman. The one who condemns the erotic desires of the other, the one who begs for forgiveness and projects virtue onto the husband.

After recovering, she turns this same affection for her husband, and the idealization that he is too good for her, into hatred and a desire for death:

"I have heard it said that women love men even for their vices," Anna began suddenly, "but I hate him for his virtues. I can't live with him. Do you understand? The sight of him has a physical effect on me, it makes me beside myself. I can't, I can't live with him. What am I to do? I have been unhappy, and used to think one couldn't be more unhappy, but the awful state of things I am going through now, I could never have conceived. Would you believe it, that knowing he's a good man, a splendid man, that I don't even deserve to kiss the ground he walks on, still I hate him. I hate him for his generosity. And there's nothing left for me but..." She would have said death, but her brother would not let her finish.

(4/XXI)

The idealization of her husband increases her inner pressure, feeding her guilt, which grows into self-loathing and hatred projected onto him. She channels all of it into surrendering to death, which now appears as a form of liberation.

Vronsky, for his part, attempts suicide when he believes he has lost her. Anna eventually recovers, and her husband offers her a divorce and gives up custody of their son. When she reunites with Vronsky, they decide to travel together to Italy, and Anna does something she never imagined she could: she leaves her son with his father.

Although her husband has forgiven her and offers her a divorce that would free her from social pressure, she does not accept it because deep down, she believes she deserves punishment, not forgiveness. She cannot so easily let go of her self-image as a proper woman, and can only step into her new life at the cost of not fully enjoying it:

There was one consolation which somewhat appeased her conscience whenever she thought of the past. She expressed it to herself at the very first moment of her departure: "I have done my husband an irrevocable injury, but at least I get no advantage from his misfortune. I also

suffer and shall suffer. I give up all that was dearest to me; I give up my good name and my son. I have sinned, and therefore I do not desire happiness or a divorce, and I accept my shame and the separation from my son."

But however sincere Anna was when she reasoned thus, she had not suffered. She had felt no shame. [...]

The joy of living caused by her convalescence was so keen, the conditions of her existence were so new and delightful, that Anna felt extraordinarily happy.

It still seems as though the love Anna is experiencing is filling her with life. For a time, it connects her with the joy of living fully, with the happiness of surrendering to her desires. At moments, Anna is becoming more human.

Her adoration of her beloved alarmed her indeed; she sought and could not find in him anything not fine. She dared not show him her sense of her own insignificance beside him. It seemed to her that, knowing this, he might sooner cease to love her; and she dreaded nothing now so much as losing his love, though she had no grounds for fearing it.

Tolstoy reminds us that Anna's fears are nothing more than figments of her imagination and her self-imposed prohibition against loving fully. These false beliefs operate inside her like a slow-acting poison, carving out her fate drop by drop.

She feels happy, but her mask of the virtuous woman prevents her from accepting the role of "the bad one" and taking responsibility for the decision to leave a husband and a child. This is a mentality typical of the sexual E3, as another woman bears witness:

If I enjoy the "sin," the world will realize that I really am a bad person, and will reject me and despise me for being immoral. But if I suffer for my decisions and renounce happiness, the world will recognize that I'm paying for it with pain, and that way, it won't judge me as harshly. They'll see me as a victim and might feel compassion for me, might even love me.

What we see is an unconscious attempt to manipulate others' opinion of her. And that's what Anna does, falling ever deeper into victimhood. Deep down, she doesn't believe she deserves happiness, and in rejecting her husband's forgiveness and the divorce, she confirms this belief.

After their honeymoon period in Europe, Anna returns with Vronsky to St. Petersburg, where she begins to feel the absence of her son. While away from home, she sometimes didn't even think of him.

The sexual E3 generally feels a strong affection for their children, who, as Tolstoy notes, give meaning to their life as a secure form of love. But when their existence jeopardizes the emotional bond with their partner, they may physically or emotionally abandon them by withdrawing their presence. This is the case with Anna and her trip to Italy:

"Seryozha?" she thought. "I thought, too, that I loved him, and used to be touched by my own tenderness. But I have lived without him, I gave him up for another love, and did not regret the exchange till that love was satisfied."

(7/XXX)

Since hers was an arranged marriage (by her aunt), Anna never loved her husband and projected "all the love that had never found satisfaction" onto the son she had with him. In contrast, she doesn't love for the daughter born from her relationship with her lover, as the child, we can imagine, threatens her wish to be the "only one" for him.

But at the sight of this child it was plainer than ever to her that the feeling she had for her could not be called love in comparison with what she felt for Seryozha.

Everything in this baby was charming, but for some reason all this did not go deep to her heart. On her first child, though the child of an unloved father, had been concentrated all the love that had never found satisfaction. Her baby girl had been born in the most painful circumstances and had not had a hundredth part of the care and thought which had been concentrated on her first child.

Besides, in the little girl everything was still in the future, while Seryozha was by now almost a personality; and a personality dearly loved. In him there was a conflict of thought and feeling; he understood her, he loved her, he judged her, she thought, recalling his words and his eyes.

(5/XXXI)

Her son is now a man who can love her and receive her love. Is the masculine idealized, loved because it promises affection and protection? While the feminine—the *inner girl* represented by the daughter—cannot be loved, perhaps because she is vulnerable? Or perhaps because she's the fruit of a sin? Be that as it may, there is no room for children in the relationship with her lover:

"Think, I have a choice between two alternatives: either to be with child, that is a useless, sick woman, or to be the friend and companion of my husband—practically my husband," Anna said in a tone intentionally superficial and frivolous. "I am not his wife; he loves me as long as he loves me. And how am I to keep his love? Not like this!" She moved her white arms in a curve before her waist.

(6/XXIII)

Her only desire, her sole purpose in life, is the obsession with keeping her lover's love through her beauty and usefulness. A new pregnancy, another child, is a threat to her goal, a mere hindrance. And Vronsky's desire to have more children with her, she interprets, through her vanity, as... proof of his lack of love.

The question of the possibility of having children had long been a subject of dispute and irritation to her. His desire to have children she interpreted as a proof he did not prize her beauty, which would naturally disappear or lessen with a new pregnancy and childbirth.

(7/XXV)

Due to her conviction that she is loved for her beauty, she cannot accept any other kind of love and can't imagine herself as someone who has more to offer than a beautiful image. She is beauty. She exists through her perfect appearance. Not valuing her for her looks is tantamount to denying her very existence. It's a deep wound that Vronsky's inflicting on her!

In her pain and despair, Anna cannot open up, and by hiding her true feelings and thoughts, she builds an impenetrable wall of silence and separation between two vain people who, at their core, never truly knew each other:

Her suffering was the more poignant that she had to bear it alone. She could not and would not share it with Vronsky. She knew that to him, although he was the primary cause of her distress, the question of her seeing her son would seem a matter of very little importance. She knew that he would never be capable of understanding all the depth of her suffering, that for

his cool tone at any allusion to it she would begin to hate him. And she dreaded that more than anything in the world, and so she hid from him everything that related to her son.

That same concealment, that denial of her inner experience, amplifies not only her hostility toward herself but also toward him. Every unpleasant feeling left unspoken adds to the buildup of resentment in the shadows, and the idea of revenge starts taking up more and more space in her mind.

"But where is he? How is it that he leaves me alone in my misery?" she thought all at once with a feeling of reproach, forgetting she had herself kept from him everything concerning her son. She sent to ask him to come to her immediately; with a throbbing heart she awaited him, rehearsing to herself the words in which she would tell him all, and the expressions of love with which he would console her. The messenger returned with the answer that he had a visitor with him, but that he would come immediately, and that he asked whether she would let him bring with him Prince Yashvin, who had just arrived in Petersburg. "He's not coming alone, and since dinner yesterday he has not seen me," she thought; "he's not coming so that I could tell him everything, but coming with Yashvin." And all at once a strange idea came to her: what if he had ceased to love her?

And going over the events of the last few days, it seemed to her that she saw in everything a confirmation of this terrible idea. The fact that he had not dined at home yesterday, and the fact that he had insisted on their taking separate sets of rooms in Petersburg, and that even now he was not coming to her alone, as though he were trying to avoid meeting her face to face.

"But he ought to tell me so. I must know that it is so. If I knew it, then I know what I should do," she said to herself, utterly unable to picture to herself the position she would be in if she were convinced of Vronsky's indifference for her.

Terrified of rejection, she looks for proof to confirm what she fears most: that he has stopped loving her. This fixation is virtually the same as her annihilation. The sexual E3 becomes dependent on their partner's presence to soothe inner anxiety, and the yearning to be together turns into a form of abuse disguised as a demand for love.

Given her strange behavior, Vronsky tries to talk to her, but Anna's masking—her refusal to let him see inside—renders real connection impossible:

He decided he absolutely must speak openly with her. And he waited for her in her drawing-room. But Anna did not return alone, but brought with her her old unmarried aunt, Princess Oblonskaya. This was the lady who had come in the morning, and with whom Anna had gone out shopping. Anna appeared not to notice Vronsky's worried and inquiring expression, and began a lively account of her morning's shopping. He saw that there was something working within her; in her flashing eyes, when they rested for a moment on him, there was an intense concentration, and in her words and movements there was that nervous rapidity and grace which, during the early period of their intimacy, had seduced him, but which now made him uneasy and filled him with disgust.

Anna is denying her internal experience: a growing restlessness, insecurity, and aggression. She hides it behind a cheerful façade and remains oblivious to the signals her partner is sending her; a common pattern in sexual E3s.

He looked at her with serious eyes, but she responded with that defiant, half-mirthful, half-desperate look, the meaning of which he could not comprehend.

At dinner Anna was in aggressively high spirits and even seemed to flirt with Tuschkevich and Jachvin.

Flirting serves here as narcissistic nourishment for Anna. The act of seduction energizes her and provides validation through the game of attraction, which also functions as a provocation to her partner, a means of revenge that gives her a sense of power and the illusion of control over the situation. Her unacknowledged aggression leads her to a provocative move: she goes to the opera without Vronsky, wearing a flashy dress, where she is openly humiliated by Russian society. People don't want her around, as if she carried a contagious disease. Clearly, they are punishing her for disregarding the rules. Upon her return, she bitterly blames Vronsky for her ordeal.

"I begged, I implored you not to go; I knew it would be unpleasant ..."

"Unpleasant!" she cried. "Hideous! As long as I live I shall never forget it. She said it was a disgrace to sit beside me."

"A silly woman's chatter," he said. "But why risk it, why provoke—"

"I hate your calm. You shouldn't have brought me to this. If you had loved me..."

"What's all this talk of love now, Anna?"

"Oh, if you loved me as I love, if you were tortured as I am!" she said, looking at him with an expression of terror.

He was sorry for her, and angry all the same. He assured her of his love because he saw that this was the only means of soothing her and, although he reproached her deep down, he said nothing that could displease her.

Vronsky and Anna are lying to each other; frustration has no place in a vain relationship. She begins to demand love from him outright, accusing him and placing on him the responsibility for her unhappiness, a burden no one could bear. Victimization now becomes part of her revenge: "It is only those two creatures that I love, and one excludes the other. I can't have them together, and that's the only thing I want. And since I can't have that, I don't care about the rest. I don't care about anything, anything."

It's not just that her husband no longer wants to give her the son. It's that the desperately desired love from Vronsky leaves no room for any other love.

Anna approached Dolly, sat down beside her and, looking at her with eyes expressing deep suffering, immense regret for her guilt, took her sister-in-law's hand.

"What are you thinking? What are you thinking about me? Don't despise me. I don't deserve contempt... I am simply unhappy. If there is a wretched being in the world, it is I," she said, and, turning her face away, wept bitterly. [...]

In the meantime, Anna went back to her boudoir, took a wine-glass and poured into it a few drops of a medicine, the chief ingredient of which was morphine. Having drunk it, she sat down and remained thus motionless for some time, and then went to bed in a soothed and more cheerful frame of mind.

When she entered the bedroom, Vronsky looked at her intently, searching her face for traces of the long conversation he supposed she had had with Dolly. But in her expression of restrained excitement, and of a sort of reserve, he found nothing but her beauty, which, though he was accustomed to it, always bewitched him afresh. Whether it was simply because he was in awe before the beauty of his beloved, or because it awakened in him desires that

absorbed his thoughts, Vronsky asked nothing. He hoped she would tell him something of her own accord. But she only said: "I am so glad you like Dolly. You do, don't you?"

(6/XXIV)

Anna is already turning to morphine to dull her feelings, as a support for her masking. It's better to anesthetize that inner world, so ugly and full of pain, unhappiness, shame, and hatred.

But her chief thought was still of herself—how far she was dear to Vronsky, how far she could make up to him for all he had given up. Vronsky appreciated this desire not only to please, but to serve him, which had become the sole aim of her existence, but at the same time he wearied of the amorous snares in which she tried to hold him fast. As time went on, and he saw himself more and more often held fast in these snares, he had an ever-growing desire, not so much to escape from them, as to try whether they hindered his freedom.

(6/XXV)

Anna's efforts to tie him down so that she can have him at her disposal whenever she wants, along with her manipulations, accusations, and jealousy, only push her lover further away and deepen her despair. She continues to project her insecurities onto him until she causes the very outcome she fears the most:

"That glance shows the beginning of indifference." And though she felt sure that Vronsky's coldness was beginning, there was nothing she could do, she could not in any way alter her relations to him. Just as before, only by love and by charm could she keep him. And so, just as before, only by occupation in the day, by morphine at night, could she stifle the fearful thought of what would be if he ceased to love her. It is true there was still one means; not to keep him—for that she wanted nothing more than his love—but to be nearer to him, to be in such a position that he would not leave her. That means was divorce and marriage. And she began to long for that, and made up her mind to agree to it the first time he or her brother approached her on the subject.

Absorbed in such thoughts, she passed five days without him, the five days that she was to be parted from him. [...]

"Never mind," she thought, "only let him be here, and so long as he's here he cannot, he dare not, cease to love me."

(6/XXXII)

Apparently her beautiful face and special love aren't enough to hold him down, and her frustration drives her to make even greater efforts to control him, restricting his freedom. In her urge to manipulate him, she moves with him to Moscow, convinced that in her presence he won't be able to leave. As a last resort to ensure he stays, she decides to marry him and finally asks her husband for a divorce. But the more she tries to control her lover, the more he starts fighting for his right to his personal space.

One thought, and one only, pursued her in different forms, and refused to be shaken off. "If I have so much effect on others, on this man, who loves his home and his wife, why is it that Vronsky is so cold to me?... Not cold exactly, he loves me, I know that! But something new is drawing us apart now. Why wasn't he here all evening? [...] He is glad of an opportunity of showing me that he has other duties; I know that, I submit to that. But why prove that to me?

He wants to show me that his love for me is not to interfere with his freedom. But I need no proofs, I need love."

Anna craves her partner's affection. Her thoughts, her emotions... everything is consumed by an obsession that, by its nature, can never be satisfied. The sexual E3 tends to rationalize the feeling of love, turning it into a strategic program of effective actions aimed at keeping the other person bound to them. Here we can see her oral character: at heart, she's not an adult woman who embraces her feminine strength, but more like a baby who can't soothe herself because there is no safe and stable bond with the mother. This personality abuses their partner, using their presence to calm their own anxiety.

"I can do nothing, can begin nothing, can alter nothing; I hold myself in, I wait, inventing amusements for myself—the English family, writing, reading—but it's all nothing but a sham, it's all the same as morphine. He ought to feel for me," she said, *feeling tears of self-pity coming into her eyes.*

She heard Vronsky's abrupt ring and hurriedly dried her tears—not only dried her tears, but sat down by a lamp and opened a book, affecting composure. She wanted to show him that she was displeased that he had not come home as he had promised—displeased only, and not on any account to let him see her distress, and least of all, her self-pity. She might pity herself, but he must not pity her. She did not want strife, she blamed him for wanting to quarrel, but unconsciously put herself into an attitude of antagonism.

The constant frustration, both from her attempts at fusion with her lover and from trying to manipulate him into staying, builds up into aggression she can no longer manage. Rage and the demanding need for a kind of love that proves she is lovable surge up unconsciously during their encounters, and begin to morph into hatred and a desire for revenge, increasing the distance and resentment between them. Her shadow is already taking over, and her mask of victimhood has set in place. The more intensely she feels the emptiness in her life, the more desperate her demand for attention becomes. And the less she receives, the more anesthesia she needs to cope with the growing anxiety.

Vronsky's attempts to reclaim his personal space threaten her success in getting what she wants from him. And it's all or nothing. Black or white. There's no middle ground, no other options. Her infantile consciousness leaves no room for alternatives.

And her words, her intonation, her gestures, everything about her reflected a desire to argue, to fight... [...]

She was glad of this appeal for tenderness. But some strange force of evil would not let her give herself up to her feelings, as though the rules of warfare would not permit her to surrender.

Even when a gesture of tenderness feels good, her pride keeps her from surrendering and taking in that love. Her mind now seeks only revenge for the frustration of not achieving romantic union.

"For you it's a matter of obstinacy," she said, watching him intently and suddenly finding the right word for that expression of his that irritated her so much, "simply obstinacy. For you it's a question of whether you keep the upper hand of me, while for me..."

Again she felt sorry for herself, and she almost burst into tears. "If you knew what it is for me! When I feel as I do now that you are hostile, yes, hostile to me, if you knew what this

means for me! If you knew how I feel on the brink of calamity at this instant, how afraid I am of myself!"

In her desperation, she begins to use the emotional threat of suicide to regain control over him. And for a moment, it works:

Anna turned away, hiding her sobs.

"But what are you talking about?" he said, horrified at her expression of despair; and again bending over her, he took her hand and kissed it. "What is it for? Do I seek amusements outside our home? Don't I avoid the society of women?"

"Well, yes! If that were all!" she said.

"Come, tell me what I ought to do to give you peace of mind. I am ready to do anything to make you happy," he said, touched by her expression of despair; "what wouldn't I do to save you from distress of any sort, as now, Anna!" he said.

"It's nothing, nothing!" she said. "I don't know myself whether it's the loneliness, my nerves...Come, don't let us talk of it. What about the race? You haven't told me!" she inquired, trying to conceal her triumph at the victory, which had anyway been on her side.

He asked for supper, and began telling her about the races; but in his tone, in his eyes, which became more and more cold, she saw that he did not forgive her for her victory, that the feeling of obstinacy with which she had been struggling had asserted itself again in him. He was colder to her than before, as though he were regretting his surrender.

And she, remembering the words that had given her the victory, "how I feel on the brink of calamity, how afraid I am of myself," saw that this weapon was a dangerous one, and that it could not be used a second time. And she felt that beside the love that bound them together there had grown up between them some evil spirit of strife, which she could not exorcise from his, and still less from her own heart.

(7/XII)

Her struggle is that of a codependent woman. What she's really looking for is symbiosis with her partner, where "I" and "you" dissolve into a unity without limits or differences, without individuality, and without personal freedom, as all of these pose a threat to the union she longs for. The other's will is pure poison. The partner becomes an extension of the self, a vital source of survival. She can't see him, therefore, with his own limitations and treasures—she cannot love him. Love respects difference and sees the other as they are, without the lens of oral fantasies still searching for mommy's breast.

Anna doesn't want a partner who is her equal; she needs to lift him up or bring him down in order to fulfill her projections, either idealizing or demonizing him. But whenever she succeeds in soothing her anxiety with his affection, she feels blissful. It's the contentment of a child finally receiving her parents' comforting love.

In her book *Neurosis and Human Growth*,¹¹ Karen Horney describes this personality as *dependent*, taking love to be the key to paradise, the place where all suffering ceases.

In Anna's eyes the whole of Vronsky, with all his habits, ideas, desires, with all his spiritual and physical temperament, was one thing—love for women, and that love, she felt, ought to be entirely concentrated on her alone. That love was less; consequently, as she reasoned, he must have transferred part of his love to other women or to another woman—and she was jealous. She was jealous not of any particular woman but of the decrease of his love. Not

¹¹ K. Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization*, Norton & Company, 1950

having got an object for her jealousy, she invented it. At the slightest hint she transferred her jealousy from one object to another. At one time she was jealous of those low women with whom he might so easily renew his old bachelor ties; then she was jealous of the society women he might meet; then she was jealous of the imaginary girl whom he might want to marry, for whose sake he would break up with her. And this last form of jealousy tortured her most of all, especially as he had unwarily told her, in a moment of frankness, that his mother knew him so little that she had had the audacity to try and persuade him to marry the young Princess Sorokina.

And being jealous of him, Anna was indignant against him and found grounds for indignation in everything. For everything that was difficult in her position she blamed him. The agonizing condition of suspense she had passed in Moscow, the tardiness and indecision of Alexey Alexandrovitch, her loneliness—she put it all down to him. Everything, absolutely everything, was his fault. If he had loved her he would have seen all the bitterness of her position, and would have rescued her from it. For her being in Moscow and not in the country, he was to blame too. He could not live buried in the country as she would have liked to do. He must have society, and he had put her in this awful position, the bitterness of which he would not see. And again, it was his fault that she was forever separated from her son.

(7/XXIII)

By this point, everything revolves around the obsessive madness of securing a love that doesn't truly exist. Two human beings cannot live in symbiosis. In the kind of symbiosis we crave from madness, love dies and an emotionally violent dynamic is born, oscillating between love and hate, between attraction and repulsion.

As the impossible cannot be achieved, the relationship becomes a breeding ground for frustration, leading to escalating levels of violence and desire for revenge:

"He hates me, that's clear," she thought, and in silence, without looking round, she walked with faltering steps out of the room. "He loves another woman, that's even clearer," she said to herself as she went into her own room. "I want love, and there is none. So, then, all is over." She repeated the words she had said, "and it must be ended."

*"But how?" she asked herself, and she sat down in a low chair before the looking-glass.
[...]*

And all at once she knew what was in her soul. Yes, it was that idea which alone solved all. "Yes, to die!... And the shame and disgrace of Alexey Alexandrovitch and of Seryozha, and my awful shame, it will all be saved by my death. To die! and he will feel remorse and repent; will be sorry; will love me; he will despair and suffer on my account." With the trace of a smile of commiseration for herself she sat down in the armchair, taking off and putting on the rings on her left hand, vividly picturing from different sides Vronsky's sufferings after her death. [...]

"Anna, why distress yourself and me so?" he said to her, kissing her hands. There was tenderness now in his face, and she fancied she caught the sound of tears in his voice, and she felt them wet on her hand. And instantly Anna's despairing jealousy changed to an exalted passion of tenderness. She put her arms round him, and covered with kisses the head, the neck, and the hands of her beloved."

(7/XXIV)

When she sees him unarmed, vulnerable, and suffering, she suddenly swings from hatred to desperate affection and a fleeting reconciliation. Anna doesn't just want to be loved. She wants her

love to be received. Affection and excitement make her feel alive, give meaning to her life... Yet, the moment of harmony is short-lived, and soon they quarrel again, this time over a visit he wants to make to his mother, whom Anna despises for advising him to marry another woman. That advice makes her mother-in-law despicable, an enemy, a threat to Anna's longing to merge completely with Vronsky. She is projecting her own guilt and self-hatred onto him, and her desire for revenge has already won.

It had never happened before that Anna and Vronsky had spent a whole day at enmity, and that it had happened now was for Anna clear indication that Vronsky's love for her had disappeared, or had at least grown lukewarm. How else could it have been possible for him to look at her in that cold way he had addressed her when he entered the room to collect the guarantee; how could he have seen that her heart was breaking to pieces and gone out without a word with that face of callous composure? He was not merely cold to her; he hated her because he loved another woman—that was clear.

And remembering all the cruel words he had said, Anna supplied, too, the words that he had unmistakably wished to say and could have said to her; and she grew more and more exasperated.

"I won't prevent you," he might say. "You can go where you like. You were unwilling to be divorced from your husband, no doubt so that you might go back to him. Go back to him. If you want money, I'll give it to you. How many roubles do you want?"

All the most cruel words that a brutal man could say, he said to her in her imagination, and she could not forgive him for them, as though he had actually said them.

Her mind starts hallucinating, spinning faster in a storm of emotion. She's lost contact with reality, and the anger from an imaginary wound, rejection and humiliation that only exist in her fantasy, is stoking her thirst for revenge. Her destructive thoughts have become addictive, and her mind fixates on conjuring the most agonizing scenario possible. She wants to destroy, to leave nothing but desolation in her wake. Revenge seems like the only trump card in her struggle for Vronsky's love: through suicide, she will force him to acknowledge his one true obligation—to love her. In her vision of revenge, he will suffer forever once she is gone.

And as the sole means of resurrecting the affection for her in his heart, of punishing him and of gaining the victory in that strife which the evil spirit in possession of her heart was waging with him, the idea of death rose clearly and vividly before her mind.

Now it was all the same to her: going or not going to Vozdvizhenskoe, getting or not getting a divorce from her husband—all that did not matter. She wanted only one thing: to punish him. When she poured herself out her usual dose of opium, and thought that she had only to drink off the whole bottle to die, it seemed to her so simple and easy, that she began musing with enjoyment on how he would suffer, and repent and love her memory when it would be too late. [...]

"I'll go to him myself. Before going away forever, I'll tell him everything. Never have I hated anyone as I hate that man!" she thought, as she ran to her room.

(7/XXIX)

She is projecting hatred onto him, but the truth is that she hates herself: "He is everything for me, and I want him more and more to give himself up to me entirely. But instead he wants more and more to get away from me."

The sexual E3 projects desire and devotion onto the partner to compensate for their own inability to surrender, and the inner prohibition against their own desires.

"If I could be anything but a mistress, passionately caring for nothing but his caresses; but I can't and I don't care to be anything else. And by that desire I rouse aversion in him, and he rouses fury in me, and it cannot be different. Don't I know that he wouldn't deceive me, that he won't desert me! I know all that, but it makes it no better for me. If without loving me, from duty he'll be good and kind to me, without what I want, that's a thousand times worse than unkindness! That's—hell! And this is precisely what we have now! He has not loved me for a long time now. And where love ends, hate begins. [...] If something disturbs me, I have the reason to escape from it; that is, I must get rid of it. And why shouldn't I be able to put out the light when there is nothing left to look at, when I feel nothing but disgust for it all? Why are they talking, why are they laughing? It's all lies, deceit, cruelty. Thus I will punish him and escape from everyone and from myself."

(7/XXXI)

In the end, her lower self prevails. The passion for revenge triumphs, and she takes her own life, which seems the ultimate act of punishment and aggression against herself and those around her.

Karen Horney asserts that the dependent personality can only surrender through self-denial. This kind of surrender, achieved through symbiosis, can only be experienced, she writes, in humiliation, mistreatment, and aggression, as these forces break the pride preventing surrender. But this humiliation, in turn, reignites the desire for revenge and self-hatred, frustrating any true surrender in a vicious cycle.

Anna must therefore fantasize humiliation in order to win the battle for Vronsky's love. The longing to surrender, the greatest desire of the sexual E3, may lead her to suicide, because surrender, by definition, cannot be experienced in a codependent relationship. But surrender to death *can* fulfill that deep craving.

Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* begins with an epigraph from the Bible: "Vengeance is mine, and recompense" (Deuteronomy 32:35). Surely, Tolstoy is not referring to a vengeful God, but to the destructive shadow of the protagonist. More broadly, it alludes to the shadow of the sexual E3, whose vengeful strength is, at heart, an expression of self-hatred born from suppressing their Eros, from cutting off their life source, their wellspring of power, feeling, pleasure, and vitality. If this character could grant themselves that permission, if they could give themselves over to their experience as it is, if they could love freely and without guilt, they could simply *be*.

VIII. Love

The sexual E3 is addicted to love and to the idea of being loved, making it their absolute priority; they are more preoccupied with receiving love than truly experiencing it. When they talk about love, they often refer solely to the love of their partner, as if there were no other forms of it. Their fantasy is that if they find that love, they will find complete happiness. It's a superficial love, however, feeding on the intensity of infatuation and the initial stages of a relationship; very short-lived. Deep down, there's an enormous fear of authentic love, the kind that is present in everyday life, where imperfections and flaws of themselves and their partner are visible.

I used to think of myself as the Sleeping Beauty. One day, I would meet a prince who would awaken me with his love, and we would live happily ever after. This already speaks of the deep disconnection and the numbing of the self that I was going to find through a romantic relationship.

Claudio Naranjo proposes a concept of love in three different forms: “erotic love,” which is a child-like love of self; “compassionate love,” reflecting maternal love that is nurturing and giving; and “admiring love” or “appreciative love,” which is a paternal love, in the sense of representing reverence for something greater, like values and the divine. Mental well-being lies in the harmony of these three dimensions, whereas neurosis takes root when one of them is overly emphasized.

On the surface, the sexual E3 gives priority to erotic love but that is only the product they “sell,” which is far from being genuine instinctive pleasure. In fact, of the three forms of love described by Claudio, this is the one the sexual E3 has the least developed. As they have inhibited capacity for erotic expression and spontaneity, it’s difficult for them to connect with desire. Frequently, the sexual E3 neglects their inner wounded child and their need to receive love; they confuse being desired with being loved. Given their significant disconnection from their deepest feelings and desires, along with their tendency to overadapt to preferences and interests that aren’t truly their own (a form of image reversal), they become objects of desire for others without seeking to satisfy their own needs.

To truly love and be loved, the first step for the E3 is to reclaim self-respect. This involves looking inside and confronting their inner emptiness, recognizing the depth of their pains and deficiencies that they’ve learned to disguise since childhood, as well as setting aside the need to *make a good impression*, instead acknowledging their own worthiness and the right to experience pleasure, both in life and in their relationships.

Seduction isn’t necessarily rooted in a deep desire for someone; often, it serves the purpose of masking internal emptiness. For the sexual E3, the gaze and desire of others provide external validation that they are special and valuable. In erotic love, they focus on the mystique of promising pleasure, but what they truly seek isn’t pleasure but admiration:

The love I sell to women is erotic love; that is, I offer pleasure and entertainment beyond the sexual aspect. Once I promise the fun and enjoyment in sex, I try to make myself interesting, showcasing what I do, what I know, what I’ve accomplished, what I’ve learned, what I’ve read... Small hints or glimpses of all the potential I hide.

Ultimately, this staged performance aims to position them in a state of admiration for me: “Look how much he knows,” “Look at his achievements,” “He’s so well-connected,” “I’ll learn so much from him,” “He’s great in bed,” and so on.

For the sexual E3, attracting admiration isn’t a significant challenge. The desire to be admired and loved is human; the problem is that this pursuit further disconnects them from self-love, their self-esteem, genuine needs, and their true selves.

Their quest for love becomes desperate, leading them into relationships with partners they don’t actually want to be with, enduring mistreatment for the fear of losing love and facing loneliness. They might even tolerate abusive situations, which they emotionally detach from to endure, because to separate from the partner would mean confronting the pain of abandonment, their most feared nightmare.

Their most developed form of love is probably maternal, as they tend to take care of those they love. They also frequently seek refuge in family or a partner, both of which enhance their sense of worth. The sexual E3s are very passionate about family, where they don’t grapple with insecurity as

much. They can be good housewives, and the family unit not only gives them the feeling of protection, but also brings meaning to their lives.

The sexual E3 sells compassionate love to attain this same nurturing love and admiration. In their romantic relationships, they pour a great deal of energy into this form of love, often confusing it with eroticism, viewing seduction as the gateway to securing maternal love.

Thus, they sell maternal love on the basis of taking care of the other. They want to be treated as royalty but act as servants. They firmly believe they are deserving of unconditional love, where they are the star. They appear extremely attentive to their partner's needs, providing efficient care, albeit without a deep, authentic loving connection. They struggle, deep down, to offer genuine love, one that is intimately attuned to their own and their partner's emotional needs. It's a monumental effort, which begins with the annulment of their own truth, particularly their need for affection, which is omitted from the equation as they "buy" the admiration of others.

The sexual E3 strives to generate dependency by making themselves indispensable, which gives them a sense of power and shields them from appearing fragile or needy. They present themselves as experts in all matters of nutrition and care, and the phrase "I don't know" doesn't exist in their vocabulary. And if there's something they genuinely don't know, they are quite capable of deceiving themselves and their partner. This behavior is driven by their deep-rooted fear of reliving childhood abandonment and losing the love of others. The dependence is generated by fostering the belief that they're the most wonderful and perfect person on Earth, without whom the other person simply cannot live.

In return, they buy love like the one they sell: someone strong who continually looks after them, admires them, makes them feel special, who showers them with gifts, and consistently tells them how amazing they are. And of course, someone who won't criticize them. Ever. On the contrary, they want someone who discovers in them something fascinating that no one else has ever found and who appreciates it. Who gives a redemptive sort of love that can erase all the pain they've lived through. Their belief is that if they find such love, happiness will follow, and all their pain and frustration will disappear.

However, disappointment sets in when this impossible love never comes. Then they fall into a new self-deception: they give so much but feel they aren't receiving what they deserve in return, although... deep down, they don't even trust that the other person can take care of them. Their demands for how they *should* be cared for become so exacting that their significant other eventually gives up.

The sexual E3 needs to have someone hooked on their offerings every day of the year. They don't realize that, beneath it all, they are using the other person with just as much dependency as they generate in *them*, until one day they end up feeling trapped and, in their craving for freedom, they... blame the other party.

When the relationship eventually ends, they don't allow themselves to mourn, and immediately look for another partner to fill the void. And if they're ever single, they either have a fool in love to whom they're promising the world, or their imagination is already occupied with fantasies of future conquests, no matter if they're realistic or not.

Over the past ten months, I've had three different partners, moving from one to another without much pause. I didn't take the time to be alone, grieve, or let any lessons sink in. I've realized that I've almost compulsively jumped from one relationship to the next, that it has not meant much for me to start again, and that's made me aware of my emotional detachment and coldness and my tendency to fill the glass, the void, the emptiness without allowing myself to truly feel.

At the start of each new relationship, a common pattern emerges. I indulge in the fantasy that this time, with this woman, I'll finally have my ideal love story, complete with a happy family, children playing, and a loving father returning home from work, showering them with hugs and kisses. Automatically, as I weave this perfect narrative, my perfect love story, I start to lose myself, forget about myself, give up my space. I become devoted, loving, caring, and tender, convinced that everything I'm providing is perfect and wonderful. I've already cast myself in the role of perfection, where I expect to be greatly admired and desired. Of course, I forget to feel, and express my own desires, for fear of not being liked, and I stop articulating what I truly want and need.

When a crisis in the relationship leads to a break-up, the sexual E3 can spiral into self-destructive behaviors, turning to drugs and alcohol to numb the pain, and losing all sense of dignity and self-esteem.

It's not so difficult for a sexual E3 to express admiration, but in reality, it's rooted in hidden envy. They idealize someone they perceive as more valuable than themselves, and whom they want to seduce in an attempt to have their own self-worth validated, something they struggle to feel, lacking internal confidence in themselves. Hence, the admiration they are constantly seeking is superficial; it's centered on the image they project. It only reveals their distrust in being seen and respected for who they are. Physical seduction taints admiring love, turning it into a rigid and automatic channel of connecting with their partner, sidetracking any genuine maternal or appreciative love relationship. The blurred boundaries they've encountered with their parents keep them in the dark about the paths that could lead them to getting what they truly want.

If they find it difficult to trust life, and feel the need to micromanage everything, it's *precisely* because of their deep yearning for surrender. When the sexual E3 realizes that they can surrender and give themselves over to God, they connect with their own divinity, and can find a sense of inner peace:

It's difficult to describe what the love of God is like for a sexual E3 in a more general way, because it is inherently a spiritual and highly subjective dimension. Speaking from my own perspective and experiences, I can express the love for God as an encounter with Love itself. A love that translates into adoration and gratitude to the One who guided me on this journey. It's a facet of the soul, and when accessed, it becomes an experience of unity with all things, of loving without exception, bridging the differences that separate us. I can describe the love of God as a deep love for myself. When I recognized the magnificence of my true Self and the divine strength within me, I started holding myself in reverence. This experience was pivotal in establishing a connection with my own intrinsic value and, though apparently vanity is still there, internally it provoked a progressive and liberating transformation of my consciousness.

IX. Historical figure: Marilyn Monroe



Marilyn Monroe at the height of her career

Image

Marilyn serves as a good example of a self-destructive personality. She tragically died at the age of thirty-six, and everything points to the fact that she committed suicide. She was a star who lived off her image, and was celebrated as an icon of feminine beauty and desirability. A broken doll exploited for the benefit of many, she lived in constant fear of losing her sex appeal, driven by public opinion.

Eternally preoccupied with maintaining her physical beauty, she relentlessly pursued a perfect image, because, in dire need of love, she knew no other way to obtain it. In her own words:

My arrival in school, with painted lips and darkened brows, started everybody buzzing. Why I was a siren, I hadn't the faintest idea. I didn't want to be kissed, and I didn't dream of being seduced by a duke or a movie star. The truth was that with all my lipstick and mascara and precocious curves I was as unresponsive as a fossil. But I seemed to affect people quite otherwise.

It's good for my waistline not to eat. There's nothing finer than a washboard belly.

When she had her appendix removed, she famously went into the operating room with a note to the surgeon taped to her waist, asking him to cut as little as possible, so as not to leave a noticeable scar. An integral part of her hairdresser's job was dyeing her pubic hair blonde. She also never took off her bra, as Amy Greene, a model and close friend of Marilyn's, well knew:

Somebody, somewhere, had told her that if she always wore a bra her boobs wouldn't sag, and she insisted on it. She slept with a bra on. She told me she'd finish making love with someone and then, zoom, on with the bra.

Writer Adele Fletcher once waited for Marilyn to join her for lunch: “She arrived at Elsa’s suite three hours late, at precisely the hour when she was supposed to be at the Cecil Beaton studio. I later learned that she had had her hair shampooed and set three times before leaving. She was continually apprehensive that she would not look her best and people would start saying her looks were fading.”

Beauty and youth – that’s what women of this character dread losing the most, in the belief that once that disappears, they’ll lose everything. As if one doesn’t deserve to live when their “physical perfection” diminishes. That’s why they so often undergo cosmetic surgery.

In the summer of 1953, shortly after her twenty-seventh birthday, Marilyn lay down on the sidewalk of Hollywood Boulevard. Beside her was Jane Russell, her co-star in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. They placed their hands in wet cement, did the same with their feet, and then scrawled their names alongside the prints. Jane noticed that Marilyn looked both happy and very frightened at the same time. Earlier that day, her hairdresser had received a long-distance call: “I need your help.” It was Marilyn, who continued in a panic, “Please come, and bring your mom.” It sounded like a real crisis, until Marilyn explained: “I can’t decide which dress to wear.” Travilla, a costume designer for some of her films, recalls:

I think she wanted to love, but could only love herself. She was totally narcissistic. She adored her own face, constantly wanted to make it better and different. She once told me, “I can make my face do anything, same as you can take a white board and build from that and make a painting.” But the only way she was highly sexed [turned on sexually] was the charge she got out of looking in the mirror and seeing the beautiful mouth that she’d painted with about five shades of lipstick, to get the right curves, the right shadows to bring out the lips, because her lips were really very flat.

If ever there was a prick-teaser, it was Marilyn, when she wanted to be. She did it for real and for show.

Norma Jeane’s childhood

Her family was almost non-existent. She never knew who her father was. So she created an imaginary one. Because of a picture her mother showed her of a man who claimed to be her father and who looked like Clark Gable, she created the fantasy that her father was really him and kept telling all her friends.

To cope with the pain of not having a real family, it’s typical for sexual E3s to create a perfect one in their fantasies. Pursuing this ideal image then becomes a frustrating obsession, as it becomes impossible to attain.

Her mother’s side of the family had a long history of mental illness. Her mother suffered long periods of depression and was unable to care for her children, so she left her sons with her first husband’s family. As for Norma—Marilyn’s real name—she had foster parents and, at one point, ended up in an orphanage.

When she turned sixteen, her adoptive mother had just remarried for the second time, and they were moving to the East. The condition for taking Norma with them was that she had to get married. She was arranged to marry a twenty-one-year-old neighbor. Her future husband’s name was Jim and what he liked about Marilyn was that she would lean extra close when they danced, laughed at the right moments, and kept quiet when she was supposed to. She quickly became the perfect housewife. She learned to cook, and Jim said she was a good wife. He enlisted in the Navy, and the long absences

began. Marilyn, who wrote to him every day, couldn't bear the loneliness and started drinking. She decided she wanted to become a movie star. As her husband became increasingly absent, she divorced him and left for Hollywood, leaving behind, along with her entire life, her name: Norma Jeane.

The sexual E3 has a remarkable ability to disconnect, often breaking away from an entire past and leaving it behind forever when only a moment before they felt they couldn't live without it. However, there is also a need to find themselves, a search for their own truth, and questioning whether the love they believed was definitive and indispensable was merely something they invented and idealized:

This is the end of my story of Norma Jeane... I moved into a room in Hollywood to live by myself. I wanted to find out who I was. When I just wrote, "This is the end of Norma Jeane," I blushed as if I had been caught out in a lie. Because this sad, bitter child who grew up too fast is hardly ever out of my heart. With success all around me, I can still feel her frightened eyes looking out of mine. She keeps saying, "I never lived, I was never loved," and often I get confused and think it's I who am saying it.

Relationship with the father

Once, at a New York party, Marilyn took part in a game where she had to say what she wanted most in the world. Her reply was that she would like "to put on her black wig, pick up her father in a bar, and have him make love to her." Then she'd say, "How do you feel now to have a daughter that you've made love to?"

Vanity in the sexual

Writer Will Fowler said of her that she loved to undress, and show her body to men. She would do anything they asked, really as a favor: "I didn't sleep around when I was married until my husband went into the service, and then it was just that I was so damn lonesome, and I had to have some kind of company, so once in a while I'd give in, mainly because I didn't want to be alone."

A journalist once asked her in an interview:

'Tell me,' he inquired, 'how old were you when you first had sex?'
'Seven,' Marilyn responded.
'Mon Dieu! How old was the man?'
The reply came in the famous whisper, with a catch of breath: 'Younger.'

This was Marilyn's only jest about childhood sex. Normally her theme was different—and grim. She claimed early on that she had been sexually molested as a child, a motif she would return to obsessively throughout her life. Was it a real event?

I was almost nine years old and lived with a family who rented a room to a man named Kimmel. He was a stern looking man, and everybody respected him and called him Mr. Kimmel. One day I was passing his room when his door opened and he said quietly, "Please come in here, Norma..." He smiled at me and turned the key in the lock. "Now you can't get out," he said, as if we were playing a game. I stood staring at him. I was frightened, but I

didn't dare yell... I knew it was wrong but I was more curious than anything else... No one had ever talked to me about sex and I never thought it was important.

Here is another of her memories:

I fell in love with a boy named George... We used to hide in the grass together until he got frightened and jumped up and ran away. What we did in the grass never frightened me. I knew it was wrong or I wouldn't have hidden, but I didn't know what was wrong. At night I lay awake and tried to figure out what sex was and what love was. I wanted to ask a thousand questions but there was no one to ask.

Then, when she got married: "The first effect marriage had on me was to increase my lack of interest in sex. My husband either didn't mind this or wasn't aware of it."

Now let's hear the husband's version: "Norma Jeane loved sex. It was as natural to her as breakfast in the morning. There were never any problems with it."

However, other men who were in Marilyn's life, and also her psychiatrist, Dr. Greenson, relate that she found little satisfaction in sex. Rosenfeld, a multimillionaire who was intimate with Marilyn, evokes:

Marilyn thought sex got you closer, made you a closer friend. She told me she hardly ever had an orgasm, but she was very unselfish. She tried above all to please the opposite sex. Ah, but it wasn't just sex. She could be so happy and gay. How I remember that laughter!

Minardo, another of Marilyn's lovers, recalls that "She could never have a climax, though she would try so hard. She had such severe psychological problems. She was very, very unhappy." He mentions that she used sex to achieve her ends, something corroborated by Schaefer, another of her lovers:

Marilyn must have been frustrated almost all of the time. For her sex was part of the performance. I think she regarded it as her function, being this great attractive female, that she was supposed to have sex with a man, because that was something she could do, that she could give. She wasn't very successful at it, in terms of her own fulfillment.

It is typical for sexual E3s that, once the conquest phase is over, their desire wanes, even if they pretend otherwise as part of their insincerity. Here is a clear example of what it's like to live for the pleasure of others rather than for one's own, practically neglecting the idea of personal enjoyment; it seems that she saw sex as part of her job.

For Marilyn, this was a routine of her daily life, a pattern that's unfortunately common among sexual E3 women who are often easy prey because they put up little resistance. Arrogance emerges as a defense mechanism in sexual E3s to distance themselves from the pain, as if they're elevating themselves above it, rationalizing that they can provide it willingly. There is also confusion between love and sex. Any form of physical contact is sometimes mistaken for a loving touch and, in Marilyn's case, it likely stemmed from not knowing any other kind of emotional bond during childhood.

"I want to love and be loved more than anything else in the world."

The first time she fell madly in love was with Fred Karger, musical director of Columbia Studios.

A new life began for me... I had always thought of myself as someone unloved. Now I know there had been something worse than that in my life. It had been my own unloving heart. [...] I even forgot Norma Jeane. A new me appeared in my skin — not an actress, not somebody looking for a world of bright colors. When he [Fred] said, "I love you" to me, it was better than a thousand critics calling me a great star.

There was one cloud in my paradise. I knew he liked me and was happy to be with me. But his love didn't seem anything like mine. Most of his talk to me was a form of criticism. He criticized my mind. He kept pointing out how little I knew and how unaware of life I was. [...] His cynicism hurt me, too...

When Marilyn wept, he would tell her, “You cry too easily. That’s because your mind isn’t developed. Compared to your figure, it’s embryonic.” Marilyn tried to leave him several times:

There was a third and fourth good-bye. But it was like rushing to the edge of a roof to jump off. I stopped each time and didn't jump, and turned to him and begged him to hold me. It's hard to do something that hurts your heart.

She was also married to Joe DiMaggio, a baseball player, who recalls of their marriage: “It’s no fun being married to an electric light.” As his wife, she had several lovers; it is even rumored that she secretly married one of them. The sportsman was a very jealous man, who physically abused her. Marilyn would arrive at the shoot full of bruises, which had to be covered up with makeup. These aggressions seemed to affect her more than she let on, but she still stayed in the relationship for a long time. They ended up divorcing when she was filming with Billy Wilder.

The film studios capitalized on her divorce, and invaded her private life, taking advantage of her emotional vulnerability. For the sexual E3, a breakup is worse than death. Marilyn was in such a fragile and desperate state that she had no strength left to defend herself, and let herself be used.

Her greatest frustration: building a family

Around this time, she had one primary concern, perhaps the saddest of her life – becoming a mother. In the fifties, she tried year after year. She married several times, and underwent numerous gynecological procedures, including multiple abortions. She once shared a disturbing story about being molested, but also claimed that the man involved actually had intercourse with her. She was left pregnant and had the baby, but her adoptive mother gave him up for adoption, and she never saw him again. We don’t know if this is true. Amy Greene, who lived with her, says she made a lot of things up.

Peter Leonardi, Marilyn’s hairdresser and assistant in the 1950s, claims that she had her fallopian tubes tied to keep her from having children when she was rising to fame, on the advice of her agent at the time, who told her that a pregnancy would ruin her career. Apparently, she later had the operation reversed. To make matters worse, friends of Marilyn’s have recounted a large number of voluntary abortions. She herself once confessed that she had had twelve. Some of them real butchers performed illegally. Later, she was surprised to find herself unable to conceive.

A friend of Marilyn, Henry Rosenfeld, says that she wanted a baby so badly that every two or three months, she would convince herself that she was pregnant, and put on a couple of kilos. She was in a permanent state of psychological pregnancy.

Lauren Bacall, who shared filming with her, remembers how Marilyn “came into my dressing room one day and said that what she really wanted was to be in San Francisco with Joe DiMaggio in some spaghetti joint. She wanted to know about my children, my home life — was I happy? She seemed envious of that aspect of my life, wistful, hoping to have it herself. . .”

She always sought to build the family she never had and met with one failure after another. It seems that her inability to achieve this, coupled with an increasing sense of loneliness and despair, may have played a role in her tragic end. As a sexual E3, love and family held greater significance for her than professional success, but she never realized these aspirations. Excessively dependent, she lacked the inner strength to resist the harmful influence of her environment. By the time she recognized what true success in her life should have entailed, it was already too late.

Acting and professional life

Natasha Lytess, her acting coach, remembers her like this:

Her habit of looking at me the second she finished a scene was to become a joke in projection rooms. [...] The film of the daily rushes was filled with scenes of Marilyn, finishing her dialogue and immediately shading her eyes to find me, to see if she had done well.

Marilyn is shrewd. I wish I had one tenth of her ability for business, of her clever knack of promoting what is right for her and discarding what is not.

In an acting class, in the middle of a scene from *The Cherry Orchard*, her teacher at the time, Michael Chekhov, stopped to ask her whether she had not been preoccupied with sex while playing her part. Marilyn replied that she had not. Then Chekhov said to her:

I understand your problem with your studio now, Marilyn. You are a young woman who gives off sex vibrations, no matter what you are doing or thinking. And your studio bosses are only interested in your sex vibrations. I see now why they refuse to regard you as an actress. You are more valuable to them as a sex stimulant.

Marilyn told an interviewer that her reply to Chekhov was: “I want to be an artist, not an erotic freak. I don’t want to be sold to the public as a celluloid aphrodisiac.”

On the set she was very easily hurt by any kind of criticism. She never felt safe in front of the camera. She was so afraid of not acting well and of not being physically perfect, that she couldn’t leave the trailer to go to the set. She had great talent, but she couldn’t believe in it. Lauren Bacall recalls:

Marilyn was frightened, insecure, trusted only her coach and was always late. During our scenes she’d look at my forehead instead of my eyes. [...] It was not easy, often irritating. And yet I couldn’t dislike Marilyn. She had no meanness in her, no bitchery. She just had to concentrate on herself and the people who were there only for her.

Scriptwriter Nunnally Johnson wrote in a letter to a friend, "Monroe is something of a zombie. Talking to her is like talking to somebody underwater. You can't get through to her. She reminds me of a sloth. You stick a pin in a sloth's belly and eight days later it says, »Ouch.«"

Here's what actress Shelley Winters remembers from a shoot with Otto Preminger:

Marilyn did what she always did when she was confused. She just opened her mouth and smiled at anything in sight. Preminger began to use dreadful language, implying that she was so untalented that she should stick to her original "profession." Marilyn never looked up; her smile just became more frozen.

Then came revenge: she lied to everyone by slipping on the boat where they were shooting, saying she had broken her leg, which delayed filming and cost a lot of money.

Actress Constance Collier was her acting teacher in later years. This is how she portrays her weeks before she died:

She is a beautiful child. I don't think she's an actress at all, not in any traditional sense. What she has — this presence, this luminosity, this flickering intelligence — could never surface on the stage. It's so fragile and subtle, it can only be caught by the camera. It's like a hummingbird in flight; only a camera can freeze the poetry of it. I hope, I really pray, that she survives long enough to free the strange lovely talent that's wandering through her like a jailed spirit.

Lee Strasberg, the then-teacher of Marlon Brando and James Dean, took Marilyn in with his wife Paula and adopted her as his own daughter. In the muddle that was Marilyn, Strasberg was to discover a creature of dangerous potency. She would find a teacher, a priest for her personality, and a new dependency. He noticed, in the early classes, that when Marilyn described her past, she stuttered with fear: "I saw that what she looked like was not what she really was, and what was going on inside was not what was going on outside, and that always means there may be something there to be worked with. It was almost as if she had been waiting for a button to be pushed, and when it was pushed a door opened and you saw a treasure of gold and jewels."

She would go to Strasberg's classes with no makeup on, wearing jeans and baggy sweaters, and stand in the darkest corner. Her classmates were baffled by her ability to switch her Monroe persona 'on' and 'off,' to slip into obscurity only to reappear, suddenly, in a halo of white light that seemed to envelop her.

Eli Wallach, actor and Marilyn's partner, was also struck by the phenomenon of Marilyn's instant metamorphosis. In the street, heads would turn to stare or ogle, whereas a moment before everyone had passed her by. "I just felt like being Marilyn for a moment," she would murmur.

According to Wallach, at times, the Strasberg acting sessions seemed intellectually beyond Marilyn. One of her colleagues, Frank Corsaro, came to call himself 'Marilyn's translator.' He said, "She didn't know what Lee was talking about half the damn time." Acting coach Peggy Feury disagrees, saying, "Marilyn was so bright about acting. Her trouble was only that she'd get so scared she wasn't going to be able to do it, and so tied up in knots, that then everyone thought she was dumb." Lee Strasberg's son, John, recalls:

The greatest tragedy was that people, even my father in a way, took advantage of her. They glommed on to her special sort of life, her special characteristics, when what she needed was love. My parents did give her some love, but it was inextricably linked with the acting.

We end with the testimony by Natasha Lytess: “I had been her private director for long years, working with her day and night. Yet when she was asked to do something for me, she had the feeling that she was being used.”

Drugs, the road to destruction

She severely abused drugs and they seem to be what killed her. She used them as a means of disconnection, especially when she just ended a relationship or after suffering a miscarriage. During her marriage to DiMaggio, she was falling apart; she was shaking a lot and kept taking drugs. Many times she was so sedated that you couldn’t hold a conversation with her. She went through several stomach pumpings, and long periods in detoxification hospitals.

From the age of seventeen, she could only sleep with the help of barbiturates. She suffered from terrible insomnia, and needed tons of pills to sleep, and tons of pills to wake up. She was taking *Seconal*, when she started mixing in amphetamines. It was a time when studio bosses used them regularly to keep their stars working overtime. This is Dr. Elliot Corday’s, her doctor from 1948 to 1955, version of the story:

I eventually withdrew from the case because she would not employ a decent psychiatrist. People would understand her death better had they been listening to her in my office back then. There had been many suicide attempts, more than were known. And by 1954 she was using drugs — I think the hard stuff as well as the sleeping pills. In the end I told her I was not going to be around to witness what was going to happen.

Her reliance on drugs and pharmaceuticals can be interpreted as an attempt to escape the overwhelming hypersensitivity that brought anxiety, fear, and anguish, all of which stem from the profound sadness that sexual E3s carry, hidden behind their meticulously maintained façade. It also likely served as a way to disconnect from the constant self-critique that plagued her. Sexual E3s often replay their actions repeatedly, judging themselves too harshly and projecting this self-criticism onto the imaginary opinions of others. This self-punishing thought pattern leaves them with little respite, and it’s particularly challenging for individuals who live under the constant scrutiny of the public eye.

Shyness, oversensitivity, gentleness

Her first acting teacher, Morris Carnovsky, described her as extremely shy and said she took her classes very seriously; she always arrived on time and with all assignments done. Hal Schaefer, who gave her music lessons, had an affair with her: “She struck me as kind of fey, as not being altogether in this world, not all there. She was quiet, didn’t open up much. At first she had no confidence, but she reacted to my teaching and she got better.” Milton Greene was her partner and friend:

I thought I’d seen them all. Being in the business I’d seen so many models and actresses. But I’d never seen anyone with that tone of voice, that kindness, that real softness. If she saw a dead dog in the road, she’d cry. She was so supersensitive you had to watch your tone of voice all the time. Later I was to find out that she was schizoid — that she could be absolutely brilliant or absolutely kind, then the total opposite.

Arthur Miller's first memory of Marilyn was that of a young woman at a Hollywood cocktail party, "[She was] so terrified she couldn't speak a word, just stood there mute but refusing to engage in the vacuous small talk." Her future husband said he had gained Marilyn's confidence. She had told him of her 'smothering feelings of inferiority, her inability to make any real friends, the fact that people thought of her only in terms of an inviting body and nothing else.'

Marilyn's medical doctors had no doubt she needed psychiatric help. Dr Milton Gottlieb, who gave Marilyn gynecological care, said, "She was insecure, frightened of the reality of life. A very disturbed young woman." This shyness is also closely linked to vanity. There is so much fear of saying or doing anything wrong and subsequently being subjected to criticism that sexual E3s retreat into a silence where they can go unnoticed.

Maternal

Taking care of someone, isolated from the world where her neurosis came to light, seemed to bring her comfort. Schaefer recalls the worst year of his life, when he attempted suicide, "Marilyn came up to help nurse me. She was very sweet, and quite practical. I got well there, and Marilyn enjoyed it. She looked well, went swimming, got some sun — it was a very isolated spot."

Perfect housekeeper and hostess

Early in her relationship with Arthur Miller, she invited to dinner some friends who already knew they were together, even though it was a secret at the time. Miller recalls that "she did nothing else for two days. I never saw anyone so worried about a simple meal. Actually the whole thing was overdone, too formal, too meticulous, too manicured. She worked herself into a frazzle about the whole affair."

Marilyn played the role of the perfect housewife with DiMaggio. Here's the image she liked to portray of their marriage:

Joe doesn't have to move a muscle. Treat a husband this way and he'll enjoy you twice as much. I like to iron Joe's shirts, but often I haven't the time. I like to look at Joe in a shirt I ironed. A man should never have to think about his clothes. A wife should see to it that his shoes and suits are sent out to be cleaned.

She was a friend of the poet Norman Rosten and his wife, who described her as a good cook who enjoyed housework. She bragged about how well she washed dishes, and said it was a legacy of having been a child slave in foster homes.

Relationship with Arthur Miller

Being by the side of an important man, being the trophy wife is what the sexual E3 aspires to. This was her most enduring marriage. She admired Miller's intelligence but insisted, "I'm in love with the man, not his mind. The Arthur Miller who attracted me was a man of warmth and friendliness. Arthur has helped me adjust myself. I've always been unsure of myself. Arthur has helped me overcome this feeling." Miller confessed to journalist Robert Ajemian:

She is the most womanly woman I can imagine. Being with her, people want to die. This girl sets up a challenge in every man. Most men become more of what they are natively when they are around her: a phoney becomes more phoney, a confused man becomes more confused, a retiring man more retiring. She's kind of a lodestone that draws out of the male animal his essential qualities.

He also talked of Marilyn's obsessive worry about her lack of education:

She'll come to me and say, "I heard a new word the other day, what does it mean?" The other day she asked me about the word "impermeable." She often mispronounces a word. But she wants to learn.

How can I capsulize Marilyn? The more you know about people, the more complex they are to you. If she were simple, it would have been easy to help her.

Her relationship with Elia Kazan

Elia Kazan, who knew her from the beginning of her career, gives a heartfelt description of her in his autobiography. The director was Marilyn's lover but, above all, her friend and confidant:

When I met her, she was a simple, eager young woman who rode a bike to the classes she was taking, a decent-hearted kid whom Hollywood brought down, legs parted. She had a thin skin and a soul that hungered for acceptance by people she might look up to. Like many girls out of that kind of experience, she sought her self-respect through the men she was able to attract.

All young actresses in that time and place were thought of as prey, to be overwhelmed and topped by the male. A genuine interest, which I did have, would produce results. I'm still surprised at how quickly women will empty the most intimate secrets of their lives into a sympathetic ear. I was good at listening, and the stories she told me, with neither malice nor regret, were amazing.

She'd married Jim, her first husband, so that she wouldn't have to go back to the orphanage where she'd been put after the dissolution of her parents' home. She was sixteen. She didn't like "anything Jim did to me—except when he kissed me here" (she touched her breasts). After he was finished, Jim would fall asleep, leaving her awake and unsatisfied. She remembered taking long walks at night along the tracks where they lived in Sawtelle. A lover found her available. Fred was a musician, scrawny but able in love. She came as many as three times with him in one go. He was vulgar and coarse and scornful with her. He said she was no good for anything except fucking. He found her dress "cheap." He told her her breasts were too big. He didn't like to sleep in the same bed with her. He thought her beneath conversation, said she was stupid and only good for one thing, which he didn't regard too highly. When she left Fred for Johnny, Fred became frantic, and his attitude changed completely. He begged Marilyn to marry him.

I asked her if she was attracted to men who abused her; when Freddie stopped being mean to her, was she no longer attracted? I asked her if she respected men who were scornful of her because their estimate coincided with her own. "I don't know," she said.

When I first knew her, after Johnny's death, she was being courted by Joe Schenck. Mr. Schenck was one of the richest as well as the most respected men in the "Hollywood" community. She told me about the night when Schenck had taken her dancing and asked her

to marry him. Mr. Schenck was then seventy-one years old, and had had his first cerebral hemorrhage. During the courtship, he took her to his house and showed her a huge room, decorated with piles of money, and told her that it would be hers if she wanted it. To convince her, again and again he told her how old he was and that he would not be in this world for long, that she would be a widow stuffed with millions. "I'm seventy-one," he said. "I know I'm a man of limited powers. But you'll find that I'm understanding. If my wife feels she must go with other men, I'll understand. But only so long as it's not the same man twice in a row." This did not appeal to Marilyn, who was a romantic. It seemed to me that many women like Marilyn in that world would have been tempted by this offer; but she was pure of heart.

What she needed above all was to have her sense of worth affirmed. Born out of wedlock, abandoned by her parents, kicked around, scorned by the men she'd been with until Johnny, she wanted more than anything else approval from men she could respect. But there was a fatal contradiction in Marilyn. She deeply needed to be valued, and yet she respected the men who looked down on her, because they reaffirmed her lack of self-esteem.

When I first saw her with Art [Arthur Miller], they were dancing and she looked so happy in his arms... Not only was he tall and handsome in a Lincoln-esque way, but he was a Pulitzer Prize playwright. All her doubts about her worth were being satisfied in one package.

It's interesting that Kazan makes note of how she respected men who despised or mistreated her. Marilyn sought her value in men, because that's where she primarily experienced a sense of lack. This is a common trait among women of this subtype. Since she was very young, men only valued her for her sex appeal, and her interactions with them were often abusive or purely sexual, lacking the depth of a loving connection. Hence the confusion, and the question that haunted her as a child: "What is love, and what is sex?" This is also why she entered, again and again, into relationships that reinforced the sense of worthlessness she felt so deeply.

X. Literary and cinematic examples

A cinematic example



Nicole Kidman plays Grace in Lars von Trier's *Dogville* (2003)

Dogville

Written and directed by: Lars von Trier, USA, 2003

Character: Grace, played by Nicole Kidman

The story unfolds in the 1930s in a small American town called Dogville. The set is a theatrical stage; very minimal, with white lines drawn on the ground to indicate the boundaries of the houses and the town. Beyond these lines, there's nothing. It's as if the town has no concrete location, a fictitious village, existing in isolation from an unknown external world. Life is confined within a strict, claustrophobic space, as if all the residents were part of one big family, and the town itself were a single household. Everything happens right here, within this constrained area.

The first character to enter the scene is Tom Edison (Paul Bettany), a young man full of projects, a would-be writer, who can't seem to bring his plans to fruition, dependent on his father's authority and his mother's protection.

According to Tom, the inhabitants of Dogville have a difficulty in receiving and accepting help, and being open. Tom is determined to get them together to address this issue, even though the villagers are seemingly doing fine as they are. In Tom's view, a gift would have to fall from the sky for their problems to get resolved. At that very moment, Grace, a beautiful fugitive pursued by gangsters, arrives in Dogville.

Grace symbolizes the ideal woman, with her beauty, femininity, tenderness, generosity, and kindness. She finds no fault in anyone, always has a smile on her face... Upon her arrival, when nobody is watching, she steals a bone from the only dog living in the village out of hunger. Tom catches her in the act and offers her a piece of bread; she says she was raised to be arrogant and must be punished for stealing, so she cannot accept it.

Tom convinces the villagers to hide Grace in town for two weeks and devises a plan to get them to accept her – she'll work for them in return. Grace hasn't worked a day in her life; it's evident from her expensive clothes, healthy-looking skin, and manicured hands; she's clearly a wealthy woman who has never experienced hardship. Nonetheless, she's determined not to be cast out or betrayed, and she's willing to pay a high price for this sanctuary.

Her first objective is to win everyone over. To accomplish this, she will demonstrate her worth by offering the villagers what she imagines they might need, all with the help of Tom. Tom, on the other hand, hiding behind his “good intentions,” is pursuing his goal of finding an escape from the repetitive and closed world of Dogville. Consequently, he will exploit Grace without the slightest consideration.

Although the inhabitants of Dogville initially claim they don’t want anything, Grace starts taking on chores that they didn’t even realize they needed until she made herself indispensable to each and every one of them. She cleans for some, listens to the problems of others, reads to a blind man and describes to him what he cannot see, picks apples and helps in the fields, takes care of an elderly lady, and looks after children. She tirelessly moves from house to house, completing all these tasks without a single complaint. In no time, she adopts a new persona: efficient at work and modest in her attire – an image that conforms to what the townspeople expect from her.

Seemingly happy to help everyone, she endures abuse and exploitation in order to be protected and considered a “good person.” She even perceives the absurd tests she’s subjected to as acts of recognition. She adapts, like Tom, to a world where recognition or love are contingent upon obedience, good behavior, and respect for the rules. Feelings, emotions, and instincts are part of the “evil” that might threaten this illusory tranquility, this false order, and are, therefore, punished.

Grace allies herself with these “image” values to the point of defending them against the inhabitants when they themselves criticize them. She needs to create a comforting narrative to shield herself from the cruelty of her circumstances.

The narrator of the story describes her as a woman who always knows what others need and who has a lot of practice in controlling her emotions. She adapts to any situation, including becoming the object of desire for the men in town.

When the hunt for her intensifies, and the police arrive in the village to post “wanted” posters, the people of Dogville, overcome with the typical fear of American society, believe they’re entitled to demand even greater compensation for the risk they’re taking to hide her. Tom, as the intermediary between the townsfolk and Grace, draws up a new plan whereby she’ll work even longer hours. She accepts with good grace, and they go so far as to mistreat and punish her to unbearable limits in the eyes of the viewer.

Tom, although obviously in love with her, is an accomplice to this cruelty, because he shares the same fear of not being right, and not being accepted. He manipulates Grace by promising her protection, and she complies and conforms; to be more exact: she believes him, because she feels a masculine presence by her side.

Grace even tolerates abuse and rape, constantly forgiving her aggressors by rationalizing their actions and excusing their behavior as a consequence of being powerless against their instincts. She’s capable of putting up with anything so that they don’t turn her in, so that they don’t throw her out, and it’s exactly what they constantly threaten her with. The important thing for Grace is the illusory sense of protection that the people can offer her against her persecutors. On one hand, we can speculate that whoever is threatening her is so dangerous that it’s better to accept this false security; on the other, we can sense that Grace is well-accustomed to adapting, and being mistreated or overlooked as a person.

When she is finally sexually abused and raped, she retreats into a state of detachment. This is what the sexual E3 does: disconnects from the abuse, going so far as to ally themselves with the abuser. The explanation given to her by a man from the village who wants to abuse her is all too clarifying: “If you love me you have to satisfy me; if you don’t satisfy me, you don’t truly love me.” Grace finds it nearly impossible to make decisions and struggles to express anger or rebellion; she only knows how to be an accomplice to her exploiters.

She ends up becoming the town whore, though she doesn’t get paid for it. She doesn’t even seem to have made that choice; she simply *lets* herself be used and forgives one rapist after another. Her disconnection helps her deceive herself, and maintain that image of kindness, purity, generosity, and

false modesty, closely tied to vanity, or, as we will hear from her father's lips in the final scene, arrogance.

But prior to the climax, we witness a scene where Grace finally expresses her pain. The women of the village go to punish her at her house for having seen her with one of their husbands. She had been collecting clay figurines that she'd bought with the tips they gave her. The narrator tells us that these figurines are for her the symbols of the children born in the village between the meetings that determined whether she would stay or leave, and serve, therefore, as proof that her suffering produced something meaningful.

One of the women picks up two figurines and promises not to break any more if Grace can stop crying. The narrator says that this is the first time she has cried since she was a child, and that for her, they're like human beings disintegrating. The villager destroys, one by one, all the clay figurines as Grace weeps inconsolably, as if they were killing her family or herself. Finally, she connects with the horrors she's endured and decides to escape.

But she doesn't make it. The man who had promised to help her flee by hiding her in his truck, having already collected the money, rapes her and then drives her back to the town. When she returns, she is chained and forced to live as a slave. The director uses this external prison to reflect what she has unwittingly created, a product of her vanity, based on false perfection, control, and detachment. This leaves the audience in deep frustration, with the desire to articulate what she can't or won't.

After another meeting with the people, Tom, who had supposedly become her boyfriend, can no longer navigate the internal conflict between defending her and protecting his own position, and turns her in to the gangsters who are after her, calling them on the phone. When they arrive, they are led by... Grace's own father. We then learn that she came to Dogville after a fight with her father, where she had the audacity to voice her grievances and chose to escape from her previous life.

Now, in the ensuing reunion, it is her father who voices his grievances. She called him arrogant for believing he had the right to take her rapists' lives, robbing them of what God had bestowed upon them. She had justified them, contending that they were not at fault for obeying their nature. Her father replies that she is the arrogant one for calling her rapists victims and blaming the circumstances. He accuses her of having the preconceived notion that nobody can possibly reach her "high ethical standards," and that's why she exonerates them, which is the height of arrogance. The father explains to her that they must be given the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions, an opportunity she does not give them. He asks her to return home with him and offers to hand over power to her in return.

These words give Grace pause for thought, and she decides to take her father's power and make the world a better place by killing *everyone* in Dogville. Faced with the woman who broke her figurines, she orders them to do the same to her children. The accumulated suffering now drives her to *annihilate* her aggressors. It's the price she pays for not having set boundaries and also the sign that she's finally taking off her sweet and pristine mask to reveal her shadow: the rage, vengeance, and the desire to exact revenge on those who stole her life. Her father is also presenting her with an opportunity, an opportunity to act on her most deeply hidden instincts, including anger and rivalry towards himself. We, as viewers, know that she will never be the same.

The film invokes pity for this woman and, concurrently, frustration with her inability to stand up for herself. Lars von Trier said in an interview that he doesn't feel sorry for his protagonist. From the perspective of the arrogance that the filmmaker wants to portray, with her putting herself above her aggressors with that deceptive veneer of perfection, it's true that she becomes less pitiful. Yet, if we look at her abusers through the same lens that she does – as men who have been lonely for a long time, in great need of physical contact, poor "imperfect" guys due to fear – we begin to fall into her own trap. It's true that it is fear that leads them to do what they do, a fear perpetuated by those in authority, which causes Americans to create societies like the one in *Dogville*.

Finally, let's see Grace the way her father sees her, when he accuses her of not giving the perpetrators a chance to take responsibility for their actions. The sexual E3 takes on the responsibility for the wrongdoing of others in order to preserve their image. They're even capable of romanticizing murderers. And they don't take responsibility for their own evil, which they hide behind a seductive sweetness. If they expose the wrongdoings of others, they bring darkness to light and, with it, their own ugliness.

A literary example

The Picture of Dorian Gray, by Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a classic study of the narcissistic personality, even if it is a fictional account. Like Narcissus, Dorian Gray was an exceedingly beautiful young man. Moreover, the beauty of his appearance coincided with an equal beauty of temperament. He was kind, considerate, and concerned. Inevitably, Dorian's good looks attracted the interest of a well-known artist, who undertook to paint his portrait. They also excited the interest of a dilettante, Lord Henry, who undertook to teach him the ways of the sophisticated world.

With appropriate flattery, Lord Henry seduced Dorian Gray into thinking he was special because of his exceptional physical beauty. Lord Henry convinced the young man that it was his duty to preserve his good looks. One way to do that was not to allow any strong feeling to disturb the placidity of his mind or mark the surface of his body. But how can one prevent the ravages of time? Dorian became preoccupied with and worried about his appearance. What a shame, he thought, that the picture should always show him as a happy, radiant, and beautiful young man, while he himself aged and deteriorated. Would that it were the reverse, he prayed, and so it came to be.

Dorian Gray passed the years without showing any sign of age or trouble in his face and body. At fifty he looked as he had at twenty. No line or wrinkle reflecting the cares and concerns of living marred his visage. His secret was the picture, which aged and showed the ugliness of a life lived without feeling. But Dorian hid the picture and never looked at it.

In the absence of feeling, Dorian Gray spent his life seeking sensation. He seduced women (which was very easy to do with his charm and good looks), then abandoned them. He introduced the young men who admired him to vices and drugs, which ruined their lives. Very early in his career, he brought about the suicide of a lovely young actress, who fell in love with him but whom he rejected when her acting failed to measure up to the star performances that had initially attracted him to her. Throughout all this, Dorian felt no remorse. He never looked at the picture; he never confronted the reality of his life.

Besides Dorian Gray, no one knew of the picture except the painter and Lord Henry. When the painter demanded to see the picture, Dorian killed him. To hide his crime, he blackmailed a former admirer into disposing of the body. This person then committed suicide.

Finally, however, Dorian could no longer restrain his curiosity about the picture, nor still the growing inner torment. Venturing into the hiding place, he removed the covering from the picture. The twisted, tortured look on the aged face struck him with such horror that he took a knife and slashed the picture. The next morning, a servant discovered lying in front of the picture, with a knife in his heart, an old man with a twisted, tortured face. It was Dorian.



Hurd Hatfield in front of the oil painting *Dorian Gray*, by Ivan Albright 1943-1944, in a still from Albert Lewin's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945)

XI. A vignette



Barbie and Ken's dreams, photo by Dina Goldstein

The dreams of Barbie and Ken, the world's most famous sexual E3 couple

Barbie, the best-selling doll in the world, is nearing sixty (surely with the help of her plastic surgeon), still living in her artificial, plastic-coated castle with her little pink horse. Everything is pink—her house, her car, her furniture, her thoughts, her dreams...

From the very beginning, she was sold in a swimsuit, ready to be dressed in exquisite, expensive outfits, often designed by famous names like Dior. She started out as a doll for the middle and upper classes.

It's said that if she were a real person, her proportions would be so extremely thin that she'd have no room for intestines or other vital organs. Her world is one of fashion, wealth and glamour, where human imperfections have no place. She is the eternal princess in a sterile, sexless realm, projecting beauty, refinement, and everlasting happiness. At her side is Ken, her male counterpart, a vain reflection of herself.

Aqua's iconic song *Barbie Girl* hits the nail on the head with its chorus, "Life in plastic, it's fantastic!" Theirs is a shallow and empty existence, that of people endlessly optimizing themselves in pursuit of an artificial, bittersweet happiness, tinged with an aftertaste of death.

Barbie Girl

Hi, Barbie
Hi, Ken!
You wanna go for a ride?

Sure, Ken!
Jump in...

I'm a Barbie girl, in the Barbie world
Life in plastic, it's fantastic!
You can brush my hair, undress me everywhere
Imagination, life is your creation
Come on, Barbie, let's go party!

I'm a blond bimbo girl, in a fantasy world
Dress me up, make it tight, I'm your dolly
You're my doll, rock'n'roll, feel the glamour in pink,
Kiss me here, touch me there, hanky panky...
You can touch, you can play, if you say: "I'm always yours"

Come on, Barbie, let's go party!

Make me walk, make me talk, do whatever you please
I can act like a star, I can beg on my knees
Come jump in, bimbo friend, let us do it again,
Hit the town, fool around, let's go party
You can touch, you can play, if you say: "I'm always yours"

Come on, Barbie, let's go party!

Oh, I'm having so much fun!
Well Barbie, we're just getting started
Oh, I love you Ken!

XII. Transformation process and therapeutic recommendations

What initiates the healing process for a sexual E3 is reconnecting with their body, emotions, and thoughts, and recognizing their inherent value. Becoming aware of the loss of the vast richness of their inner world, of the repressed vital impulse, and the condemnation of pleasure; contacting and confronting the pain of such a loss; recognizing the patterns of self-deception; rediscovering spontaneity, humor, openness, and vulnerability through inner exploration and intimate encounters with others; opening their eyes to the denied aspects of their shadow, accepting all parts they're ashamed of, cultivating true compassion for themselves and others, and, ultimately, daring to be and feel complete. All this represents the richness and grace of the transformative path they can find in therapy and the SAT program.

The therapeutic process that leads to transformation

The therapist of a sexual E3 must be able to create a loving and non-judgmental atmosphere, encouraging the individual to reveal their inner self, often buried in denial and shame. Establishing trust and unconditional support is essential for this character to feel safe enough to unravel the automatic patterns of their ego. The fear of not being liked, of not being adequate, of not performing well enough, inevitably leads them to self-deception and manipulation—a defense mechanism echoing childhood patterns learned in the relationship with their parents, that is, pleasing and hiding themselves.

Therapeutic approaches that emphasize the present moment and avoid getting lost in verbal conversations—such as Gestalt and body therapy—are what a sexual E3 needs to regain their capacity to live fully and break free from the captivating yet deceptive stories they tell themselves.

My first therapy was Lacanian psychoanalysis, and while I had fun, I found myself entangled in a lot of seduction. I was conscious of it, but couldn't break free, because, in a way, I felt like I was pulling the psychoanalyst along, and I was the one in charge.

I underwent psychoanalytic therapy for four years. I understood all the connections between my adult self and my childhood, yet I felt nothing, and everything remained the same. I lived in self-deception until I encountered Gestalt and the Enneagram. I had no place to hide anymore. It was a shock, like a breaking out of a shell; I was forced to confront my dark side, my shame, my vanity, my envy. The SAT program was pivotal: engaging in authentic movement and theater helped me reconnect with my body, enabling me to feel.

The SAT process allows for immediate reflection, it opens you up, exposes you to countless possibilities, all with a sense of playfulness. It's a profound personal journey that is nourishing, restorative, and sparks creativity.

To truly understand myself, I first needed to feel seen by my therapist, and in order to accept myself, I first needed to feel accepted for who I am. It was a step towards recognizing that I can exist without seeking validation, without reflecting the gaze of others.

Key moments in my journey began with the Enneagram and later with the SAT. There, I could finally see myself and realize that I was just one of many people with similar aspirations and a shared desire to live authentically, genuinely, and vibrantly.

I've just returned from the SAT, and I'm coming to grips with the profound impact of the work I've done. For the first time, I could recognize and observe hidden moments in my past that had a significant influence on me, conditioning me from the shadows. These were like imposed mandates, compelling me to function automatically, out of obligation. Acknowledging this liberated me, made me feel lighter, and, most importantly, heightened my awareness. Now, I can fully see and continue to unearth the origins of my character, understanding where it stems from and how I remain loyal to those mandates that do the opposite of helping me.

Initially, the most valuable therapeutic step involves *uncovering self-deception*. Then, *connecting* with oneself beyond the facade of falsehood. Finally, it's *embracing* the darker aspects and *deconstructing* fantasies. These three steps lead to the *courage of presenting oneself openly*, naked, without the illusory support of an image.

If trust and unconditional acceptance are “necessary” parts of all therapeutic processes, in the case of sexual E3, this already constitutes a pivotal task. The entire construction of a false image is rooted in the belief of being accepted not for who one truly is but for the results they produce. Thus, the initial seduction the sexual E3 engages in is offering the therapist the expected outcome, responding in a very “correct” manner.

Adept at sensing what is appropriate in therapy, they might come off as exceedingly compliant, playing the role of the “good patient” in sessions, not contacting their emotions and authentic needs. They may use their seductive charm with an innocent, victim-like, shy, or naive facade. The crucial step towards authenticity involves dismantling both the seduction geared at appeasing the therapist, as well as the one that serves as self-protection against connecting with truth.

Claudio Naranjo recommends as a basic exercise for Enneatype 3 the Gestalt continuum of consciousness, where the patient repeats the formula: “Here and now I realize that...”, and engages with their bodily, emotional, and cognitive experiences. For sexual E3s, the real challenge lies in looking at themselves, responding to their own needs rather than trying to meet perceived expectations from the therapist. This signifies the beginning of establishing a boundary between “me” and “you” and, more importantly, delving into their own experience, making contact with their inner world, and attempting to express it directly. It’s also about learning to differentiate between thought and emotion, and between the mind and rationalization. The trickiest part is avoiding the confusion of feelings and thoughts with the fantasies that sexual E3s construct to maintain self-deception.

This exercise also forces them to pause in the present moment, something sexual E3s aren’t accustomed to, as they’re always focused on what lies ahead – what they should be or do, how to achieve the ideal version of themselves that allows them to captivate others, to be seen, to be loved.

In a neurotic pattern, the sexual E3s become adept at transforming any emotion into a practical project, a rational endeavor where contact with true feelings is lost. Their thoughts, too, lack the value of self-reflection on what’s happening within or around them; instead, they serve to construct rational strategies for avoiding inner contact, conflict, pain, anger, or fear.

This exercise can also be an excellent foundation for cultivating the virtue of E3: authenticity. Turning inward, examining themselves; acknowledging the truth of their emotions and expressing them; recognizing their thoughts and articulating them. It’s like finally revealing themselves to others, with no other motive than to genuinely be seen.

Navigating towards authenticity encounters yet another obstacle: the *shame* associated with being themselves, leading to a sense of feeling “lesser,” unworthy, and undeserving of love. Throughout their lives, this has driven them to present an outward strength and efficiency, a facade that has little to do with their internal reality. It’s an image that doesn’t align with genuine feelings. Shame is the most readily accessible emotional state for the sexual E3; delving into it more deeply touches upon fear, perceived as the ultimate monster. Shame is linked to the fear that others might “discover” the truth—specifically, that beneath the clean and beautiful surface, there’s nothing or something unattractive and of no value. There’s also the shame associated with the possibility that their seduction might be perceived in its erotic sense, as it truly is, rather than as a pure desire for intimate love. Sexual desire is perceived as dirty, sinful, not conforming to the image of a good child or an honest woman or man.

If repression of the emotional world is the ultimate defense mechanism for E3 in general, in the case of the sexual E3, the therapeutic journey involves connecting with emotions beyond the anxious state and the chaotic sense of fragility and fear of abandonment. It’s about recognizing that the

emotional world is nuanced, with each nuance having a name and motivation. This character must learn not only to feel different emotions but also to see them as a guide to understanding their authentic needs. This insight enables them to choose actions aligned with their true desires, leaving behind actions that merely serve to escape from emotions or fill psychological voids.

The first thing I noticed in therapy is that I didn't know what I felt. I had a hard time connecting with my emotions, and the realization of this disconnection left me feeling bewildered and distressed. I, for the life of me, couldn't understand what the hell "being, simply being" was supposed to mean. What was it to simply be, to experience what? I was confronted with the emptiness beneath my exterior. Without the facade and the coping mechanisms I relied on, there was nothing—just an empty space within me, almost agonizing, devoid even of chaos because there had never been harmony in the first place.

Naturally, this journey involves coming face to face with pain. While the sexual E3 is the subtype most attuned to pain and suffering—which can often get them mistaken for a social E4—when confronted with the profound pain of childhood deficiencies, they step into an unfamiliar realm of panic. Convinced that they alone cannot and don't know how to manage their suffering, it's crucial for the therapist to provide a sense of companionship in this abyss, in the psychological void that terrifies them.

I tapped into pain, the authentic pain that I had harbored inside since my early childhood—the pain of not being accepted for who I was. Confronting that pain head-on allowed me to get through it, to experience it fully and contextualize it in the present moment. I chose to face the reality of not being liked, not being deemed adequate or effective or wonderful. I resisted the urge to sidestep it through seduction, to mask or embellish my feelings. Instead, I started presenting myself with a clear, unadorned expression of what I felt, what I knew, and what I was still figuring out. This, little by little, led me to the intimate realization that "this is the right way."

Therapies that are more cognitive or behavioral in character seem to be unsuitable for sexual E3s, as they tend to perpetuate their overadaptive tendencies. Confrontational therapies from the get-go also seem less fitting, as they swiftly and directly lay bare experiences of ineffectiveness, deception, and impotence, potentially strengthening their defense mechanisms.

I had a brief contact with a cognitive-behavioral therapist. I felt pressured by her to have answers, to explain, and rejected because of my own confusion. The confrontations were very direct. I left that therapy feeling disoriented and lost, convinced that I needed to fortify my "head" even more and build an even greater shield against my own awareness of helplessness. Next, I sought therapy where I could "let myself fall" with the assurance of being supported, and I found that in Gestalt.

The therapeutic goal is for individuals to rediscover their intrinsic value. It involves recognizing their own capabilities and embracing the process of individuation and independence, understanding that it doesn't lead to loneliness but to self-love. The aim is to establish the groundwork for intimate, equal relationships where love is supported by mutual esteem.

Developing resources means for the sexual E3 maturing, taking responsibility, and becoming the architect of their own fulfillment, breaking free from the habit of delegating this responsibility, particularly to a partner, and treating it as the source of their happiness. Naturally, this means going

against their ingrained belief that true existence lies in being an ideal for someone else. For the sexual E3, standing on their own two feet has always seemed inconceivable, having lacked the experience of being recognized as distinct from their mother or father.

The need for admiration, largely unconscious at the beginning of the process of trying to reach self-awareness, correlates with a deficiency in affection, care, and repose. Self-esteem issues are concealed by projecting the image of a “powerful” individual. It’s crucial to acknowledge the hidden elements of competitiveness, profound insecurity, and feelings of inferiority. When it’s understood that an excessive reliance on physical appearance stems from an inability to access one’s internal value, therapeutic focus can shift toward discovering a much richer, more complex “self.”

Another aspect of the therapeutic process involves reconnecting with the instinctive, something the sexual E3 has suppressed and tainted by putting it at the service of neurotic seduction, distancing themselves from pleasure, spontaneity, and eroticism. The first step is to release the plastic rigidity in body and expression, unshackling the artificial image, *dirtying* it, like a merry child rolling in the mud. This process aims to reclaim the freedom of gestures and movements, primarily focusing on rediscovering pleasure for its own sake. It’s about experiencing the body as more than a foreign object that can be molded to the taste of others, which the sexual E3s have done all their lives. The goal is to perceive the body as “me,” as “mine,” and bestow upon it the human and sacred respect it’s been denied.

Feeling alive in a raw, physical sense—distinct from the controlled image—empowers the sexual E3 to reclaim lost vitality, anchor themselves in the present, and thaw the internal coldness that has stifled them so much, robbing them of spontaneity. This brings them to a new tangible, authentic reality, which allows them to disentangle and disidentify from fantasies and idealized self-images.

Dance therapy brought me immense pleasure and joy. Dancing during the SATs made my emotions more intense, and authentic movement allowed me to rediscover spontaneity and relish the joy of simply being with myself, flowing with the music.

Following these sessions, I always clearly felt a shift from a state of self-control and the need to make a positive impression to a state of genuine joy, love, and grace that settled in over the course of the week. During spontaneous dance therapy done with closed eyes, I surrender to a heightened state of awareness, reconnecting with an unusual strength and agility, which, for me, has a therapeutic function. It brings about a sense of well-being and optimal integration on physical, emotional, and psychic levels.

Adopting a meditative discipline is the basis of any search for self-knowledge with existential depth. It’s fundamental in the transformative journey of a sexual E3 to embrace a meditation practice, grounding the restless and busy mind in the present moment, and learning to observe their tendency to create falsehoods. This involves recognizing the escapes that hinder their contact with inner and outer reality, prevent them from feeling, stifle their spontaneity, and repress their intuition and surrender in relationships with themselves and others.

Meditation helps to cultivate an intimate bond with themselves, fostering a compassionate attitude that isn’t focused on improvement but allows change to unfold effortlessly from the depths of the soul. Given the sexual E3’s low self-esteem, which often manifests as a critical and rejecting stance toward their inner world, meditation offers a genuinely loving perspective towards themselves—an aspect often sought desperately in pleasing others and especially in the fantasies of romantic love projected onto their partners.

As this inner attitude develops, it extends to interactions with others. It’s at this point that the sexual E3 begins to see that there’s something greater, found in being rather than appearing. Self-deception and the compulsion to please, which are, in essence, attempts to alleviate anxiety and

secure connections with others while avoiding the anticipated pain of rejection, then stop in a natural way, as a result of a conscious presence in the here and now. The cultivation of an internal observer through meditative practice creates a strong, invisible internal structure for the sexual E3, enabling them to embrace the feared emptiness and rest there without fear.

Exploring Eastern psychology, particularly the Buddhist understanding of existence, provided me with insights into the human soul and our psychological processes. While I learned many techniques, driven by a sort of “spiritual gluttony” at the beginning of my journey, the practice I truly embraced for its simplicity and effectiveness was Vipassana. Consistent Vipassana practice granted me a heightened self-awareness, offering a deeper understanding of emotions, unresolved psychological conflicts, and my truest aspirations.

Beyond this initial awareness, Vipassana meditation almost always produced in me a greater detachment from more negative feelings. It felt like I was visiting the healthier aspects of myself, bringing back clarity, serenity, empathy, and receptivity. This significantly improved the quality of my daily experiences, and I could easily discern the difference in the day’s quality when I skipped meditation. Regular meditation became a way to rest within myself, exploring another dimension of consciousness that somehow connected me to a more genuine source of love and joy. It affirmed my belief that the source of my nourishment resides within, showing me the path to address my lack of affection.

We conclude with the account of a transformation process of a Brazilian sexual E3 through experiences with ayahuasca:

In addition to the resources provided by the SAT School, I want to emphasize the significant impact that experiences with sacred plants, especially ayahuasca, had on my journey, given its accessibility in Brazil. I participated in various rituals, ranging from doctrinal formats with Christian influence to more free or shamanic ceremonies, which are my favorites. These experiences reaffirmed the importance of the spiritual dimension as the primary source of meaning in my life. The ecstatic states I have encountered with these plants served as powerful catalysts in my self-transformation process, helping me to go through important aspects of the ego and overcoming its stages.

In one of the first meetings, I came into contact with deep and unsuspected pains. I remember screaming, pierced by immense suffering in my chest, the nature of which I couldn’t specify but that must have been harbored for a long time. In this moment, the other participants embraced me with much love, allowing me to recognize my own pain for the first time and surrender to the caring support of others. Following this catharsis, I realized that I, too, deserved care and felt compassion for myself. A wonderful sense of love and unity engulfed me, connecting me with all present and those in my memories, bringing me great joy for my existence and deep gratitude for my life. Breaking through the wall that separated me from my own pain was necessary to establish the initial connection with my loving source, with my true self.

Another experience that I consider transformative occurred when I was granted the grace to witness my own light—the beauty of my Self—and feel the ecstasy of being myself. I felt so much love and reverence for myself as I never had before. I saw the purity, truth, love, joy, and goodness within me. Finally, the real value I sought in myself was appearing, gradually calming many enslaving aspects of the E3 ego.

I have freed myself from the need for external validation, from the sense of lack and the constant need for attention. I feel more at ease, less insecure, and less controlling of myself. Actually, I would say that I’m making peace with my ego. It’s a complete shift in consciousness. Vanity is giving way to dignity, self-respect, and responsibility for myself. Outwardly, it might look like I’m doing the same

things, but the internal motivation now stems from my deepest desires, not dictated by others or in the name of a self-image.

Steps of self-knowledge

Recovering body consciousness

One effective way to revive the soul and reconnect with emotions is through body-centric practices such as conscious breathing, massage, dance, and spontaneous movement. Engaging in activities that bring awareness aids in moving the body's energy and rediscovering vital essence.

Breaking the false image

Sexual E3s must learn to allow themselves to fall apart, to let themselves unravel, especially during a breakup or disagreement, instead of hastily attempting to fix things without genuine emotional engagement. Embracing moments of chaos, residing in uncertainty, dissatisfaction, insecurity, frustration, anxiety, and helplessness presents a significant challenge. Learning to permit the other person to express anger or distress without rushing into automatic reconciliation and accepting emotional distance—all of this can be learned by the sexual E3 when they understand that their impulse to please and seduce, rooted in the ego, only makes them superficial and distances them from their Being.

Navigating through this transition involves confronting the support derived from the false, empty image that lingers once they learn the “truth.” It feels like standing on shaky ground in a chaotic world that appears entirely fake. At first, this awareness of deceit isn’t perceived as a relief but rather as something overwhelming, without reference points. It’s like living in a vacuum, unable to distinguish between dream and reality, without the familiar defense mechanism of constructing fantasies to endure the harsh reality. Many people describe this period as a fear of irrevocably losing themselves, a sensation of not knowing “who I am,” doubting the possibility of an existence based on the genuine experience of being; of existing within themselves.

If the sexual E3 receives encouraging support during this time, the path of transformation remains open: to truly exist, to be and feel complete.

Acknowledging the shadow

Exploring the darker aspects of themselves, confronting fear, coming to terms with aggression, envy, jealousy, competitiveness, and manipulation is no small feat for the sexual E3, because their defense mechanisms resist unveiling their true self. Letting go of the façade, keenly observing without relegating everything to the shadows, abstaining from concealment or judgment is the path towards completeness. Seeing the shadow, embracing vulnerability, and revealing authentic aspects pave the way for genuine connections and intimacy—an experience hindered by the compulsive barrier of their complacent mask.

Letting go of fantasies

The renunciation of fantasies confronts the sexual E3 with great discomfort and anxiety, for it is there that the distortion and plasticization of their world began. Fantasies, in general, act as anesthetic shields, perpetuating the sadness of this subtype.

Halting the constant doing

The sexual E3's incessant doing revolves around constructing their image and, more precisely, solving others' problems. Ceasing this compulsive doing means recognizing the control they exercise over others by fulfilling what they assume they need, acknowledging their individuality and independence, and creating a neutral space for listening—to others and, foremost, to themselves. Embracing the emptiness of this unique inner void, distinct from the psychological void, validates their emotions and thoughts, allowing their actions to stem from a connection with their true selves, and be the result of intentional decision-making.

Solitude and/or isolation

What aids in connecting with themselves, fostering that intimate contact that reinforces their own foundation to avoid losing themselves in others, is the silence of meditation.

Fruits of the transformation journey

Daring to be themselves

Without relying on seduction or masks, they will embrace their intrinsic value, navigating through deep-rooted feelings of shame. They'll find the courage to be vulnerable, give themselves permission to make mistakes, and become more genuine, more human, and more connected to their true self.

Relinquishing control

Letting go, giving up control, learning to trust in others and themselves, going with the flow, being present with what is, not constantly doing—these steps lead them to put faith in a higher power or “God” that will take care of things, even amid anxiety and fear. It’s through this process that they rediscover and get closer to their divine nature.

Sense of humor and contact with nature

A natural sense of humor emerges as the inner child and instinctive aspects are increasingly allowed to play, have fun, and express themselves without the judgment of a critical superego.

As a nurturing source and a means of connecting with the essence of life, the real and the authentic, it helps to spend more time with nature.

Taking back their power

Daring to take back and embrace their inner power and strength, letting go of false roles like pseudo-security, feigned compassion, and protection-seeking shyness, empowers them to take responsibility and hold themselves accountable in life. It’s the moment when they can finally get out of abusive or codependent relationships. Confronting their compulsive attempts to manipulate through victimization and complaining helps them transform neurotic weakness into a natural strength.

Understanding limits

Recognizing and respecting their own limits, being able to say no, renouncing manipulative complacency, along with passionate insatiability, supports them in the journey of not merging entirely with their partner and growing as a person.

Confronting personal limits exposes the mask of omnipotence and indispensability, making them more authentic and humane. They come to understand that others also have limitations that come with being human. In their desire to merge to feel secure and loved, they overlook the boundaries of others and constantly transgress them, either unintentionally or simply because they feel entitled to do so.

When they're able to manage the anxiety that distance evokes, they develop a healthy sense of boundaries and space. It allows for a more fluid dance between closeness and distance in relationships.

Awareness

The awareness gained in this process allows the sexual E3 to establish an intimate connection with their inner self, recognize and break free from automatisms, and slow down their neurotic compulsions. It makes it easier for them to move more deliberately and express themselves in a more authentic manner. This deepens their interpersonal relationships, making new encounters more satisfying and surprising.

Humility

As they move beyond the “vain need” to be more or someone different, and manage to be open and trusting while accepting their own attitudes and limits, they naturally become more generous with others. This becomes the pathway to genuine contact. By recognizing arrogance and self-importance, renouncing the desire to be special, and accepting themselves as just one among many, they naturally find a place for humility.

Compassion and self-compassion

They develop compassion by allowing themselves to get in touch with their pain, acknowledging the wounded inner child's need for a loving inner mother to welcome and protect it.

The sexual E3s love the image they project of themselves, not their true selves. When they tap into their hidden sensitivity and repressed pain, embracing authenticity, they learn to understand and truly love themselves. By extension, they begin to actually see others and develop empathy for their suffering. The focus is shifted from seeing people merely as tools to feed their expectations to recognizing them as real individuals. Understanding that love means giving themselves over, not demanding, and allows for self-nourishment from within or a higher source, a true blessing on this transformative path.

Allowing natural instincts to flow

Contacting their inner child, acknowledging its needs, desires, and innocence, allows the sexual E3 to rediscover the joy of sexuality. Entering relationships where they don't have to make an effort to be accepted becomes a more manageable task.

Participating in creative, passionate, and unconventional activities, such as painting, moving and dancing, acting, joking around, singing, and immersing in other highly sensory experiences helps them let go of their rigidity. This not only brings pleasure but also greatly enriches their life.

Finding meaning in life

Discovering meaning in life involves giving oneself over in an authentic way, not to please others but to serve and give back. This requires reconnecting with oneself; otherwise, it becomes mere ego nourishment. It's about sowing and bearing fruit. When the sexual E3 recognizes the false facade, genuine goodness emerges, distinct from what they previously tried to portray.

There are many aspects that remain unchanged in therapeutic work; true transformation lies not in changing things but the relationship with them. Embracing them from a new perspective, even if they haven't changed, establishes a fresh connection, including with the inner child and the emotions rooted in the early self from childhood. As awareness grows, the person gains a broader view of their virtues and flaws. With the “real strength” derived from heightened consciousness, self-acceptance becomes easier, leading to a departure from vanity, grandiose fantasies, or inferiority complexes as

fundamental sources of love and approval. Having greater clarity makes a person less enslaved to their passions.

SEXUAL E3: BIOGRAPHY

by Lorena García

It took me a long time to recognize myself as a sexual E3. Finally, after the whole SAT process, I could truly see myself and realize that it had been important for me to be confused for so long, and that I could only look at myself through a compassionate lens when I was mature enough. Prior to this, I had rejected this trait and subtype. Falsehood was all Greek to me. I didn't perceive myself as false; rather, I often found myself being overly honest, discussing my intimate details unintentionally and baring my soul. I finally discovered that falsehood was precisely this – a lack of internal listening, prioritizing external expectations and what I thought others wanted from me. A kind of emotional prostitution, where I sold false emotions.

Claudio Naranjo consistently saw this in me and mentioned it. I imagine that he patiently awaited my realization. This revelation occurred during my first SAT as a collaborator, an SAT Education in Chile. Scenes from my entire life flooded my mind, like what they say about the moment of death. My initial sentiment with these scenes was that I was born with this ego fixation. I was unwanted from the very beginning. My mother tried to abort me with an injection from a doctor friend since, at that time, abortion was impossible in Spain. I feel like I was born with a sense of guilt for being alive.

According to my mother, I didn't cry or complain. She insists I was the sweetest girl in the world. That's how I remember myself, always striving to be well-behaved and avoid causing any inconvenience, because I was born feeling like a nuisance and often believed I had no right to exist. I was born in the 1960s amid an environment of madness, drugs, and apparent freedom. My mother, an English sexual E1, had moved to Spain, where she fell in love with my father, an alcoholic sexual E8, who had a lot of mistresses. She was his favorite at the time. My father already had two daughters with another woman. Everyone worked in the film industry, and it was the hippie era (1966), so everything was allowed within that environment, in stark contrast to Franco's Spain.

The relationship between my parents was very short-lived. My mother, an only child, didn't want me to be one as well. Despite knowing that whatever she had going on with my father had no future, she got pregnant again. She had my brother, who is a year younger than me. My father visited the hospital to see him when he was born, and then eloped with my mother's best friend for twelve years.

As my father left my mother and didn't marry her, during the Francoist era they didn't want to issue a birth certificate for my brother and me. If there was no church marriage, you were practically nonexistent as a child. My mother, who is far from being Catholic, had to baptize us in order to get it. Then, she devised a clever trick so we would have my father's surnames: she gave them to her own mother. Even today, when I go to the civil registry for my birth certificate, I have to go to a special department, treated as an outcast, a reminder of the illegitimate daughter status I once held (I am no longer illegitimate as my father acknowledged me at the age of twenty-four).

There has always been an external force influencing my feeling of not having the right to exist. I often interpreted this as being special and different from the rest, perhaps as a survival mechanism—a

form of arrogance shielding me from the associated pain. It's as if I internalized an idea from my parents that being in the world requires being different and a rule-breaker.

This sense of not deserving to exist and the need to deceive to survive has made me always want to go unnoticed through life. There's a desire to blend in like a chameleon in order not to be seen, sometimes even fantasizing about being invisible. It's as if revealing myself would expose my dark side, a forbidden aspect of me. In invisibility, I also find respite from upholding the perfect image I believe others expect.

So my father literally ran away. He left, like I said, with my mother's best friend, an Australian who also worked in film and television. For the first twelve years of my life, he never called or wrote a letter. My mother would occasionally pull out photo albums, and show us pictures of my father. She would tell us wonderful stories about him, and I grew up convinced that he left because I wasn't worthy of having such a good dad. She also told us that he was an alcoholic (my mother's always been open with us about everything). I grew up with a fantasy that at any moment, I might meet him. Passing a homeless man on the street coming home from school, I'd imagine he could be my father, that I'd save him, and that this would make him love me.

As an adult, I always looked for men I could save, and the ones I was most attracted to were the lustful ones. My fantasy was that they needed rescuing, until the realization dawned that it was me who needed it to save myself. It frustrated me that they didn't want me to be their savior.

The most important for me have always been men. I've invested a lot of energy into always being in a relationship and into my partners. The emptiness of not having one has been a rare experience for me. I think the relationship with my father, or rather the non-relationship, his absence, has had a lot to do with this.

When he left, my mother had to work very hard to support us, and we saw very little of her. Throughout our childhood, we had several caregivers. She says that when I was two years old and my brother was nine months old, she found me clinically dead in the hallway. I had no pulse and wasn't breathing apparently. She left the house with her legs shaking so badly she couldn't walk. A neighbor picked me up and took us to the hospital. When I was on a stretcher about to be resuscitated, I miraculously came back. They placed electrodes on my head for examination and asked my mother to leave me alone with a psychiatrist. After a while, she returned, and the psychiatrist asked her if I had siblings. My mother said yes. The psychiatrist then explained that I was in desperate need of attention and affection, emphasizing the importance of hugging my brother as much as necessary and spending much more time with me. I had supposedly died from a lack of affection and my mother's gaze. The disappearance of my father likely played a role as well. The clinical studies by doctors could never explain what had happened to me, only this psychiatrist. I didn't die again, and I suppose that this must have influenced the formation of my brother's character, who is E5.

Then, Paqui entered our lives—a sixteen-year-old girl just out of a village in Cuenca. She was to take care of the house and us. Paqui adored my brother and me. At times, I even felt like she was my mother. She came with us everywhere. If we had to travel for my mother's work, she would come too. We visited her village a few times and loved it. There was no toilet or shower, and we did our business in a pen with the chickens. I recall those moments now with a sense of great freedom and longing.

I have only fond memories of Paqui. I guess because she was so young, she could play a lot with us, and prepare surprises, always cheerful and very patient. I used to watch her clean and cook while she looked after us, and even when I was very young, I helped her take care of my brother and with the household tasks. Paqui represents the joy of my childhood; the rest I remember with profound sadness.

Paqui left when I was six years old. She got married, and then, I saw very little of her. Her departure was devastating for me, and I think that's when I began to sink into a depression that persisted for a long time, only becoming fully aware of it through therapy as an adult.

My mother had married an Argentine film director, and when Paqui left, they were starting to separate. I didn't go to their wedding. They got married in London, and during that time, we visited Paqui's village. Upon returning for school, the teacher, on the daily attendance list, suddenly called me by a different last name that I didn't even recognize. This last name stuck with me for six months, just like that marriage. Once again, I didn't know who I was. They changed my name and my identity.

Another man disappeared from our lives. Then came others, and my mother seemed to never have time for us—either she was working or with her current boyfriend, at least that's how I remember it. At the time, we still lived in Francoist Spain, surrounded by fascist neighbors. But my mother was very hippie. She wore see-through dresses without underwear, and constantly smoked the marijuana she grew on the terrace, in full view of all those neighbors.

My grandmother, my mother's mother, moved to Spain, to a village in Cuenca, with her second husband, an English film director who never learned Spanish, and retired with my grandmother to that village to paint. He was an alcoholic, and my grandmother bought him gin that came in very cheap carboys until he fell ill with cirrhosis. My mother gave my grandmother some marijuana seeds to plant in her garden, without telling her what it was. When she returned to town, she saw that the plants were huge, towering over the garden wall. She had to tell my grandma what they were in case the civil guard passed by. From that moment on, my grandmother began to harvest marijuana every year, and they shared it between the two of them. Since my grandfather couldn't drink, my grandmother gave him joints.

With this family situation, some neighbors felt sorry for my brother and me, and others didn't let their children play at our house. They looked at us strangely, and I wanted to be like my friends, with their normal mothers and fathers. I envied their homes, their families, and clothes they wore, always brand-name. We could never afford them, because my mother never had any money.

I decided that to win people over, I had to help them, and that's how they viewed me—good, helpful, and never causing trouble. I crafted an image of my family that I wanted people to see and started going from house to house, doing chores for my neighbors. I would buy bread for some of them, and take care of the children. I also swept the playground, which they all told me I was very good at. I was doing all this when I was eight years old, and they praised my responsibility so much that there was a neighbor who would leave her nine-month-old baby with me every afternoon. When I was ten years old, a family started paying me to take care of their daughter, and another neighbor hired me for house cleaning.

I had to grow up very fast. I developed a strategy to be noticed—seducing men and playing the role of the perfect daughter for my mother: helping around the house, avoiding disturbance or making noise, and intuitively reading adults' expectations.

I was a child remarkably adaptable to everything. I learned to easily disconnect from reality, controlling myself in order to survive my difficult environment, for fear of descending into madness and going crazy.

With my mother, I learned to please her so that she would give me recognition. She always focused on my appearance. She constantly criticized my physical attributes. I started to care more about my clothes and looks to meet her standards, especially regarding my hair, which she always picked on. It kept covering my face—another attempt not to draw attention due to shyness. Regardless of my efforts, I never felt good about my physique, consistently fixating on what I lacked rather than appreciating what I possessed. At the same time, I had the confidence to seduce and fall in love with almost any man.

Throughout childhood, my most recurring fantasy was to have a family. In private moments, I played out scenarios of having a husband and children who were always together and never separated—a secret that I didn't share with anyone. It was that need to have the family I never had.

This unmet need has followed me all my life. Then it became a dream, which has always been with me until I've realized it, and although my family is far from perfect, I do experience happiness often.

From my childhood, I remember doing things alone or with my brother, whom I took care of because my mother spent her time working. She didn't set limits for us. That was another thing I envied about my friends: the limits imposed by their parents. I vividly recall moments with my mother when I'd ask her to do something or go somewhere, secretly hoping she would say no. But she never did, and that made me feel very lonely and abandoned for some reason. I felt like she said yes just to get it over with as soon as possible, and not have to spend time with me. Having experienced this, I understand very well how limits have to do with love, and now, as a mother myself, I see how difficult it is to set them.

Another example of how neglected we were was when my brother nearly drowned in a pool. In our neighborhood community, there was a pool, and during nap time, only one lady was sleeping on a bench. Neither my brother nor I knew how to swim – we were around five and six years old, left alone in the pool with no one to supervise. My brother was playing and fell in, and I stood there looking at him but didn't react. I was looking at him without actually seeing him. A neighbor on a balcony noticed, shouted to another neighbor who was sleeping, and they rushed in to save him. It was around the time Paqui had left, when I believe my depression began. I felt a lack of energy, an incapacity to react, and immense sadness.

Also around that time, when I was about six years old, I developed rheumatic fever. My knees started to ache in the cold while going to school. Though the pain was mild, I recall exaggerating it because when I fell ill, my mother would care for me a lot. She got worried when I told her about it, and I remember internally convincing myself that my knees were aching more and more, so that she would listen to me. It feels as if I provoked that illness out of a desperate need to be seen again. They took me to the doctor, conducted tests, and it turned out to be a very serious disease that could be fatal as it affected my heart. The doctor instructed my mother that I had to stay in bed without moving, and they began giving me very painful injections. This continued for four years until they operated on my tonsils. Then the disease disappeared.

When I was nine years old, my mother started doing transcendental meditation. She told my brother and me that it had changed her life, and brought us to a large house for a session, where we were dressed in white, and smelled incense. Each of us had to offer a toy or object dear to us. I was led into a semi-dark room, and I remember being afraid. The instructor explained to me briefly how this meditation worked, and provided me with a mantra that he told me was mine alone to keep, saying that I could never reveal it. I treated it like a secret. He left me there for a while to practice alone with my eyes closed. I, being very obedient, didn't open my eyes until he came back, although I wanted to do it very much and already leave that place. It took forever. I was fully immersed in the experience, attuned to the sounds, yet unsure of what I was meant to do.

I then practiced this meditation at home a lot. I felt obliged to do it, though I remember that it actually helped me, and that I even sat down and engaged in it for pleasure. Eventually, I abandoned the routine but the mantra has always stayed with me.

At the age of ten, I remember a moment of awakening. My mother went from not seeing me at all to treating me like her friend. She took my brother and me to a New Year's Eve party where there were only adults drinking and doing drugs. I asked a lot of questions about drugs, and everyone told me it wasn't stuff for kids. There was a man who was very drunk, and I guess under the influence of something else, giving me an endless lecture about why kids shouldn't ask certain things. I remember this awakening vividly, marked by a surge of anger toward that man and my mother. The next day I asked my mother for explanations, and she revealed to me that what I was smoking was marijuana and that I shouldn't tell anyone because it was illegal. From that point on, I received the green light to

enter the living room when she and Fausto (her partner at the time) were alone. I started smoking with them, and they seemed to enjoy my company. Later, I found out that they were doing more drugs, like LSD.

I always had friends quite a bit older than me. When I was ten years old, I had fourteen-year-old friends who were cutting classes at school and already going out with boys. I started imitating them to fit in and feel at their level. I started skipping classes too and going to big department stores to steal with two friends from school whom I corrupted (at least that's what the school principal accused me of when she found out). We would take a bus to the center of Madrid (about half an hour from school), enter the store with a plastic bag each, and exit with it full of things. When I was ten years old, I started rebelling in response to the lack of limits and attention I received. I started doing poorly in school, which no longer interested me. I also started lying at home, until they found out about the truancy. That's when my mother became more stern than ever, but it was too late for me.

For my mother, the most important thing and the source of her greatest suffering were her partners; at least, that's my recollection. She always had partners whom she had to take care of and financially support; the one who was with us the most was Fran, a Cuban film director and another alcoholic, who spent the day in bed with a bottle of gin beside him. They fought a lot, and he would hit her. It was the norm in my house, and many days I would come home from school and find them in the middle of a fight, with Fran threatening to throw a chair at her head. I would walk in, see these kinds of scenes, and walk back out as if nothing happened. Again, I would disconnect.

Even as a very young child, I sensed men's attraction toward me. My relationship with men was always strange; I barely knew them, yet I was very curious. What I knew was that they would be around at home for a while, and then they would leave. I remember the first time an exhibitionist showed me his penis. I was seven years old, in the garden at home, and he strolled up and down the street, exposing himself to me. I just stared, looking at him with wide eyes. Later in my childhood and as an adult, I came across many such scenes, like men hiding in their cars or in a park, watching me while they masturbated.

The first man in my life was my father. He showed up when I was twelve years old, still drinking heavily, already an alcoholic. I was smoking joints openly at home by then. The same day I met my father, I also met my two sisters (daughters of the woman before my mother). Suddenly, I had a lot of siblings, a lot of competition for my father's attention during his short visit. On that trip, Lisa, the Australian (the one he had been with all those years), called to inform him that she had become pregnant. The doctors had told her it would be impossible for her, yet just as my father made the trip to meet his children, she conceived.

I remember that meeting with my father and my sisters, I felt as if I didn't belong, and was making great effort to fit in and to make up for the twelve lost years in a short time. I could see that my sisters were doing much better than me; they were also older.

My father stayed with us for a few days and then returned to Australia, promising to take my brother and me on vacation to Sydney after a few months. I didn't quite understand why he was taking us and not my sisters. It seemed to me that my sisters were his favorites, and I felt like he hardly saw me.

We boarded a plane to Sydney, suddenly arriving in a wonderful country with breathtaking weather and nature. My brother Ed, the Aussie, was a few months old when we arrived, and I became his babysitter. There I met Lisa, my father's wife and my mother's friend. To me, she was the picture of the perfect mother. During the trip, my suitcase got lost, and Lisa bought me a lot of clothes. I had never had so many beautiful clothes. She was very affectionate with us, and we lived in luxury, not having to worry about money, in a house in the middle of the tropics next to idyllic beaches. Suddenly, we had two dogs and another family, seemingly happy.

My father drank from the moment he woke up until he went to bed. He had his harem of women, some of whom were prostitutes, and he didn't even try to hide it. Looking back, my stepmother Lisa must have been either blind or willfully ignorant, because I imagine she had been putting up with it for many years.

During my childhood, I could distinguish between those who acknowledged my presence and those who did not. Those who saw me treated me as the child I was; above all, I recall a sense of peace and affection when I remember that kind of treatment. Those who didn't see me, for example my father, treated me as an adult because of their own confusion. My father doesn't know how to relate to the female sex in any way other than sexually.

Whenever my father had children, he systematically separated from his wives. Despite being with Lisa for twelve years, the birth of Ed marked the beginning of their separation, which just happened to coincide with our visit. At one point, Lisa left for Melbourne, where her father lived. It was then that my father began to sexually abuse me in front of my brother. Initially, it was a shock to me, having never experienced any sexual contact. It left me paralyzed, and although I didn't like it, it became the only way I could have a relationship with my father. I essentially became his girlfriend at the age of twelve. The abuse persisted the whole time I was there.

He managed to extend our stay in Australia (we were there for six months in total). I went everywhere with him, attending his parties, seeing him go to whores, and I started to feel very confused. I fell in love with him and began to experience jealousy. There were many days when I skipped school because he would take me to the movies or to his office to assist in scriptwriting or reading, expecting me to offer my opinions. He treated me like his girlfriend.

One night he was very drunk. Lisa had already left for Melbourne with Ed. We had been at a party with some of his friends, and we took a cab home, which was about forty-five minutes outside of town. On the way, he kept saying that when he arrived home, he was going to kill himself. When we got there, he wanted me to sleep with him all the time. I was angry and I guess scared, so I locked myself in Ed's room and got into bed. My brother Andy was sleeping in another room with a friend. My dad kept telling me to come out, and that he was going to kill himself if I didn't. I didn't listen to him. I just wanted this nightmare to end. Suddenly, I heard a gunshot followed by silence. I got out of bed, and I remember thinking that I wished he had succeeded in killing himself. I would feel a great relief. I made my way from my room to his. When I entered his room, I saw that he had fired into a wall. He looked at me, laughed, and said, "I missed." I went in, took the shotgun from him, and left. I hid it under my brother's bed, returned to my room, and locked the door. He knocked on my door all night, asking for the gun.

During all of this, I recall acting like an adult, with a lot of common sense and composure in the face of everything happening to me. Simultaneously, there was confusion and teenage-like emotions of infatuation and passion. While I craved my father's touch and needed his affection, I didn't want sexual contact and avoided it as much as possible. I never experienced a bond with my father as a father and daughter, and I never knew what it was like to feel a father's love. The first and only time I experienced it was in a dream, where I hurt my hip and my father tenderly massaged me with concern, devoid of any sexual undertones. I sensed his love for me then. This dream was very important for me, allowing me to feel what it was like to receive loving contact from a father figure. It's a dream I've had as an adult, already undergoing the SAT process. As a mother now, witnessing my daughter's relationship with her own father and seeing her joy in being with both of her parents, I realize I never had that.

We went back for Christmas to Madrid, when it was summer in Australia. Another thing my father did was teach me how to ride a 125cc motorbike. He really likes motorcycles and wanted me to learn. I remember we went riding one day, and I was very angry with him out of jealousy and confusion; he'd just told me he'd spent the night with a whore. I got on the bike, and accelerated the

bike aggressively, resulting in a crash. A pedal got stuck near my Achilles tendon, which almost left me lame. With this injury and crutches, I arrived back in Madrid. I didn't tell my mother about the motorcycle incident; instead I told her I had fallen into the pool.

In Australia, I began to suffer from fainting spells. Suddenly, my blood pressure would drop, and I would collapse. I suppose it served as a defense mechanism against everything happening to me. They never took me to the doctor to see what was wrong. I also started to develop nearsightedness. I always gave myself the explanation that there were a lot of things I didn't want to see.

The return was terrifying. I didn't want to be in Madrid, I wanted to go back to Australia all the time. I had fallen madly in love, and I couldn't confide it in anyone. My depression continued to get worse. My mother learned about the motorcycle accident from a letter I sent to my father, and she forbade me to return until I came of age. She didn't find out about the abuse, although my brother mentioned it to her one night in front of me. It sounded like a joke, and she didn't pay it any mind.

Upon returning to Spain, they enrolled me in a different school. I had always attended an English school, which is very different from a Spanish school. I had loved school in Australia because I was treated there as an individual, receiving the attention I had missed in Spain. I felt accountable for my learning, a mindset encouraged by the respectful support given to students facing difficulties. If you struggled with something, they wouldn't criticize but instead expressed concern, as if sharing the burden with the student. When I returned to Spain, and transitioned to a school that claimed to offer a bilingual education but leaned predominantly Spanish, all the joy for learning I gained in Australia evaporated, and I began to hate going to school. The only silver lining to this school was the friends I started to make.

I had a teacher who would call me to the blackboard, and mock and humiliate me in front of the entire class because I struggled with division (in English education, you divide backwards). This teacher caused me a lot of distress, and I started to fail all my subjects. I only managed to pass with an "A" in one subject taught in English. Then they transferred me to an English school, but it was too late. I decided I didn't want to attend school and I never went, not even when my mother made the effort to get out of bed and drive me. When she was gone, I would run away.

I had several motivations for skipping classes, but the main one was boys and my friends, all older than me. Almost all of them went to high school, and when I ran away from my school, I would join them there. They had few classes, so I was always with them. I would drink liters of beer or muscatel in a park, play guitar, sing and smoke joints. I also started dating my first boyfriend, whom I stole from a close friend while she was away on vacation. On Sundays, he and other Falangists ran a stand where they sold fascist flags in various forms, like stickers or cloth. I didn't hold strong political beliefs, but I decided to become a fascist too because I didn't want to feel left out, and because it was fashionable among my friends at the time. I also think I did it to annoy my mother. Returning home, I would try to convince my family about the virtues of fascism, and my mother, of course, wanted to kill me. I was mainly targeting England for taking Gibraltar away from us. I wanted to hit her where it would hurt most.

My mother started taking me to a psychologist, mainly because of my school problems, and I went for a while. I never revealed anything about my father, however. I never felt the confidence since the psychologist talked to my mother after almost every session.

What I did achieve is having her persuade my mother to take me out of school. I wanted to study music, something I always aspired to, but my mother never bought me an instrument or encouraged it. My father's family were pianists, and so was my father, among other things. According to my father, my great-great-grandfather was a pianist who lived and played in the court of King Alfonso XIII. My father has always claimed that we have royal blood because my grandfather was the son of the King. He says that my great-great-grandfather married a courtesan, and that the King had relations with his courtesans. It's a tale to keep our sense of uniqueness and specialness.

While in Australia, my father got me a guitar, and I began giving lessons. I had been giving them at school since I was ten, when, finally, I had received the guitar as a Christmas and birthday gift from the whole family. I stopped going to school at fourteen, and went instead to a music academy two hours away from home, recommended by a musician to my mother. My brother started playing around with my guitar, and I taught him everything I had learned. Being left-handed, he learned to play as a righty because they didn't buy him one. He got attached to my guitar and never parted with it again. He is the one with the talent for music and now he's a musician.

When I was fifteen, I had my first serious boyfriend, whom I fell in love with and lost my virginity to. I didn't feel ready, but since I had older friends who had already made love, I didn't want to be left out again. I suffered in this relationship for many years. He was in love with another woman, whom he met regularly. Love was already the central point in my life, and the pain was overwhelming. I wanted to die. I spent three days in my room, constantly crying. My mother helped me a lot, drawing from her own experiences. She's always been there for me in my romantic dilemmas, and in those moments, I felt her presence as a mother more than ever before.

This first love's name was Carlos, and with him began my journey with hard drugs. Carlos had a sister my age, who became my close friend, and with whom I began to experiment more with drugs. Her name was Concha. I started taking LSD with her, and we smoked lots of joints. I was introduced to the street world.

Concha and I experimented with nearly all drugs, except for heroin. Concha swore she wouldn't do it because she knew the danger. The drugs provided a temporary escape from the pain caused by my relationship with Carlos, which never ended because I kept seeing him. Occasionally, we would get together for a night, but the next day he would disappear, leaving me feeling empty and sad. During this period with Concha, I also began my promiscuous phase, and every man I slept with I saw as a trophy. I started compiling lists of names, sleeping with a different one (or sometimes more) each night, and adding them to my list. It was a futile attempt to ease the pain and emptiness, which was only getting bigger. Each man made that feeling of emptiness grow.

With Concha, I often ran away from home, leading my mother to call the police several times. She would file a complaint, and then not withdraw it. Later, as an adult, I even had the police drag me out of a hotel bed during a theater tour, because of an old complaint my mother never withdrew.

I was still fifteen years old then. Concha was Galician, and we went to Galicia a few times with no money. We would sneak on the train, and in Galicia, we met with another brother of Concha's, Manuel, a lawyer connected to the Galician mafia (he later ended up in jail). Suddenly, we lived a life of luxury. It was during this period that my involvement with cocaine began. I became Manuel's girlfriend while Concha entered a relationship with a mafia boss.

On the way back from a trip to Galicia, I met Sara, a student at a religious school. We became close friends, and the three of us were inseparable. My heroin era began with Sara. She became the girlfriend of a heroin addict named Curro, who ended up stealing everything from her family. Meanwhile, I had made friends with Alfonso, an orphan and also a heroin addict who practically lived on the streets. I became Alfonso's girlfriend, and we both started fooling around with heroin. Concha distanced herself; she was very afraid of this drug. We started snorting, and the first few times I remember wanting to die. I kept vomiting and couldn't move. After the first time, I said to myself "never again," but kept doing it because I didn't want to feel excluded.

We did a lot of stuff under the influence of Curro and Alfonso. They must have been our age or slightly older. They started saying that injecting the heroin made for a better experience. The first time I tried it, I lost consciousness and accidentally broke a bar sink with my head. It took three hours for someone to notice the pool of blood around my head—I hadn't even realized. Eventually, they took me to the hospital, where I received several stitches.

It was a time of living on the edge; the more dangerous the experience of dancing with death, the better. I didn't want to be alive anymore, and with each hit of heroin, the wish to die intensified. I had been in a very bad state for many years, and now things were seemingly falling into place, especially concerning my father. I later learned it's a normal process for women who have been abused. Before the abuse, the wounds of being abandoned by him for twelve years had already left their mark. During that period, it felt as though I was taking on his responsibility and guilt, which were so overwhelming that I wanted to die because I couldn't bear it. I felt immense shame. There was nothing tying me to life, no personal motivation or future prospects, nothing that truly mattered to me, so I didn't care if I put it all on the line.

This marked the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. Together with Curro and Alfonso, we started selling drugs on the street and stealing. We needed (at least) a daily fix. We injected ourselves with used syringes. There was a spot in a park fountain where junkies left them for others to use, and we used them until the needles deteriorated from use and became painful. Syringes cost money, and we didn't have that luxury.

My mother was unaware of everything. One day, a friend of hers came into my room, and saw a syringe on the floor. My mother found out that day, and decided to take me out of the country. She called my father on the phone, who, perhaps feeling guilty, came to escort us to England. It was an unusual scenario for me, being with both parents and sensing my father's concern. I would have liked to spend more time with them like this. I was taken to a village in southern England, where only one bus passed through each day. My role there was to work as an *au pair*, taking care of a six-month-old baby. I was sixteen years old, and a junkie in deep depression. I brought opium with me to smoke and get through withdrawal. That's when I found out that my father had quit drinking when I left at the age of twelve. I guess he realized what he had done to me, and the guilt led him to stay off the booze and drugs. He's always blamed his condition for what he did, never fully owning up to it. I suppose guilt also made him travel to Spain to save me. He wanted to take me to Australia, but my mother objected.

They left me there alone, and I really wanted to die. I lived with the family on the floor above the pub they owned, and naturally, they were oblivious to my struggles. I kept crying in the silence of my room. I replaced heroin with alcohol. It's miraculous how I got through the cold turkey. I somehow could function, and despite the pain in my body and all the withdrawal symptoms, I managed to care for the baby. I also cleaned the house and did the ironing. The family were very pleased with me, and I think the desire to look good put me in a very cooperative mindset. Perhaps feeling worse inside made me want to improve my self-image.

Although I resented my parents a lot for leaving me in that place when I was the one who needed to be taken care of, I later realized that taking on the responsibility of caring for a baby was probably what saved me. I was going through hell, from which I could momentarily escape. What astonishes me now is how effectively I concealed it—no one seemed to notice.

The village where I lived was called Fletching. There, I had several boyfriends who helped me hide what I was going through. They were all much older than me. The first one was twice my age (I was sixteen, and he was thirty-two), but that relationship didn't last long. Finally, John came along. He was the one I think I fell in love with, and he was ten years my senior. I spent every weekend with him, and befriended all his friends. They were all bikers with long hair and intimidating black leather outfits. They went everywhere in packs, and sometimes got into fights, although they were generally peaceful. They were very foul-mouthed, constantly picking on each other, and, of course, me, as I was the only girl in the group. There was a pool table in the pub where I worked, and I became an expert at pool, winning competitions. It amused them to take me from pub to pub, watching as I triumphed over the tables.

After six months in Fletching, my contract with that family ended, and I returned to Spain. My friends were still on heroin. Even Concha was hooked; she didn't inject but still smoked it. Sara was already prostituting herself. She had another Moroccan boyfriend, more of a delinquent, who was also her pimp. I found myself getting into that whole mess again, with Sara, her boyfriend Francisco, and his friend, whom I became romantically involved with. It was even worse than before. I didn't resort to prostitution like Sara, but we were always together, and Francisco was capable of killing to get money. He robbed gas stations, older women on the street, and on one occasion, stabbed someone and returned covered in blood, unsure if he had killed or not. I got hooked on heroin again.

This episode lasted six months and ended in betrayal. An acquaintance of mine had come from Amsterdam with a surplus of heroin, and she had thirty grams left to sell, equivalent to 500,000 pesetas at the time, which was a lot of money. She wasn't a junkie and wanted to sell it quickly. She told me about it, and I told my boyfriend. He suggested that he was going to rob a gas station with Francisco to get the money for the heroin. When they claimed to have the money, they called me to meet my friend. The plan was for me to receive the money, and I would make the exchange with her in the bathroom of a bar. When we arrived, Francisco seemed very nervous. He was carrying a newspaper with two large knives hidden in it. He explained that he was going to the bathroom with my friend because I didn't know what thirty grams looked like, but he did. Both went downstairs, and Francisco, wielding a knife, threatened my friend, and stole the heroin. He hurried back upstairs, saying, "Let's go." Sara, Francisco, and my boyfriend left the bar with him, and I could hardly react. They hopped into a cab in the blink of an eye. I was saying goodbye to my friend's boyfriend, who had stayed at the bar with us. When I saw them leave like that, I realized what had happened. I rushed to the bathroom and found my friend in shock. She never forgave me, and our paths never crossed again either.

I also never saw Sara and my boyfriend again. I went home and opened up to my mother, admitting that I was addicted again, telling her everything that had happened. I pleaded with her to send me back to England. I was afraid of being in Madrid. It was like I suddenly became aware of the danger of the world I was caught up in.

Coming out of that stage of my life, I felt like I had a guardian angel looking out for me, who helped me stay alive. I had played with death too much. Three of the men I had slept with died of AIDS, including Concha's brother Manuel. Concha is HIV-positive but manages it with medications that came later. I contracted hepatitis unknowingly (another resilient character trait). I found out the first time I was tested for AIDS, when the doctor said, "I have bad news to tell you," almost giving me a heart attack. Only to inform me that I had cleared hepatitis B. I've always believed some doctors are sadists.

Reflecting on that time now, it feels like it wasn't a part of my life. I was very ashamed of my family's conduct. I took the blame to preserve the perfect image of my parents, and I couldn't bear the shame, thinking I had caused the abuse and mistreatment. Trapped by it, I felt nothing I owned had any worth. I was very ashamed to express myself, even to speak, and I found solace only in drugs. The one that disconnected me the most from pain was heroin; with it, I felt nothing at all—the pain vanished, and so did the shame. It was like being dead while alive, and this brought me a strange sense of pleasure.

I went back to England, this time living with newlywed friends. At this point, I still couldn't put a name to my depression or even recognize it. I remember this period as one of the saddest in my life. I lived in a village amid the harsh English winter, where it gets dark at half-past three in the afternoon, in a house with no heating and only a trickle of hot water. Here I was, sixteen, almost seventeen, having no idea what I wanted to do with my life. I went back to my boyfriend, the Englishman, whom I only saw on weekends. These outings served as a refuge for me, offering a break from the harsh

reality. Our weekends were spent hopping from pub to pub, drinking and watching talented musicians play live.

I began an apprenticeship in real estate. I liked this job. I learned to type and write descriptions for the houses we sold. I had a very upbeat boss, who took me to play squash from time to time, attempting to teach me with little success (I've always been quite clumsy at sports). He got me very involved in the real estate business, and boosted my confidence by actually listening to me and valuing my opinions. He was one of the few men I knew then who took genuine interest in me and my growth, without wanting to get me into bed in return. A bit like I imagined a father should be.

After this job ended, I started another one in a construction company, managing the books and writing down numbers all day long. I had to get up every morning and leave the house, even in the freezing cold at night, without the chance to shower. Eventually, the company went bankrupt, and I was fired. I found myself unemployed, and started to mess around with drugs again.

I moved from where I lived to the house of a friend I met, who was married with a baby, but whose husband was out all day. We were always partying at her place. I was getting tired of my weekend boyfriend.

During my time in England, I honestly just wanted to go back to Australia, to my father. I was still a minor, and my mother had told me that I couldn't go back until I came of age. I was in the process of obtaining the visa to return to Australia, which was taking time. At almost nineteen, I finally went back and achieved what I had set out to do and more—I became my father's girlfriend. He lived in a mountain village, an hour and a half from Sydney, and practically took me hostage, turning into a possessive monster. When I arrived in Sydney, he had his harem, which he left when he started the relationship with me, under the condition that he could have me available sexually whenever he wanted, claiming me for himself twenty-four hours a day.

During this time, I did experience sexual and physical aggression. I had granted him permission, accepted the pact, and given him a free hand. He needed a lot of sexual activity, and I couldn't take it any longer. It was a real hell for me.

He forced me to quit smoking and drinking, and I found myself in another prison. I molded myself into what he wanted me to be, and although I was suffering, I put up with it again because I felt loved. I know that my father has loved me and loves me in his own way, but he misunderstands what love should look like due to his own past. He has a history of incest in his family, and witnessed it at home when he was little, from his aunts and his parents. My grandparents spent his entire childhood fighting—my grandfather was a communist, and my grandmother a fascist, who ended up calling the civil guard and put her husband in jail. While they were still together, my grandfather didn't sleep with his wife but with his own mother. All this has helped me understand my father's behavior. But not forgive him.

Occasionally, I managed to escape and visit my brother and stepmother in Sydney. Gradually, I started spending more time with them, and my stepmother offered me a job in her television production company. While I handled secretarial tasks, I also met with the writing team. It was a subject that fascinated me despite me keeping quiet. I learned a lot about developing TV series, and it provided a respite from the whole ordeal with my father. We saw each other less frequently, but he still tormented me whenever we did.

By this point, I had lost sight of who I was or what I wanted in life. My father decided that I should follow in his footsteps as a screenwriter and film director. He heard about a drama school that was relatively close to where he lived. He had been told that it offered courses in acting, screenwriting, and directing, and he insisted I enroll. It was a university, and I hadn't completed my studies. Still, I had the advantage of being Spanish, so when I went to register for the entrance exams, I told them a lie pushed by my father: that the papers proving I finished high school had burned in a

house fire, and that it was impossible for me to retrieve them from such a distance. Surprisingly, they accepted this story.

The entrance exams were very difficult. I had to perform both a classical and a contemporary theater monologue and sing a song. I had no prior exposure to theater, and suddenly I found myself reading Shakespeare and learning a monologue. In the town where my father lived, there was a seasoned actor well-versed in Shakespeare. My father, treating my audition as a personal challenge, enlisted his help with my monologue. With all the awkwardness I felt, this became another nightmare for me. Despite the initial embarrassment, I worked so hard on the monologues that I eventually built the confidence and strength to give it my best shot. I had acted before, at the age of fourteen, in a movie my mother had produced.

On the day of the audition, I found out there were around four hundred of us, and they'd select about sixteen. The audition took place in a massive room, with a panel of teachers behind a long table, taking notes. I performed my monologues and followed up with a flamenco rumba on the guitar. I think they liked it because of the exoticism, and I was admitted. This is when I was able to get away from my father for real. That's why I believe theater saved my life. I started meeting people my own age, and started smoking tobacco again. My father couldn't stand this and kicked me out of the house. He told me he never wanted to see me again because I had taken up smoking.

I moved in with a schoolmate, and renting an apartment felt wonderful. I was still suffering a lot because of my father, as he was sending me letters saying that he wished he'd never met me. I confided in this friend about my father, and finally sharing my story was liberating. What I didn't anticipate was the reaction of the people I told. They were horrified, and I almost ended up consoling *them*, assuring them it wasn't a big deal and that I was fine. I felt completely detached from my past experiences, as if they weren't a part of me. What truly caused me suffering was the separation from my father, and the fact that he didn't want to see me; I couldn't comprehend it.

When I look back on it, I realize how depressed I was and recognize the lack of self-esteem I struggled with. In college, I was very embarrassed about showcasing my talents, facing exams almost daily in front of a panel of judges—in acting, voice, singing... anything that exposed me. I believe my shame from the experiences with my father created a contradiction: I needed to hide, and at the same time, express myself through characters, which provided a sense of liberation. Overcome by fear, I would drink cognac before each exam or performance to relax.

I have both good and bad memories of this university. On the positive side, it enriched me culturally, which I had never experienced because I had left school so early. I learned to read theater, acted extensively in front of audiences, even directed a classic ("Antigone"), and played live music. It also taught me teamwork, introducing me to valuable and creative people, some of whom I still keep in touch with.

The best thing was the opportunity to learn about the Aborigines and their culture. There was a subject called Theater Studies, and the teachers who taught it decided to do a cultural exchange with Aborigines. They reached out to a western teacher who lived in a village with the Pitjantjatjara tribe. Six of their elders visited Sydney. The elders are highly respected and esteemed because they are the wisest of the tribe; a sharp contrast to the West, where they come to be considered a nuisance. It was the first time these elders had left the desert to venture into a coastal city. They lodged in a house provided by the teachers, and unaccustomed to indoor living, chose to sleep in the garden. They even moved the furniture outside to sit on the floor inside.

I got very close to them, as if I sensed that I was going to learn things no one else could teach me, and I made the most of every second spent in their company. Every evening, we performed *inma*, an Aboriginal sacred dance where they sing with their bodies painted, half-naked. Depending on the body paintings, women and children, only men, or only women can participate. It's a sacred rite to perpetuate life on Earth, attract food, and celebrate health. I felt privileged to be part of this.

Upon their return to the desert, they had to select six students to spend time with them. They chose me and five of my best friends from college. Along with two professors, we traveled to Alice Springs by plane and then by 4WD to Mimili, their home. Recognizing the devastating impact of Western Australians taking away many of their sacred lands like Ayers Rock or Uluru, they had implemented a new law prohibiting white man access without permission from the Aborigines. In Mimili, we were the only white people, together with this teacher who lived there and in whose house we stayed.

It was one of the best experiences of my life, and my first spiritual encounter which, at twenty years old, I couldn't quite name or fully comprehend in all its glory. I felt a connection with those people that transcended words, originating from a place I can't describe. They were very generous with us in imparting knowledge about their culture, and I learned to appreciate nature and the land, which was like their home. There were codes to enter certain areas, requiring us to wait until invited. Each rock held symbolic meaning, and they graciously guided us to their most sacred places. Daily sessions of *inma* became a shared practice, and in return, we performed theater in front of an earnest and eager audience.

The Aborigines have a strong need to preserve one of the world's most primitive cultures, a culture that Western man is destroying. In the ten days we were there, we witnessed this destruction, and I connected with a very ancient pain, the origin of which also remains elusive to me. The youth had stopped following the elders in embracing their cultural heritage; caught between two opposing worlds, their desire was to die, and that's what they were doing. Feeling that they didn't belong anywhere, the children and young people spent their days with cans of gasoline attached to their noses until they died.

In their culture, there is no concept of forbidding children; instead, they accompany them in their mistakes, devoid of judgment, simply being there for them. This was their approach with these children and young people, carrying the heavy burden of witnessing how their race is self-destructing. For them, it was very meaningful that we, despite being young Westerners, were so interested in their culture; it gave them hope. In the final days, the young ones set aside their gas cans, joining us at *inma* time to dance and sing alongside us and their teachers. It was a deeply touching experience, and though things reverted to their usual state after we left, we felt that we had given them something significant.

I felt very guilty and ashamed to belong to the West. I also felt a deep connection with those children and their desire to die. Their pure, lost gazes resonated with me in a way I had never experienced before, touching my heart. I still remember Bradley, whom I regarded as a little brother, and who died shortly after we left. I returned to Mimili a year later with three friends, immersing myself in their culture for twenty-one days, consuming worms and kangaroos until I had diarrhea and vomited for four days straight. It seems this is a common response to culture shock.

Upon my return to college, I excelled in everything that had to do with writing essays and theoretical papers, but failed in everything that required presentation, like acting... They finally expelled me, saying it wasn't the right place for me. In retrospect, I realize I've never been a conventional actress; quite the opposite. In a conservatory, especially an English-speaking one, it seemed there was no room for someone like me, especially at a time when I wasn't entirely clear if I wanted to pursue acting because it made me suffer too much... Oddly enough, getting kicked out served as a catalyst to persevere and solidify my decision to become an actress.

I was on vacation in Spain when I received the news of my dismissal. Before leaving, I had partially separated from my then-boyfriend, with whom I was living. I had gotten pregnant, and had made the decision to have an abortion without consulting him, which he couldn't accept. This led to our separation. By that time, I had grown close to my father again. He had a new girlfriend, who was

younger than me and who had previously been my brother Andrés' girlfriend. Later, they would have another son together, my little brother Manolo.

My father's girlfriend was really into rebirthing therapy, and convinced him to enter therapy in an attempt to fix our relationship. He agreed and called me up so that we could do it together. I had already awakened my desire for a deeper introspection during my experience with the Aborigines and through acting, so I said yes. I also hoped to have a different relationship with my father. I was still with my boyfriend James and looked forward to them getting to know each other.

During my first session with the therapist, she told me that she'd rather work separately with my father and me. I was honestly relieved by this. Her style involved minimal conversation before or after the sessions. The first one was very revealing for me, as the breathing exercise brought back many images and moments from my childhood, a time when I wasn't in control over anything happening to me. I felt very supported by this therapist, but afterwards, there wasn't much space for further discussion, and I would have liked that. After this, she invited me to a group session, and I did go but didn't engage, holding back instead. I felt very scared, since there were people who had a lot more experience and maturity than me. I was the youngest in every way. I just remember wanting it to end so I could leave.

I don't recall if I had the abortion before or after these sessions. But at some point, I went to see the therapist, and she told me more about the rebirthing technique, and how everything is recorded in our unconscious from the moment of our conception. She told me that we begin to feel from that very moment, and this connected me with the pain of having had an abortion. A flood of guilt hit me, and I cried for all the times I hadn't cried before. Until then, I had assumed the abortion caused me no trauma, no pain, and that I only felt relief. This woman helped me get in touch with my real emotions. The first time I had made contact with myself was with the Aborigines; the second time was with her.

It's curious that I'd originally gone to work on the relationship with my father, yet we never talked about it, even though many of the images from that first session involved him. I was waiting for her to broach the subject, but she never did; I don't know if she was waiting for me to do it. I still felt a lot of shame and, I suppose, fear. Internally, I had somewhat placed it and had forgiven him. Later, when I started with Gestalt, I discovered that I had not forgiven him at all, but rather swallowed his guilt, convinced that I had provoked all of that.

Emotional disconnection helped me survive my childhood and adolescence. When I started to reconnect, I felt that I was on the right path, but it was very scary. The fear was that I would reopen a void of pain in me that could never be closed again, and that the suffering would never stop. I had learned to get by without feeling. Yet, the encounter with that pain made me feel alive, and I knew it had to be good for me.

Being an actress linked me to life. Inhabiting the worlds and lives of other characters ignited my passion because it connected me with my life and aspects of myself that had been dormant until then. The contact with the audience gave me so much fight that it made me feel alive too.

And so, when I got back to Madrid, I began my search, which I didn't realize was my calling until much later. There weren't many drama schools in Madrid at that time. My mother, who is a talent agent for actors, always leaned towards interpretations that were more connected to truth and less to artifice. In Spain, overacting, or intense and tense performances, in my opinion, were still highly valued.

My mother always had a knack for this kind of thing, and was looking for a school for her clients that would teach them to be authentic and personal. She comes from a family of actors; her parents were actors, and she was on the path to becoming an actress too. Her first job as a child was in the theaters where her parents performed, calling the dressing rooms to inform the actors about the time remaining before going on stage and making sure they complied. When she finished school, she managed to pass the entrance exams for one of the best drama schools in England. However, her

father told her that if she wasn't willing to sacrifice everything to be an actress, like scrubbing stages for several years, she shouldn't even try. This discouraged her, and she gave up on that school. I believe she would have made a fine actress.

My mother supported my decision to pursue acting, insisting that I should study. She sent her actors to learn from Cristina Rota, and I joined them. At that time, she was the only one who conducted classes in the living room of her house. I spent four years in her school, where I learned a lot, and most importantly, I began to enjoy myself. I no longer felt scrutinized every time I performed, allowing more room for mistakes and exploration. Cristina was very generous, and dedicated a lot of time to me; both in class and when I had a job assignment or an exam, she would give me private coaching sessions without charging me. She was the one by my side during the transition from her living room to a venue where we began performing for the public. After completing my studies with her, I directed a short play and that's where I met Marcos, a musician who was also studying at the school because of his interest in acting. He composed the music for the play I directed, and we started a courtship that lasted four years.

Cristina Rota extended an offer for me to stay at her school, but I declined. Despite learning a lot from her, I still felt lost and believed that to grow further and find out more about acting, I needed to leave for some time. I still wasn't completely sure if I wanted to be an actress, although her school was the closest I had come to that realization. I'll always owe her a lot for it was there that I ultimately decided I wanted to pursue acting, thanks to the taste, enjoyment, and confidence she instilled in me. It was the first time I felt capable of taking on this path.

My search continued, and my mother suggested I try a school in Los Angeles. I didn't like the city at all; it felt enormous, and the people seemed very fake (this was the thing that threw me off the most, I wonder if it was because I hated seeing my reflection in them). I only saw hypocritical smiles, and I felt very lonely.

During that trip, I also visited New York, a city beating with life in every way. I loved it, especially listening to live jazz in tiny bars, always with impressive musicians. Once again, I put myself in danger by going with unknown men, buying drugs on 42nd Street, venturing into unsafe neighborhoods... Yet, once again, nothing untoward happened to me, and I remained oblivious to the gravity of the situation until I told my friends about it, and they pointed out the risks I had taken. I was utterly disconnected from fear.

Now I'm the opposite; I'm afraid of everything. I don't have as much faith as I used to that there's some invisible force protecting me. I'd like to reclaim this sense of security, even a little bit, so I can relax. Now that I've shifted to this other extreme, I fear that if I'm not the one controlling every moment of my life, something terrible will happen. It's exhausting. I think it has to do with aging and being more experienced in life. Now stability matters a lot to me, unlike before, which was evident in my heroin days. I also think my second subtype might be self-preservation, so the need for security is more pronounced in me at this point in life.

Another important reason for not moving to the United States was that I had fallen madly in love with Marcos. Having just separated from my previous boyfriend, Jose, with whom I had been living for two years, I found myself without a place to stay. Since my first boyfriend, Carlos, had left me, I developed a pattern of being the first to leave in subsequent relationships; I suppose it was a way to avoid facing the pain of abandonment. When I left, I also left many of my belongings due to guilt and, once again, to preserve my image. Then, unable to cope with the emptiness and grief of separation, I always found the next partner right away; sometimes the very next day or even before officially breaking up.

At the beginning of the relationship with Marcos, I couldn't find a place for myself. I lived at my mother's house, and also ended up partially living with him at his, which was always a mess and had

no natural light; we called it the “hole.” It was quite depressing. During this period, I was very insecure and wore heavy makeup. I couldn’t step out onto the street without it. I felt far from perfect.

We moved into my childhood home, which my mother rented for very little money because it was pretty old. Although it had served as my mother’s office for a while, she needed a larger space. I took Marcos out of the “hole” to live in that posh neighborhood, in a beautiful apartment with a garden and a swimming pool. I had this fantasy that I was rescuing him from misery, although he wasn’t really miserable. I think Marcos is an E8 like my father. I’ve always been attracted to E8’s. He was the bassist in a trendy band at the time.

I was still looking for an acting school. Two of my actor friends from Cristina Rota’s school had just returned from Buenos Aires, and told me about a school there run by Carlos Gandolfo and a teacher they had met, Juan Carlos Corazza. Since my mother was also eager to bring someone from abroad for her actors, I told her about Juan Carlos and suggested inviting him to give a seminar and get acquainted. My mother contacted him on the phone, asked for his resume, and proposed that he come to Madrid to give a seminar that summer.

I was in charge of organizing the event with my mother, and I also took part as an actress. I immediately connected with him and felt like I had finally found my teacher. This meeting was as significant for me artistically as it was personally. Everything I had learned at school in Australia was totally at odds with this approach to acting, which involved research, embracing the unknown, and starting to learn how to learn. Instead of putting on armor, it was about baring the soul, and for this, knowing oneself at a deep level was crucial.

I remember the first exercise I did alone in front of all the attendees, where Juan Carlos asked me what I felt and what I needed. No one had ever asked me this before, and I started to cry, continuing throughout the entire seminar. It was as if I was exposing all my fragility, which had always been concealed by my cold exterior and restraint. At that very moment, I began walking down a path that would change my life.

Through Juan Carlos, I learned about Gestalt and met my teacher, Claudio Naranjo. Juan Carlos incorporated much of what he learned from Gestalt and Claudio into his classes. Around that time, I also became friends with someone practicing Gestalt therapy, and I began individual therapy with a Gestalt therapist she recommended. I started therapy partly because it was a trendy thing to do in my circle, and partly because it seemed appropriate given my experiences, but I didn’t feel a genuine need for it. After a while, the therapist terminated our sessions, and advised me to return when I truly felt the need for it. It was a bold move that turned out to be a great favor, because it pushed me to connect with my true needs.

With therapy, I began to see that things weren’t right in my relationship with Marcos. I had entered a process of personal growth, and he wanted nothing to do with it. I felt lonely and dead in the relationship. I thought we were the perfect couple when, in truth, we loved each other a lot, but it wasn’t the right time to be together.

Before we broke up, I went to Australia with the intention of renewing my permanent residency, but I arrived late and lost it. Initially planning to stay for only two weeks, I ended up staying for two months. I went to Bali, invited by my stepmother Lisa, along with her and my brother Ed. Upon returning, I couldn’t change my ticket to Madrid and went back to Australia, where Lisa got me a job in a television series. In Australia, I was well-received because I was considered exotic, and after filming three episodes, they offered me a permanent position. I declined because it would mean leaving my entire life in Spain again. I also had a meeting with my father, and although he wanted more, it scared me, and therapy had connected me with anger. I didn’t tell him this, again driven by the desire to protect him.

While in Australia, I had a lover, which gave me the strength to end things with Marcos when I returned. My friend Ana, the one who introduced me to Gestalt, was also planning to separate from

her husband. I broke up first, and then she followed. Ana helped me a lot. She moved in with me, and I decided not to rush into a new relationship, but to take my time. Initially, it felt like a bit of a chore. I had lovers but I didn't marry any of them. Ana practiced meditation, and I took up the habit again, which offered much-needed solace. I spent two years without a partner, meditating, doing therapy and theater. Encouraged by Ana, I participated in my first group dance therapy with Graciela Figueroa. This workshop impacted me profoundly because it was a new experience for me, and I felt very awkward in my body.

Ana also convinced me to try the Fischer-Hoffman process,¹² and I did it with Paco Peñarrubia's team. It was also an impactful experience, and Enrique de Diego, part of the team, provided great support. In one exercise, he asked me to read a letter to my father aloud for the group. It marked the first time I publicly accused my father, and I'll always be grateful to Enrique.

I've always felt the need to have a man by my side. Whenever I tried being single, I felt a deep emptiness and a lack of self-confidence. Now, I understood that looking for a man to fill that void would never make me happy. I wanted to start feeling good about myself, complete and self-assured.

It was my second year studying under Juan Carlos, and two schoolmates and I decided to stage a play. I secured the minimum funding, and two other classmates ended up directing. We found a theater for the performance, and even managed to do a small tour. On our premiere night, we caught the attention of a theater director, and I was offered my first tour across Spain.

At the end of this tour, Juan Carlos proposed that I start teaching at the school together with Catalina Lladó. He was directing a play and needed substitutes for his classes. We started teaching together, and formed our first group. While I enjoyed teaching, I also realized that it could potentially keep me away from acting. I decided to stay connected with the school by attending some workshops without the commitment of leading one.

I was at a crossroads, torn between fully immersing myself in the Studio's work or stepping away entirely. I enjoyed my time there, and Juan Carlos had this idea of putting together a team where we not only taught but also performed in theater. These people felt like family to me, and my closest friends were working there. Considering all these factors, I decided to stay. Plus, it offered a steady income, which meant a sense of security. I spent fourteen years working for Juan Carlos, and in the later years, I began to desire to be a mother, and channeled all my energy into it. Although staying there felt like having a father and siblings, I realized that to keep growing, I needed to leave home. I am very grateful to Juan Carlos for everything he has taught me about education, acting, and art.

Being fully engaged in teaching at the Studio distanced me from my acting, something I had neglected for too long. Consuelo, a fellow Studio member, and I decided to stage a play where I would act, and she would direct. We settled on Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," which turned out to be challenging in every way. I started realizing that I was developing a different vision of my profession. I needed to liberate myself and explore my own approach to being an actress. I wanted to break free from that neurotic need to be perfect, yet, everything I enjoyed and experimented with in rehearsals disappeared in front of the audience. My vanity took over, making me feel trapped by the image I projected.

Only towards the end did I truly start acknowledging myself as an actress because I began allowing myself to be surprised and possessed by something beyond my control, which is one of the reasons I love my job. Acting has been liberating for my ego. It's funny and it may seem contradictory, but standing in front of an audience, embodying a character with a world distinct from mine, has freed me from my vanity, and I've felt like breaking free from my cage. Acting compels me to step out of my comfort zone and trust in a higher force.

¹² Residential course that delves into the genesis of our character in childhood in contact with our parents.

The time came when I needed to leave the Studio to continue growing. It was very difficult for me because it had been my family for many years. Juan Carlos was both a father and an artistic mentor to me. This paternal dynamic in a sense became a trap, because by placing myself in the role of a daughter, I became accommodating, blind to some things, and not entirely honest. My teacher will always remain my teacher.

I met the man who is now my husband, M., ten years ago. It almost coincided with the death of Carlos, my first boyfriend, in a motorcycle accident before I turned forty. With M., it has been an ongoing journey. Before him, I was with Jose, another musician and another E8, and that's when I stopped getting involved with such men. Jose appeared after my first SAT Program course, during which I went a bit crazy (or perhaps my craziness became more evident). I attended this SAT with my boyfriend at the time.

And that's when I met Claudio Naranjo. The day before going, something miraculous happened, which I've always associated with the magic of the SAT program: my father, who hadn't spoken to me for years, called me, crying, and asking for forgiveness. It was the first time I heard him cry, and it left me in shock. He was about to move in with a girlfriend, and I had previously told her about the abuse I endured from him. She, having experienced abuse from her own father, decided to leave him. He was devastated, and I, in a moment of automatic desire to appease him, said that yes, I forgave him. However, it was another instance of false forgiveness.

I arrived at the SAT identifying as a self-preservation E2, but Claudio always told me that he thought of me as a sexual E3. It was hard for me to accept this because of my history, always in search of intensity and so drawn to danger. Additionally, given my past with men, it was difficult for me to see myself as what I perceived as a sexual E3—women who were good girls, always composed, controlled, rigid, sometimes labeled as sexually frigid. They had all been exemplary students... I felt like the opposite of all that, yet the underlying pattern was the same. I realized this five years later.

During that SAT I, I was trying to play a role that didn't correspond with who I really was. Firstly, I was uncertain about my own character traits, and then, during the parental work, I struggled with the concept of forgiveness toward my parents. When I returned to Madrid, I wrote a letter to my father, informing him that I had done some work, and had forgiven him. He wrote me back, again blaming his circumstances—alcohol and drugs—for what he had done to me. It was like that request for forgiveness I had received from him before I left for SAT evaporated, and witnessing his lack of accountability made me very angry. It was then that I realized I hadn't truly forgiven him.

When I came back from SAT I, my boyfriend and I broke up due to my own infidelity, which he eventually found out about. I felt terrible about it. I went to my mother's house, and let him stay in what used to be our home until he had sorted things out. I suddenly felt very guilty for all the harm I had caused him, something I didn't think about while living out the affair.

I met up with my lover one last time, and that's when I realized our supposed connection had all been my illusion. I slowly distanced myself, unintentionally causing him a lot of harm. I later learned how much he suffered due to our separation.

Still grappling with the sadness from the breakup with my boyfriend, I decided to go away for a weekend with my friend Ana, who lived with her husband and their baby in a town outside of Madrid. Her husband asked if I could give a ride to a musician friend of his, Jose, who turned out to be my next partner. This relationship was a nightmare. I got swept up in its intensity, and before I even knew who I had gotten involved with, we had already rented an apartment and moved in together.

I went through hell, and instead of leaving, the abuse just got me more and more hooked. I think I needed to have a relationship like that before I could heal from all the toxic guys in my life. I had suicidal thoughts all the time, cried non-stop, but couldn't find the strength to leave. Jose is incredibly talented as a musician, sensitive, cultured, and I was attracted to this part of him, as if I had met a

genius who gave my life meaning. He himself thinks he's a genius and is angry with the world for not recognizing him. He reminds me very much of my father in that respect.

He made me feel so small and diminished my self-esteem to the point where I thought I was nothing without him. I was afraid that I wouldn't survive without his support. This relationship cost me my friendship with Ana, who one day told me that Jose didn't respect me and was telling people intimate details about me. She tried to make me see how destructive it was, but I couldn't, and I didn't see Ana for seven years.

I felt incomplete without a man, and I preferred being with someone like that to being alone. I needed a man by my side as much as I needed air to breathe. It took me two years to participate in the SAT again. During SAT II, I was more honest and shared the hell I was going through. Neither my closest friends, with whom I worked every day, nor anyone else had heard anything. There were many days when I went to work without sleep, having cried all night, and I concealed it so well that apparently no one noticed. A year later, Jose told me he was leaving, unable to handle the damage we were causing each other. Even though he had made the decision, I was the one who left home.

I wanted to die, and the next day, I took a plane to visit my mother in Los Angeles, where my stepmother Lisa was also working at the time. My mother took great care of me, treating me to massages, spa days, and shopping excursions, which helped me momentarily forget everything. After this, I'd call my friends and share my tragic story. This is my most frivolous side; one of the places that allows me to disconnect from everything is the shopping center. As I look at clothes and spend money, my mood changes, and the hell I was going through disappears, if only for a moment. I'd buy clothes, enjoy a spa day, and then pour my heart out on the phone.

During that trip, I finally had a conversation with Lisa, my stepmother, about what had happened to me with my father. My older sister (my father's daughter from his first marriage) had told the whole story to our family. I had confided in her, and I guess feeling the weight of being the older sister, she spilled the beans. Lisa had lived with us during the early stages of the abuse and said she hadn't known a thing. She apologized for not noticing and not doing anything to stop it. I listened, but I always felt uncomfortable talking more about it with my family. I think Lisa didn't see a lot of things because she didn't *want* to see them.

My sister also had a sexual relationship with my father later on, at a time when they were operating on his son, who recently died at twenty-one due to numerous surgeries for a brain tumor. She was twenty-six at the time of the relationship, and I believe she was really desperate, needing a father figure. Our confusion stemming from having an absent father and a distorted understanding of love likely contributed to this. She says that he took advantage of her situation and raped her.

The breakup with Jose helped me mend my relationship with my mother a bit more. For the first time since leaving home at fifteen, I went to live with her for a while, and I felt like I finally allowed myself to be her daughter, not the mother. She, in turn, became more of a mother to me than ever. She took care of me, gave me advice, cooked me dinner every night, and listened to me. And the surprising thing is that I let her. The problem for daughters who've taken on maternal roles for their own mothers also lies in ourselves, in that we sometimes don't let them be mothers. I realize I had put myself above my mother, and in that, I recognize my arrogance—a very egotistical aspect that didn't allow me to learn how to take care of myself, because I didn't know what it was like to have a mother.

I had left home at a young age and always looked after myself by working hard to get ahead or relying on a boyfriend for support, but I never asked my mother for anything. I asked her for money once when I needed it because I was in therapy, and the therapist suggested it. I got into a huge fight with my mother and wouldn't speak to her. This presented an opportunity for her to care for me too. I felt incredibly guilty asking her for money and allowing her to take care of me, like I was playing a role that wasn't mine. It felt as if something inside me had been torn apart.

I've often focused more on the sadness or pain in my life, sort of seeing myself as a victim of the circumstances and the people around me. As I write this biography, I'm recognizing the harm I caused, especially to the men in my life. Seeing myself as a victim is also vain because by paying attention only to the damage others did to me and not acknowledging my own role in all of this, I maintain an intact image of myself.

Another thing is that I've always claimed to be faithful, in contrast to other people of my subtype. However, looking back, I realize that I very rarely was so. As long as my relationships were going well, sure. But when I no longer felt fulfilled, I sought outside what I was missing inside. This pattern was connected to my commitment to my father. On one hand, I wasn't fully committed to a man, and on the other, I pursued another fling that had to be kept secret, like ours. I was also unfaithful to Jose towards the end of our relationship. I think I did it out of revenge.

I was thirty-three years old when I separated from Jose, and I was terrified that I would never find another man and wouldn't be able to start a family, to realize my dream. I still carried the sense of not being fulfilled without a man, and I think I put up with Jose for so long for fear of being left with that emptiness. I wanted to get pregnant with him, even when we were apart.

At this point in my life, I met Bert Hellinger and learned about his Family Constellations method in Seville. I went to work on the issue of attracting men who weren't good for me and the belief that I could never have a healthy relationship or start a family. Hellinger did a simple constellation with me. He asked me to pick one representative for my mother and another for my father. I was supposed to "play" myself. He then instructed me to position them.

In the way I arranged them, he quickly identified the theme of incest. He explained that women who place themselves in the position I did, often do so with the desire to reunite their parents, assuming the mother's role. He rearranged the positions, removed me from where I had placed myself, and had me tell my mother something like, "This is your business, not mine, and I hand it over to you." It was very liberating for me, and I felt it was a crucial part of my journey, especially because it felt like I was lifting a huge weight internally. The following year, I met the man who is now my husband, someone very different from what I had typically looked for. Someone who treats me very well.

That year, I did the SAT III, and Claudio Naranjo invited me to collaborate with him to do theater for the SATs. I was surprised because I didn't actively do anything to make it happen (at least not consciously). I've always felt unconditional love from Claudio; he loves me just because, just for who I am, without any ulterior motives. I've felt very awkward and clumsy around him, and yet, he has always valued me, which always caught me off guard.

The invitation came one day when we had dinner together. I opened up to him about something that bothered me: I could not forgive my father, no matter how hard I tried, and didn't know what to do. Claudio told me that I *didn't* have to forgive him, and this perspective has been one of the most valuable gifts he's given me. I was so relieved, like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I've always been grateful to him.

After being with M. for a year, and living with him, one day he told me that he wanted to end things between us, feeling that he wasn't in love. This turned out to be one of the most important lessons of my life. It coincided with the wedding of two of my friends, who invited me to join them on their honeymoon as they noticed my distress. It was August, and I wanted to die. I couldn't stop crying, reliving all the abandonments from my past through this separation. I didn't eat, smoked non-stop, and relied on pills to sleep. My friends did everything they could to help me, offering wise advice and listening to me, but there was nothing to relieve me from that pain. It was two weeks of torture but, in the end, I returned to Madrid stronger than ever, able to face everything. Internally I'd let go of M., and this was the ultimate lesson.

Driven by my fear of abandonment, I ended up suffocating him (of course, he had his share of commitments as well). When I stopped doing it, he began to get closer again, and when I came back, he told me that he wanted me to give him another chance. I set a few conditions, including couples therapy. He agreed, and our first step was a session with Suzy Stroke, which proved immensely helpful.

M. and I got engaged, and I relaxed, no longer smothering him. I've always wanted to be a mother, and we began trying for a baby when I turned thirty-eight. Initially hesitant, M. gradually warmed up to the idea. I always assumed that once I made the decision, I'd immediately get pregnant, but that didn't happen. It turned into an obsession, and I read everything available on the subject. I tried various methods to track ovulation, and our sex life began to suffer as a result of my controlling ways.

I practically became an expert on pregnancy. I knew I had to chill out, that's what everyone kept telling me, but I couldn't. I found it increasingly difficult to relax, and I enjoyed sex less and less. Gynecologists recommended in vitro fertilization. I wanted to adopt and M. knew this, but he was not yet ready, so we decided to go ahead with IVF. After two attempts, we gave up. It was an incredibly tough time for me. I took each failure terribly, and it brought me a lot of pain and anger. My womanhood was at stake. I don't know where this idea came from, but I didn't feel like a complete woman if I couldn't get pregnant. I was also under the influence of all the hormones they gave me, which made me highly sensitive, and led to changes in my body.

Before making the second attempt, M. was already more open to adoption. We agreed that if this attempt also failed, we would adopt. My friends Ginetta and Grazia suggested that I don't do IVF anymore, and talked to me about adopting from Ethiopia. I was very encouraged by this, and asked Ginetta to be the godmother if we chose Ethiopia. Now she's our daughter's godmother.

We began the adoption paperwork. I told M. about Ethiopia, but he wanted to look into the possibility of adopting from Nepal. He had filmed a documentary there and seen an orphanage, and he wanted our child to come from there. I, on the other hand, wanted it to be a newborn baby if possible, for the selfish reasons that I adore babies and thought it would be easier in every way. I doubted I'd be able to adopt a child who already had a lot of baggage because of all the suffering that comes with living in such circumstances. They had opened an adoption program in Ethiopia recently, with an easy, speedy process and the chance to adopt very young infants. So we decided to go for it.

One of the requirements for the adoption was to get married. While I always dreamed of a wedding, M. thought it was silly; we had a mortgage together, so for him that already meant we were married. We had a lovely ceremony with a few friends, celebrating at my mother's house. Taking this step felt important for both of us, and I saw it as a fundamental part of my personal growth. It was also incredibly exciting. Both of us opened our hearts more, but I especially noticed it in M., of course.

A year and a half went by, and just before I left for an SAT in Mexico, we received a call informing us that they had pre-assigned us a three-month-old girl. Her name was Kalkidan. We received pictures, and I took one with me to Mexico. On my first day there, I had some free time, so I went shopping for clothes for her, something I was eagerly anticipating.

When I returned to Madrid, they provided me with a scheduled travel date to bring her home, depending on the outcome of legal proceedings there. However, a document got lost the first time, and they postponed it. They gave me another date for my trip. On the morning my mother and I were set to leave, I received an early morning call notifying me that the baby girl had died. It appeared to be a sudden death. They found her in her crib in the morning, but she died between bottle feedings. Her biological mother had died in childbirth. Life's mysteries – just as I'm about to travel to get her, she dies. Thank God I didn't yet have her with me. I was in deep anguish, but I can only imagine how

much worse it could have been. M. had to deal with this news while on the road. Pain has always brought us closer, so even though we were in despair, we had each other.

I spoke several times with the director of the adoption agency. I felt tremendous support from her. She asked if we wanted to proceed as there might be another baby soon. Two days after Kalkidan (who we were going to call Lucía) died, another baby appeared in Hossana, and two weeks later, we were summoned to the agency, where they asked us if we were ready. I immediately said yes, but M. had some doubts. He didn't want to rush into something new so quickly after our loss. The child was two weeks old at that time. Her name was Abenezer. She was born in the field and was found by a farmer because she was crying. She was wrapped in a jacket with the umbilical cord still attached. The farmer brought her to the police, and when someone finds an abandoned baby, they have to name it. This farmer named her Abenezer because it means "helped by God," and thanks to the grace of God, she survived.

The court date was set for August 2, and we planned to travel on the 4th. M. was able to come, though he had to leave early. My mother also came to stay with me, helping me with the paperwork after M. went back, bringing all her enthusiasm. My brother Andy had his son on July 29, so my mother became a grandmother twice in one week.

The trial on August 2 couldn't take place due to a power outage in Addis Ababa. It got postponed to the 5th, but we chose to proceed with our travel plans anyway. There's always the risk that the trial may not go well, though it's less common for abandoned children. Alternatively, something could be missing, leading to a delay until September. Abi was one and a half months old when we met her. Following the trial day, the court was to be closed until mid-September. I had decided that if she couldn't come home, I would stay there with her for as long as necessary.

We met her on August 4, and for me, it was love at first sight. I never left her side again. That night, I bathed her and put her to bed in the foster home with Hanna, one of her caregivers. The next day, the trial was to be held, and if it was favorable, we could take her to the hotel with us. Luckily, it was, and we cried and jumped for joy when we received the news.

A year ago, we went on a trip to Australia with the whole family: my mother, my daughter, my husband, and me. My mother wanted to show us the house she had built in the tropics about three years ago. She said she had it built with the hope that we would visit every year. I always told her I wouldn't be going; it's too far, and said she should build one on the Spanish coast. Despite that, she built a huge house in Australia, and I think it's mainly for herself. I also can't help but think it's not a coincidence she chose the country where my father lives, but well, those are just intrusive thoughts...

Lisa, my stepmother, had been battling cancer for four years and had been diagnosed with metastasis (it had already spread to her bones). I wanted to visit her to say goodbye, but the mistake was doing it with my mother. She paid for the entire trip, which was very generous of her, and I felt obligated to take her with me. We spent a week with Lisa and then traveled north to my mother's house. That trip was a bit of a nightmare for me. My father lived near my stepmother, and I had decided to see him too.

I hadn't seen him for seventeen years and started contacting him by email about a year ago, when I finally felt that I could. I felt more at peace with him. I arranged to see him during that week, and my mother mentioned that she also hadn't seen him for a long time. Her therapist had suggested it would be good for her to see how she felt because she believed she didn't feel anything. She wanted to take advantage of my meeting with him to see him too.

This began before we left for the trip, and I started telling her no, insisting that she should arrange her own meeting with him. I set a clear boundary, but she didn't want to listen. When we got there, she was still trying to take advantage of my meeting with my father. It led to a heated argument, with both of us crying. I had to stand firm for her not to come with me. It made me recall what Hellinger said: my mother was, once again, using me as a middleman to get closer to my father.

Unconsciously, she made me her pawn. I brought this up during our argument, mentioning what I had told her about my work with Hellinger years before, but she didn't remember. The resolution was that I could go with my husband and daughter to meet my father without her. Even so, during the last meeting I had with my father that week, my mother still managed to join in at the end because that's how she had apparently arranged it with him. I left immediately to give them privacy.

My father was very nervous and arrived late; I had already thought he wouldn't show up and blamed my mother because I had called him to let him know she also wanted to see him and would be at the meeting with me. He didn't know she wouldn't be there. He eventually arrived, and we spent the day together with my brother Ed and his wife, and my husband and daughter. We talked a lot about the lost years. He is in his eighties, living in the middle of nowhere, where he paints a lot and makes a living from it. With the money he makes from painting, he's shooting a movie he produced, and he was very excited about this. He's in excellent health, he does a lot of sports and takes care of himself. He'd always had a girlfriend or several, but this time he talked about one. I felt calm and strangely detached during this encounter. I've always felt awkward around my father, and had a need to get close to him as soon as possible to bridge the gap of lost years, but this time I didn't feel this need at all.

I decided to go back to spend some time alone with Lisa after our trip to the north, to my mother's house. M. had to return to Spain. I was aware that this would be the last time I'd see her. I went with my daughter, and it was very depressing, but Lisa always maintained her sense of humor, avoiding sinking into the gloom, pretending that nothing was amiss, that she wasn't going to die. She told me a lot about her past and her childhood, revealing things she had never discussed with me before. I spent some time with my brother Ed as well. I had a feeling Lisa might not live much longer, given what she disclosed about her diagnosis and treatment, but my brother and mother insisted she would live for years. I did a little "big sistering" for my brother, preparing him for what might come.

Lisa's always had difficulty letting herself be taken care of; she could be a sexual E3 like me. Throughout her life, she took care of everyone. She passed away nine months later at home, surrounded by her son, her sister, and a friend. Her death was apparently calm and pain-free. They set up a hospital bed at her home to make her more comfortable, provided her with morphine (kept in the fridge for when she needed it), and the doctor also went to see her every day.

During that time with Lisa, we also talked about my father. She hadn't spoken to him in years, angry since she had learned what he had done to me. One day before she passed away, he visited her, and they managed to reconcile, which was a relief for everyone, especially my brother. In the days leading up to her death, she arranged her funeral, or as she preferred to call it, the celebration of her life: she made lists of people she wanted to invite, made a recording of her voice, searched for a venue... She was very busy planning her party. Her sister would often say to me in English, "She's putting on a show." And that's what she did till the end, putting on an outward display that had nothing to do with the harsh reality of her illness.

I had a second meeting with my father, this time alone with him and my daughter. Although my youngest brother, Manu, who is now twenty-two, and Ed were supposed to be around, Manu wasn't present, and Ed was working. I felt nervous, not keen on the idea of being alone with my father. Lisa had gone into town (she lived in the suburbs) and had made it clear that she didn't want him in her house. She had taken one of his paintings years ago as collateral for money he owed her, and she was afraid he would try to retrieve it. When my father arrived, my daughter was asleep, so I suggested having coffee outside in the garden. He went into the house to use the bathroom, and I started to feel uneasy.

We drank the coffee, and when Abi woke up, my father asked if I wanted to talk about our past together. He told me that he had always believed I had forgiven him, and it was a surprise when I said no years ago. I simply replied that I didn't feel the need to discuss it at all, and he didn't bring up

anything else. I didn't feel comfortable talking about it with my daughter around. My focus was on self-protection. I thought if we went into this, he would likely become defensive as usual, blaming everything on his situation and not taking any responsibility himself, while holding *me* accountable.

If my daughter hadn't been there, I would have gone in for the kill. I knew it was a matter of either getting into a fight or skimming the surface as if nothing was wrong, and I wasn't willing to do the latter. The way he posed the question made me realize that I had to confront him to make him see *something*, a different perspective, because he did it in an accusatory tone, as if he was an angel and I was a witch for harboring resentment towards him for so many years; that's at least how I felt about it.

We spent the day together, had lunch with my brothers and sisters, and then spent the afternoon alone again. I felt strange, realizing that I've never really had a father-daughter relationship with him, and that there's virtually no bond between us. I was cold with him; however, he was more affectionate, as if wanting to make amends for the past in his own way. I just wanted for it to be over and done with; I didn't feel comfortable.

At night, he decided to stay at my brother's house, and we went to dinner at the restaurant where Ed worked. On the way back from the restaurant, my father's car broke down just as he dropped me off at Lisa's house. He called the tow truck to pick up the car and him. While waiting for the tow truck, he entered Lisa's house. My daughter was peacefully asleep in the room where my father's painting was hanging. My brothers were waiting with us, and at one point, my father got up to look for it. I told him that it was in the room where Abi was sleeping, and he couldn't go in, so as not to wake her. I briefly went to the bathroom, and during that time, he seized the opportunity to search for the painting. My brothers had to intervene to stop him, but he went a little crazy at the sight of it. Eventually, he calmed down.

I was already familiar with his mad tendency to take what he wants, and if someone sets a limit, it leads to a lot of violence. I became fearful of what I was witnessing. In the past, I hadn't felt this fear, but now I just wanted the tow truck to arrive so he could leave. During our farewell, he got very emotional, but I was still cold to him. I knew I might never see him again in my life, but I still couldn't shake off the coldness. My brothers also left with him. I was left scared, haunted by the fear that he might return for the painting. I connected with all the fear I hadn't felt as a child, coupled with a strong need to protect myself and my daughter.

I later had a talk with my brothers about what had happened with me and my father. They both knew about the abuse. One day, when the three of us were alone, I asked if they were curious to know more or discuss the matter. They were anxious to know what had happened exactly. They told me they'd asked father, and wanted to make sure he'd told them the truth, because Lisa claimed he had lied to them. Their main concern was whether he'd penetrated me at the age of twelve, and I assured them that no. This relieved them a lot; firstly, because he hadn't, and secondly, because he had at least been truthful about this one thing. They didn't want to know anything more. I felt a bit strange after this conversation, as if the fact that he hadn't penetrated me took away all the gravity of the matter. Finding the right moment to talk was difficult, and I realized that finding another would be impossible. I wished I could have talked a bit more about this, though, telling them how I felt.

At this point in my life, I can genuinely say that I am happy, and that happiness is growing. I feel an increasing sense of freedom to be who I am, without external influences. It's the freedom to be and do as I please. I acknowledge my deceit, and it's something that keeps me on alert; although at times it ensnares me when I'm unable to see it, there are moments when I recognize it and can move past it. Deceit has been the source of significant pain in my life, and I'm actively working to leave it behind. It traps me in a sort of childish pattern where I devalue myself by constantly seeking approval.

I must also stay vigilant about my emotional detachment. I tend to lean into efficiency, and "doing" becomes the central focus of my life. Within this compulsive drive to constantly do, there's

little room for pleasure or love; it acts as their substitute. I give by doing, not by loving, and this approach often leads to resentment due to the excessive effort and work involved. Many times, I feel like I don't know any other way to operate.

Another aspect I'd like to gradually leave behind is my tendency toward excessive control, a trait I believe I inherited from my mother. This illusion that if I don't micromanage every aspect of my life and the lives of those around me, catastrophe will strike. It's as if I lack trust in life.

I would say these are the main things that make me unhappy. I recall Claudio once saying that all that causes pain is ego.

My excessive control and a tendency towards coldness or disconnection are factors that most negatively impact my relationship with M. and my daughter. I need to remain acutely aware of this, and M. points it out to me all the time, because it's easy for me to drown it out or dismiss it, particularly my inclination towards excessive doing, which I tend to get into automatically.

During SAT, I pondered: what is detachment, and what is disconnection? What sets them apart? In meditation, I found a rewarding and relieving answer. I felt sadness, tears rolling down my face, yet simultaneously felt I could observe without fully identifying with it. An image emerged – a woman observing a girl, firm and without complete identification.

I've often attracted others through sadness and fragility, traits I associate more with the girl than the woman. Feeling vulnerable and feminine makes me feel special, and I attract strong men. It's as if I hope they'll see this melancholic aspect, noticing my secret kindness that cleanses and preserves my image. It perplexes me that I feel content with just this.

It's been nearly four years since I became a mother, dedicating a significant part of my time to this role I yearned for so much. Although I've continued teaching, it's now on a reduced scale, and I feel freer than ever. I engage with groups of actors for courses, and I'm at a stage where I'm refining my teaching style, relishing the opportunity to work alone for this reason. I feel I need it. Also, I've ventured back into directing with a group of actors, and realized that I'm passionate about it as well. I do very sporadic work as an actress now, but I don't currently feel the need to put more energy into that aspect.

I have a husband whom I deeply love, and to whom I've entirely committed myself. It's not an easy relationship because we reflect each other's flaws, and we argue occasionally, but there's a lot of love between us. At the moment, things are calmer, and I feel I can relax with him.

Claudio has always valued my input, both in the SAT collaborations and in other personal meetings. I'm afraid to look inward (though less so now), and he consistently provides me with the opportunity to do so. He assigns me tasks that force me to self-reflect, and afterward, I feel immensely grateful. Otherwise, I tend to become overly practical and cold. These tasks also reconnect me with my capacity for love and dealing with my challenges. It keeps me alert, awake, confronting my ego over and over again. Every time I go for a session with Claudio, it feels like I'm going there to die. The ego is so powerful that I think I'll die from getting a bit emotionally bruised, but, in reality, it's the ego that's slowly dying.

I think women who have the courage to speak about the abuse they've endured are truly brave, and it provides a sense of liberation as they put things into perspective. To those who hesitate, I encourage them to find their voice.

My daughter comes from a country where women face significant mistreatment. Almost all the girls are raped at a very young age, getting pregnant and keeping it a secret to avoid their families

disowning them. They give birth alone, often in remote rural areas, and abandon their newborns. Some of those children die, and others, like my daughter, manage to survive because someone finds them and hands them over to the police. They eventually find a home in orphanages or foster care. Since becoming a mother, I've started to appreciate my mother and all the mothers in the world more. I love my mother very much, and I recognize what she's done for us. She hasn't had it easy, and her story, compared to mine, seems terrifying. I've found it in me to forgive her, and I have a good relationship with her now.

I began writing this autobiography two years ago, and now, upon review, there are many things I would change, but that's what I presented to Claudio. Reading it again with the wisdom of hindsight and introspection, I recognize that my writing style also carries traces of the ego. I see the desire to preserve my positive self-image and portray myself as a very good person, but I confess I'm not that saintly. There are also other things I'd include, and one in particular comes to mind that I'll add now.

I thought I had talked about my great-grandmother, but reviewing it now, I see I haven't. About a year and a half ago, an antique dealer tracked down my mother online and reached out to her. He had come across the album of an actor who worked in my great-grandmother's theater company; the actor made the album before he went off to war. The antique dealer, very kindly, mailed us the album, and that's how we found out that my great-grandmother had been an actress, a theater director and acting teacher.

The album was full of photos, hand programs and newspaper clippings with reviews of her plays. My grandmother was featured in the programs and reviews, because she worked with her mother as an actress when she was very young. Strangely, she never shared much about her mother, I imagine because they didn't have the best relationship.

Discovering this has empowered me to follow my path in the theater. Around the same time the album surfaced, I stumbled upon a theater space, and now I'm doing what my great-grandmother did so many years ago – a revelation I had been oblivious to until recently. There must be something grander at play here, some higher force bigger than all of us. It brings me relief to think about it. Since I started writing this autobiography, my professional life has seen rapid growth. Suddenly the social subtype, which I used to relate to the least, is much more present in my life.

This autobiography reflects my own version of my life. Other people, for example my mother, probably have a different vision of my childhood. She didn't see me as unhappy; however, that's how I truly felt. This leaves me with questions: What is reality, and when did I learn to construct falsehoods? Internally, I've mostly experienced sadness in my life, yet out of deceit, I've presented the opposite, and so the interpretations vary. All the events are factual, and it makes sense to me that I've developed this character.

BOOK THREE: THE SOCIAL SUBTYPE

I. Passion in the sphere of instinct: How Vanity works in Social

When the passion of vanity intertwines with the social instinct, it manifests as an unceasing and insatiable desire for constant validation of one's worth, an incessant need to be recognized as "somebody" in the eyes of everyone.

As a representative of this enneatype, the social E3 is propelled by the passion to project a self-image that can feed their "vanity," an image intended to compensate for their low self-esteem. They often feel like someone inherently uninteresting, only noticeable when they achieve results. The social E3's vanity is closely tied to familial expectations of them being an active, efficient, and, above all, successful individual.

Unlike the self-preservation E3, whose egoic passion of vanity might be aimed at securing survival or a sexual E3, focused on winning over their partner's love, the social E3 directs their energy towards satisfying the need to be seen as an "important" person. They believe that if they gain social recognition, their existence and fulfillment will be assured.

In the social E3's formative years, especially in their relationship with their father and potentially siblings, the primary role was not to usher them into the social world with the necessary security to feel that they can utilize their own resources, talents, and limitations. Instead, the child's worth was primarily reflected in terms of their achievements, not as a person in their own right. Consequently, the social instinct lost its trust in forming deep interpersonal connections that instill a sense of belonging and acknowledgment of their place within the broader context. To compensate for this void and the subsequent feelings of worthlessness and helplessness, the social E3 crafted a self-image that is popular and beneficial to the group, be it the family or a social circle. They adapted themselves according to the group's needs, believing that this chameleon-like transformation would guarantee acceptance and recognition as a member.

The genuine need for support and recognition, initially within the family sphere and later in a broader relational context, evolved into a need for wealth or admiration as a special person. This illusion stems from the belief that social success can provide what they've never felt as their own—a sense of belonging and security that assures their existence as an individual.

The social E3 is particularly characterized by an overpowering passion to establish connections and networks of contacts. It's as if the quantity of acquaintances, especially those considered important, can compensate for the lack of emotional and affective depth that genuine interpersonal bonds of love and esteem should entail. Their vanity finds expression in a compelling urge to create and project a public image, often called "social vanity," of a high caliber, as if achieving a specific social status could substitute for an existential experience they might be missing.

This subtype of E3 actively pursues accomplishments, wealth, and success, primarily to acquire and solidify their societal standing. Their consciousness is entrapped by the external realm, fixated on appearances. They genuinely believe, "I am what others perceive me to be."

Through the constant identification with external objects associated with social prestige and brightness, the social E3 often molds itself into different roles, adopting various masks. However, this habit keeps them detached from their inner self. They struggle to connect with their roots, delve into their innermost being, or find genuine repose because they've come to distrust their own feelings and perceptions.

Their carefully constructed image evolves through actions aimed at its continuous improvement. They adapt to different contexts, displaying whatever persona is deemed suitable for each situation. This inherent adaptability has earned them the reputation of being the most “chameleon-like” among the three subtypes. However, this constant strategy comes at the cost of spontaneity. They often prioritize control over trust, which can lead to rigidity and a sense of inner freeze.

Despite their tireless efforts to “do,” they often find it challenging to feel truly recognized. They meticulously manage their appearance and seek brilliance, often avoiding conflict-ridden or painful situations. Even when they receive external validation, they struggle to believe it since their identity isn’t founded on recognition for who they are but rather for what they’ve achieved. This prevents them from establishing a profound and authentic connection with the world.

The scrutiny of others is consistently present, even if it’s an internally fantasized gaze. When looking in the mirror, the social E3 sees themselves through the eyes of their potential “audience.” In their professional life, they often consider the evaluation of their boss or an abstract judge. In personal matters, they might assert their own preferences, but they remain highly aware of the tastes of their partner, friends, or anyone else, often feeling the urge to renounce their own.

This subtype tends to have a marked mercantilist orientation. They derive their value from the recognition they receive when others acknowledge their attributes. Their primary emphasis is on achieving objectives, and social relationships hold value only insofar as they contribute to their accomplishments. There is limited genuine interest in others; rather, they view social interactions as a means of maintaining a network that serves their goals. There are no boundaries to their strategies for promoting themselves and their products. They navigate the social landscape as if it were a buyer’s market, where they can be equally skilled at selling cars or spirituality workshops. They are the archetypal politicians who know how to present themselves in a way that garners votes. Despite their ability to create an external image, they might acknowledge a fundamental existential falsehood:

The social E3 often perceives themselves as good without truly embodying that goodness. They identify with their ideal but are somewhat aware of their imperfections. They recognize that they are projecting an image that doesn’t completely align with who they are. For example – me with my new house: I see it as mine when I show it to others, but that feeling fades when I am alone, revealing an underlying emptiness.

The craving for recognition is incessant and can often manifest as a fixation on material possessions. They might flaunt their wealth through watches, houses, cars, and the like, as if they are constantly proclaiming, “Look at what I possess; this is my worth.” In contemporary society, these individuals accumulate memberships in exclusive groups, collect books dedicated by illustrious figures, and attend workshops led by renowned experts. They epitomize the present era, where the promise of happiness is closely associated with wealth and power, seemingly attainable through sheer acts of will. This modern culture often overlooks the intimate needs of individuals, their place within the natural order, and is narrowly focused on individual gain. This myopic perspective persists through superficial stimuli and artificial needs. Social E3s are among the most adept and oblivious customers of shopping malls, with their compulsive shopping, or the politicians most suited to an era characterized by nihilism.

It is a narcissistic character, like E7, and can easily fall into the belief that they possess the ultimate command, in line with the DSM IV’s characterization: “The narcissist feels so important that he can speak with the highest authority.”

The social E3’s interactions with authority are based on a prior evaluation of the authority figure in question. If they consider this figure to be of lesser importance in their hierarchy, they may dismiss

it, paying minimal attention. They also have a propensity to rebel against it or, in therapeutic terms, “cut its head off” by strategically exposing its faults.

However, they are intelligent enough to navigate different types of hierarchies and actively seek recognition from authority figures. They position themselves strategically to be visible and appreciated. Their greatest fear is failing to receive recognition “from above.” When this occurs, they feel deeply distressed but do their best to conceal it to uphold their image. As Yolanda puts it: “I cope with feelings of failure by resorting to a nervous laughter; it’s outside my control.” This is a trait that makes it easier for them to fake a smile, a common behavior in Enneatype Threes in general.

The social E3’s quest for knowledge isn’t driven by personal enjoyment but is rather a way of exercising power. It is an instrumental use of intelligence in service of their desire to shine socially. They aim to project an image of leadership and competence within the group. Francesco aptly explains: “At the core of my behavior in life, there is always this drive for social power. Whether it’s in politics or in my social life...”

Their strategy revolves around achieving goals. While they are sensitive to the needs of others, they offer assistance in a manipulative manner, lacking genuine interest and instead acting out of arrogance. If someone becomes an obstacle to their objectives, they may mistreat or even destroy that person without mercy, much like Enneatype Eight, who prioritizes satisfying their perceived needs over relationships and feelings.

The social E3’s emotions are so fabricated that they can be described as feeling “what they are supposed to feel.” This places them among the category of emotionally cold and rational characters. Francesco openly discusses his connections with women of high economic status and his personal journey of transformation:

I have consistently been with women from much higher socioeconomic backgrounds than mine, from more prestigious families. I’ve been quite successful with affluent women. In the case of my wife, about forty percent of my initial attraction to her was based on her personal charm, while the remaining sixty percent was tied to her belonging to a wealthy and influential family. I didn’t recognize this at the time; it took years for me to realize it. When this awareness finally hit me, I felt terrible, and it led to a crisis in our relationship. I began to doubt whether I truly loved her. I understood that through my partner, I was seeking the prestige I felt I lacked. It was only when I could love her without needing her that I recognized it as genuine love. I achieved this through inner work.

In my current phase of life, as I’m transitioning into a career in psychotherapy, it’s challenging for me to leave my previous job, where I earned a substantial income. In therapy, my earnings would be significantly less than what my wife makes, and I’d feel like I’m taking advantage of her.

Regarding the economic aspect, Giusy adds: “I come from a wealthy family; that wasn’t the issue for me. The man for me cannot be ‘common.’ I am not interested in him being rich but extraordinary.”

Social E3s are ambitious and competitive, very determined to get what they want and calculating to the point of cruelty. The goal always comes before the relationship. While they exist in a world filled with connections, cell phones, social media networks, and photos testifying to their extensive travels, the true experience of being in a relationship or life itself doesn’t rely on inner confidence that integrates with their identity but needs concrete documentation in photographic images since, for them, there is only what is seen.

II. The characteristic neurotic need

by Eustaquio García

The neurotic need, which replaces the real need to experience the fullness of life and self-realization, revolves around the need to shine, to have *prestige*. The social E3 seeks approval and aims to please in order to receive an appreciative gaze.

The social E3 child was valued for what they did and reinforced through applause. From there, the need to keep achieving in order to receive that validating gaze was born.

We had to do well in school. I still remember being told, “If you’re good, you’ll get the scholarship.” I won the academic scholarship every year. Mom wanted me to study music, piano; for Dad, sports were the best school. I liked everything I knew they liked. I studied piano and excelled in sports: baseball, basketball, swimming... I knew I was a pretty girl, but the only words I remember my father saying about my appearance were, “You’d look better if you lost weight.”

This drive to shine shows up in action, in performing in ways that create a good impression and generate a sense of success, especially in material and outward terms. This is why money and status are so important.

If someone doesn’t feel seen, they’ll need to do something to attract attention, perhaps using more credentials or being more charming. For the social E3, the focus is on external appearance, on objects of prestige and beauty that are socially validated for and by others, not felt from within. “When you walk into a restaurant,” Ana says, “you prefer not to look at other people—because you don’t want a reality check, you want to hold on to the fantasy that they’re looking at you!” Yolanda shares something similar:

If I join a group and feel like no one is paying attention to me, I act like I don’t care, but I know exactly who I’m drawn to, who might be a rival, who I don’t like, and who might not like me. I try to go unnoticed but I know I’m being watched. I aim to be discreet but attractive; well put together, without being vulgar or flashy, pretending it all comes naturally to me. Even if I look a bit unkempt, it’s not spontaneous.

Even showing a flaw or weakness in the right way can end up being a sales success. The supposed vulnerability ends up feeding the ego. Words like “no” and “I don’t know” are rarely found in their vocabulary. Because they don’t sell.

The cost of shining is high. The person works hard without seeming to, but ends the day exhausted: “I don’t know what’s wrong with me... I’m just so tired,” you might hear them say. They only allow themselves to feel tired or sick on weekends or during vacations.

Their neurosis is oriented toward appearing “from above”; it’s an inflated passion, like in type Two, with the difference that E2 fills themselves with pride in their own value, while the social E3 fills themselves with the idea that others see them as brilliant. Much like E2, the social E3 lacks humility and, more importantly, the authenticity to recognize that their “superior” stance is a neurotic defense mechanism, not their true self. They avoid genuine connections out of fear of not being socially recognized or valued, which is their main source of neurotic nourishment.

The social E3's passion serves to avoid contact with a sense of worthlessness and with the inability to pursue personal fulfillment through their own desires, projects, and values. Lacking contact with their inner world and depth, self-realization turns into a need to conform to what the social market demands. Inflating this passion, clinging to the external goal they want to reach, the social E3 reinforces their disconnection from their interior, keeping their true self at a distance and living in self-repression.

The neurotic delusion is that attaining the desired social status will allow them to avoid feeling the emptiness of not having internal reference points, neither for relating to others nor for loving themselves. In doing so, they avoid touching the fear and depression that would emerge if they faced their truth. They passionately seek to shine, imagining that through it, they'll find their rightful place in the world. Brilliance, money, and power function as energetic stimulants, giving them the drive and excitement to keep living a life packed with tasks and relationships, all to maintain the illusion of a fulfilling existence, and to avoid the specter of failure.

They can't afford to be tired, because tiredness would mean a time of emptiness, a pause during which the monster might wake and rise. Behind their perpetual motion, disconnected from authentic feelings, lies an attempt to control constant anxiety and, more deeply, the dark hole of life's lack of meaning. It's a narcissistic willpower, fixated solely on chasing the reflection of that ideal Self, with the arrogance of believing they can orchestrate events. They can't settle into the here and now or flow with what's happening. Instead, they live in the grandiose fantasy that they can manipulate and shape the world, relationships, and even nature:

I always worked really hard, and I had come up with a wonderful trick for achieving success. I knew that if I thought about everything I had to do in one day, I'd never get it done. So here's what I did: the night before, just before falling asleep, I would quickly imagine everything I had planned for the next day, and then break it down into micro-steps. Each one was basically independent from the next, but essential to reach the next phase. And each step felt manageable, while the overall project seemed huge. That way, I focused only on the concrete task at hand, while never actually forgetting the big goal that guided me and gave me direction. And step by step, I was able to achieve major things. It can be time-consuming at times, and I get impatient with the small steps, but I respect the big stages, with patience. It's only a matter of time.

In the social E3 more than in the other subtypes, the substitution of existential and spiritual vitality with ego-driven actions becomes evident. The false, superficial mask is lived as if it were reality; the person is completely identified with their personality.

It's interesting to recall the term Ichazo used for enneatype Three: *Ego-go*. It seems that the passion Naranjo identified for the social E3, *prestige*, perfectly captures this way of living in constant *motion*; chasing the glitter of gold while believing it's light. The neurotic need has entirely replaced the deep need to *be*. The surface has become substance, constantly polished and decorated. The social E3 invents themselves, just as they invent stories, anecdotes, and experiences to build their character... until the lies are no longer even recognizable as lies.

III. Interpersonal strategy and associated irrational ideas

We've previously discussed how, during childhood, the social E3 child learns to adapt to their parents' expectations, striving to deliver the outcomes they desire. This leads to a complete identification with an image of themselves as efficient, successful, and highly capable. They deceive themselves and their surroundings by believing that the only reality that matters is the one they can convincingly portray, aligned with what they believe the world demands of them. In doing so, they tend to deny or forget the existence of their inner reality, as well as the external reality that operates independently of what they can "construct."

Consequently, they grow accustomed to managing their relationships with others and their interactions with the world through this ongoing self-construction. Their experiences, thoughts, and behaviors revolve around the fundamental belief that they can influence people and events through their actions and sheer will.

The fixation of this false self-image in the social E3 subtype is rooted in the conviction that presenting an image endorsed by the group or context is the only means to exist in the world, to belong, and to gain acceptance.

The core belief of an E3 is that they possess the power, through their will and actions, to not only alter events but also people. This idea is closely tied to their belief that "doing" something holds extreme significance. So much so that the act of doing itself can become a defining feature of their way of existing in the world, often overshadowing the intended purpose of their actions. In their relentless pursuit of success, they lose sight of the meaning behind them. The sole remaining significance is to occupy a highly visible position of prestige. Their life becomes an incessant stream of activity, and all the while they're unaware of the immense effort required because their addiction to success prevents them from feeling fatigue. This could be distilled as a generalized principle within this enneatype: "if I do, I exist," which, for the social E3, takes the form of "If I accomplish significant and socially recognized success, I exist." This philosophy underpins their sense of identity and their perspective on life.

This way of thinking reveals a narcissistic and omnipotent self-image, allowing the social E3 to deceive themselves about their control over life. They genuinely believe they can manage their life independently of external reality. Lacking self-assurance in their intrinsic value as a person, they neurotically place their trust in the effectiveness of their actions, convinced that their success hinges on their willpower, while disregarding the autonomy of others and the world around them. Their desire to evade failure or feelings of helplessness upholds this approach. Flowing with life's realities or even acknowledging their own emotions becomes challenging, as they cannot relinquish control.

Built around this distorted cognitive core, the social E3 develops a series of "crazy" notions that are irrational and disconnected from reality. They firmly believe that the satisfaction of their needs, or in other words, achieving success, can be secured through adaptability. This adaptability extends to personal relationships and social contexts, where they conform to prevailing customs or trends. They entertain the notion that if they adopt fashionable clothing or adhere to the current prevailing beliefs, success is practically guaranteed. Their social vanity thrives on these irrational ideas about how to attain prestige, success, and power.

One of them revolves around the concept that owning anything that exudes power is paramount. It could be material possessions, real estate, or influential friends – for them, "having is power." This idea translates into a desire for wealth and ownership, so they don't find themselves in a position of need, and don't have to ask, because they don't want to show any fragility or powerlessness. The social E3 becomes a *utilizer*: instead of explicitly articulating their needs, they make others feel guilty, projecting their unspoken desires onto those around them, even though they might not fully comprehend their needs themselves. However, they take it for granted that others should discern their requirements and agree to be used for their goal.

The social E3 may adopt a role of leadership within an organization or structure. Still, they are cautious about occupying the foremost position where they'd be more exposed to potential challenges like hostility, envy, or failure. They gravitate towards positions of power but remain somewhat in the background, leaning on the belief that the mere company of someone important is sufficient to make them significant. An illustrative example of a power strategy linked with ownership comes from Francesco: "At one point in my life, when my father died, I said to myself: 'I will never be poor. I'm not interested in being very rich; I just don't want to be poor.' What I am genuinely interested in is having a lot of power, the power itself."

Francesco, Haydée and Yolanda see money as a means to access a higher social class and a more elevated status: "If I have money, I am worth it."

In interpersonal relationships, the social E3 seeks consensus based on emotions and does so by identifying the collective needs and conforming to them. This form of leadership can be described as empathic, albeit a strategic kind of empathy. It's employed to gain recognition, but it's less seductive compared to that of E2. As part of the trust-building process, they may inadvertently forfeit some of their authority, operating as emotional leaders rather than being highly directive. Leadership for them is a tool for speculation and manipulation. They patiently wait for the right moment to express their thoughts and can display stubbornness, rigidity, and a tendency to repeatedly insist on their objectives. Francesco recounts: "I learned to be insincere. I learned to pretend to be much more and better than I was, and I actually subjugated the rich kids. Socioeconomically, I was at the bottom of my school, but I compensated for it with my strategic ability to become the best, the leader among the wealthy."

In therapy, one of their crazy ideas involves performing almost miraculous feats with the patient. The social E3 therapist, despite their rationality, perceives themselves as impressive. Simply holding the title of "therapist" already satisfies their need to feel "superior."

Another irrational concept relates to emotional disconnection, wherein they lack genuine emotional depth within themselves. By remaining out of touch with their authentic emotions, the social E3 loses the ability to differentiate between what they feel and what is appropriate to feel in a particular context or relationship. They also struggle to discern self-created falsehoods from reality. This extends to how they interact with their internal emotional world: either seizing upon emotions that might emanate from others or fabricating emotions that they ultimately come to believe and assert as their own. Ana provides insight into this aspect:

I require fiction to nourish my existence. My own life has often appeared gray, unreal, and insipid, leading me to seek compensation, especially in cinema. Fiction feels more genuine than my life itself, which I perceive as lacking in authenticity. Cinema fills me with the intensity and emotional profundity that I find missing in my day-to-day existence. It grants me a sense of reality that my real life fails to provide. In my regular life, my self-restraint prevents me from experiencing emotions with such depth. I don't want to pity myself or appear weak.

Another crazy idea of social E3s has to do with distrust. Given their disconnection from their true selves, they are plagued by doubts in the absence of genuine reference points. Without solid roots, they struggle to trust themselves, leading to a profound suspicion that they project onto others. In Francesco's words: "A good enemy is worth more than a bad friend. With an enemy, you understand their interests, and you can strike a deal, but with friends, you're never sure about their hidden agendas."

The most terrifying ideas for the social E3 often revolve around the fear of failure or being poor. These concerns are closely linked to the dread of having to ask for something or being without resources, be it money, power, or prestige. In essence, it pertains to facing the powerlessness of their *doing*. The power that work, money, or prestige provides is also associated with the fear of loneliness

and the irrational belief that *they will be abandoned if they are not intriguing* or have nothing to offer. They feel that *they, as individuals, are unwanted for who they are*. For Yolanda, “the crazy notion would be, ‘If I have nothing to provide, I am alone; if they don’t need me, they don’t want me.’ They only require me when I have something to offer.”

Eustaquio’s most dreaded scenario is, “the thought of being homeless, begging on the streets. It’s the fear of abandonment, the fear of not being acknowledged.” For Ana, it would be deeply distressing if others perceived her as a burden, unclean, unpleasant, or constantly complaining. She succinctly defines her irrational belief as: ‘If I don’t have money, I can’t exist.’ Francesco’s fear centers on dying alone, devoid of companionship, so his neurotic conviction is “If I’m someone important, I’ll never be alone.” In conversations between Haydée and Ana, they have often reiterated, “I don’t depend on anyone, and I can do anything.”

It is crucial for the transformation of the social E3 that they remain attuned to their emotions and stay true to them, even if this results in a lack of agreement within the group. Their typical misguided strategy involves sacrificing their genuine emotions for the sake of group harmony, all to maintain their emotional leadership. Unfortunately, this often comes at the cost of suppressing their own feelings.

With children or adolescents, it is easy for them to become authoritarian, but when interacting with peers or superiors, they cannot assert authority. Consequently, they seek consensus, reinforcing their irrational belief that *the most crucial thing is gaining validation, and only through this validation can they earn acceptance and love*.

This character imposes authority in a manner they deem inadequate. Despite their incessant efforts at self-control and propriety, their mechanisms can fail, leading to a loss of control in an embarrassing manner.

The social E3 tends to excessively conform to their surroundings while feeling inadequate internally. Their interactions with others typically involve confluence, adaptation, malleability, or a refined “adaptive faculty.” Yolanda introduces a subtle nuance to this:

We give off the impression of ‘I can do it,’ and ‘I don’t require others’ assistance; I attempt to handle things on my own.’ In any case, we see ourselves as the ones who can support others. If someone offers help, we feel uncomfortable and are compelled to return that ‘favor’ to feel debt-free. When confronted with the irrational notion that we must complete tasks flawlessly, exhaustion and inner turmoil set in, leading to a clash between reality and our ideals.

They find it difficult to laugh at themselves, even though it could help alleviate their clumsiness. When their faults are pointed out or they become the subject of ridicule, they perceive it as a personal failure and feel highly embarrassed. They do, however, feel quite comfortable in environments like Gestalt therapy, where self-denunciation is encouraged and rewarded. Humor becomes a tool they use strategically, often making fun of themselves before others have the chance; it’s so they don’t lose control. Francesco openly acknowledges, “I recognize how much I instrumentalize self-deprecation. I can’t resist revealing my vulnerabilities, but I do it instrumentally, often for seductive purposes.”

It’s worth noting their talent for speaking at length without conveying much substance, often resorting to vacuous, demagogic rhetoric. They have an innate ability to gauge the audience’s attention and adapt their speech accordingly.

The social E3, much like the other two subtypes, adopts numerous identities because they “learned” from an early age that their true self is inherently worthless. This was illustrated in a group session where Haydée emotionally recollected the shame she once felt for considering her parents as vulgar. While the group briefly delved into deep emotions, they quickly retreated, filling the void with words. They feared the emotional abyss would be too overwhelming if they allowed themselves to

fully experience it. It could have been a very intimate moment, but for a social E3 *too much emotion is unbearable*.

When the social E3 communicates authentically, without relying on intellectual constructs, it makes them feel vulnerable, and it doesn't take them long to put on a mask again. Their struggle with emotions stems from the irrational belief that *emotionality is weakness*, and they, it is clear, cannot afford to appear weak because, during their childhood, revealing fragility was met with penalties rather than rewards. Their false belief is that *one must be strong*, understanding strength as synonymous with emotional control and toughness. Eustaquio recalls:

The feeling of shame runs deep, especially when we reveal “our inner monsters” to others: the egoist who does not really care about them, the clueless fool, and the coldness, the underlying rage... I entered the world of psychotherapy when I was in my early twenties, starting with a personal growth group. We sat in the typical gestalt circle, and the therapist asked me, “And you, how do you feel?” Besides not knowing, not being in touch with my emotions, for me it was monumental – someone was interested in how I felt!

For the social E3, fitting into the environment is of utmost importance. The fear of crossing boundaries, being *inappropriate*, intruding, or causing any inconvenience leads them to constantly gauge their own and others' limits. They are overly concerned about control, even when they try not to appear controlling, yet it's often quite noticeable. Ultimately, the experience of not being in control puts this subtype in a place of the unknown, of not knowing who they are and what they want, feeling ill-equipped to interact with others. Haydée's childhood experiences illustrate this:

When I was a child, if I found myself with older girls, I only spoke up when I was very sure of myself. Otherwise, I remained quiet and observant, trying to emulate what I admired most about each one. Even now, in settings I perceive as superior, I tend to stay quiet and listen.

The need to adapt to the environment makes it impossible for them to access spontaneity. To be spontaneous would mean exposing themselves for who they truly are, yet what they believe about themselves holds little value or may be incorrect. It's more appealing to seduce through adaptation. Internally, they wrestle with the tension and dissonance, a moment when they feel adrift. Giusy described it as feeling “very adequate and deeply inadequate at the same time. We, social E3s, tend to feel inadequate within the group and simultaneously bend over backward to conform to the environment.”

For the social Three, the environment acts as a mirror where they can reflect themselves and construct a sense of identity. The reflection they lacked during childhood is something they continue to seek within the group, adjusting to the image the group reflects back to them. Their belief is, “If I can be what I perceive you want, then I can belong with you.”

All E3 subtypes grapple with a sense of inadequacy, perhaps because their actions aren't driven from within. They look outside to fulfill the needs of their environment but struggle to understand their own needs. Giusy recalls, “In my family, women were expected to conform to traditional gender roles; they weren't supposed to think for themselves.” Yolanda realized that “prior to therapy sessions, I'd make a checklist of what I wanted to discuss that day. I'd arrive with a pre-determined outline, orchestrating the entire process myself to avoid feeling foolish or lost.” Haydée embarked on therapy with a sense of “surplus” rather than deficiency. She explained, “I didn't feel a lack or neediness; I entered as an ‘extra.’ In fact, I started my Gestalt training in the third year because I needed the title.”

This highly intuitive character excels at discerning others' emotions and, in their quest to remain in the limelight, they are overly concerned with reaching a consensus, even when it might be more

beneficial for them to hold their ground and defend their own opinion, irrespective of others' viewpoints. Lowen, in his characterization of the *psychopath* corresponding to E3, mentions doing things correctly to avoid being caught at fault. In this context, Ana observes:

Accustomed to meeting others' expectations, it's challenging for me to recognize when it's about my own desires. I think I protect my therapist from myself, so that she doesn't feel incompetent. I offer her some breakthrough, some insight when it seems to me that she feels we are stagnating, allowing her to take responsibility for not progressing as expected. What I primarily need from her is acceptance, a listening ear, support, and constructive guidance without criticism or judgment—essentially, a nurturing and wise maternal figure. If, as a patient with a Type 3 personality, I present a facade to the therapist and she accepts it without making an effort to delve deeper, I believe that therapy can no longer be effective.

Based on their adaptation mechanism and the desire to please, the social E3 strives for an extensive level of control over others and their relationships, under the illusion that control can ward off their insecurities, aggression, and fear of non-acceptance.

The tacit competence of the social E3 is revealed in this anecdote from Ana's experience in therapy:

I attend sessions with a fairly clear idea of what I want to work on. I leave no room for silence. On the first day of therapy, I almost sat in the therapist's chair. There were two identical ones, but even so, there must have been something that suggested to me it was hers.

Their sense of competition operates as a hidden strategy, concealed behind their seductive and seemingly docile demeanor. When they sense that victory is unlikely, they might try to undermine the winner. Alternatively, they could form an alliance with their perceived enemy. But their preferred course of action is to withdraw, pretending disinterest, masking their internal feelings of failure or embarrassment behind a facade of indifference. For the social E3, this indifference is preferable to engaging in open conflict. When they don't know how to relate to someone, feel disliked, or anticipate not being liked, they adopt a cold demeanor towards the other party. This manifests as a form of aggressive indifference, discrediting the *enemy* and invalidating their perspective, reflecting their own feelings of inadequacy onto the other.

For the social E3, there are only a select few authority figures deserving of recognition... often primarily because of the power they hold. They have a keen eye for hierarchy and norms, readily detecting authority figures worth acknowledging to achieve their goals. Successfully seducing or standing out to gain recognition from an authority figure bestows upon them a sense of power. At the very least, such recognition makes it easier for them to adopt the values of commitment and loyalty.

IV. Other characteristic features and psychodynamic considerations

Competitive

“Anything goes to stay on Mount Olympus,” says Juanjo Herrera in his analysis of the film *All About Eve*. In the machinery fully devoted to its core objective—success and social recognition—this subtype displays a cutthroat, unprincipled competitiveness.

The forms this competitiveness takes may appear *refined*, but its core is ruthlessly unyielding. The social E3, maintaining a self-image of being good, hides a manipulative drive aimed at undermining opponents through trickery and lies. They seldom engage in direct confrontation; instead, they subtly demean others. They puppeteer from the shadows, smiling and unruffled, avoiding any space for true intimacy. Their efforts are directed not toward competent performance, but toward maintaining a favorable image and social position through charm and likability. Their focus is on staying center stage to retain control of the situation.

Envy is one of the silent motors of their actions. At work, they pursue ambition through blatant chameleon tactics, constantly showcasing their “value”: what they have, who they know. They use their discerning gaze to identify those in power, and approach them using carefully timed silences, the right words, the calculated gesture they believe will please. Once they’ve secured recognition, the struggle continues, now aimed at constant self-adaptation to avoid losing the privileges they’ve gained. There may be no limits to who they will step on or what lies they will construct to eliminate anyone who gets in their way. This aspect of their character strongly underscores their connection with E8, alongside a penchant for vengeance.

Vindictive

If they fail to achieve their goal or are exposed in their fraud or true intentions, they will still try to preserve their good image—there will be a time and place for a cold revenge where anything goes. This subtype frequently employs manipulation of information, defamation, and slander. The calculated lies they use to discredit others are so well concocted that even they begin to lose sight of the boundary between reality and fiction in their mythomania.

Histrionic

The social E3 remains composed, refusing to show anger or pain. Their armor is about not losing face or showing emotional weakness. So how do they express their histrionic trait? Through impatience, a veiled form of anger. Not getting what they want, when they want it, is what cracks their calm façade and reveals their rage. If they can no longer be the center of attention, if their charm stops working, they reach a breaking point. They can’t stand this exposure, as it unveils their deception, and may react with dramatic, exaggerated outbursts that reveal their intolerance.

Chameleonic / Simultaneously multifaceted

We could call the social E3 *simultaneously multifaceted*. In everyday life, they skillfully juggle various tasks. They’re capable of watering the plants, talking on the phone, tending to a roast in the oven, snacking on an apple, and planning their next move, all at the same time.

Their seamless adaptation to the environment allows them to master the art of knowing how to behave in any given situation: what to wear, what to eat and drink, when to speak, and when to stay

silent. Through control, they synthesize what's most appropriate and pass off a meticulously studied performance as if it were natural, when it's far from even a hint of spontaneity.

Inverted masculinity and femininity

The social E3 woman exudes a lot of masculine energy: she's logical, rational, and action-oriented. She hasn't integrated the tender, receptive energy of the mother; she missed out on that loving, protective side. She feels most at ease with men, as a colleague who helps them be even more masculine. She admires strong types and sees herself as a warrior, shielded by a tough armor against everyone and everything.

The social E3 man, on the other hand, doesn't learn to access the father's energy. He looks at him with fear and hides his emotions. His appearance tends to be more feminine, and he fears his own strength. To compensate, he fantasizes about being a force to be reckoned with. He seeks strong, powerful friends.

Both men and women experience a distortion: they associate strength with violence, as if it were an uncontrollable explosion. It's healthy for them to experience both masculine and feminine energy in group settings, entering a space free from seduction or competition.

Manipulative in giving and receiving

The social E3 hates feeling indebted, so they feel the need to give more than they receive. They can't settle for an equal exchange; they must give more and, if possible, better. To guarantee they'll receive something in return, their giving becomes a business transaction where they always come out on top. It's not about altruism, compassion, or generosity; it's a strictly commercial quid pro quo.

Appropriationist

The social E3 only moves in safe territory, building on what others have already done. They analyze, filter, optimize, and create a new product with no room for inspiration. They don't trust themselves to create from scratch because they're too ambitious and controlling, overly concerned with others' judgment. As Giusy aptly notes, "Metaphorically, a social E3's creativity would be *copy and paste*."

Death experience avoidant/frozen

In the face of death, the social E3 emotionally shuts down. They stop feeling and enter a cold, emotionless state in order to avoid confronting pain and grief. This is how Francesco recalls hearing the news of the attack on his father: "We didn't know what condition he was in, they weren't giving details about the injured. I had a massive crash and completely froze." After this numbness, they often shift to anger, either turned outward or inward, rather than grief. They don't allow themselves space to cry or soften; they fear connecting to the body, feeling the heart, and being overwhelmed by emotion.

For a social E3, death represents bodily degradation and a total loss of control. It's associated with the body becoming repulsive, with "losing face." Giusy recalls: "In a guided fantasy, I always saw myself dead, connecting with the disgusting parts of my body. Mice, insects, worms were eating

me; I felt rotten fluids oozing out of my corpse.” Faced with the reality of their own fragility, this personality panics.

They fear dying alone and fear physical pain. The anguish triggered by the idea of death is processed without emotional content, defended against through denial. They stay “stuck in the denial of the fact, the first stage of grief,” says Eustaquio. They avoid thinking about death from a sense of omnipotence, believing it won’t happen to them, that it’s something that only happens to others. If death has been a constant presence in the family environment, the social E3 may feel like a bearer of death.

Only after losing someone they truly love do they become aware of their own mortality. They prefer to process the nearness of death—whether it’s physical danger, tragic news, or illness—in a rational way, and rather than break down in pain, they throw themselves into action. “When I had cancer, I didn’t miss a single day of work,” says Ana. Haydée adds: “Just minutes after my father died, I was on the phone making arrangements. He died at 3:30 p.m., and by six I was already at a funeral home 80 kilometers away.”

As adults, they associate death with a kind of inner non-being, a barren desert, a cold, dry depression. If they allow themselves to accompany a loved one through death, they may experience a form of love that opens the heart and feels transcendent. “In saying goodbye to my father, I felt a deep love, of a kind that’s hard to describe,” Haydée recalls.

Death can also become a frivolous matter. Rather than grieving, the social E3 may focus on what outfit to wear to the funeral. In some cases, Hoffman Process work has helped them cry for all the deaths they had never mourned before.

Attached to money

The social E3 takes risks, sometimes excessively so, but is confident that when facing financial risk, they’ll find a way to maintain their status. They dislike asking for things but won’t give up anything either; instead, they try to get others to give without having to ask outright.

From a young age, they aim to be financially independent. They don’t monitor their bank accounts, don’t save, and tend to spend more than they have. Their spending isn’t about investment with long-term returns, but about consumption. They can be generous with others’ money but stingier with their own.

Another form of overspending comes through pleasing others with gifts, fine food, and more as a means to buy friendships. This generosity is image-driven: “It looks bad not to be generous,” explains Yolanda. Social E3s tend to gift their partners things that they themselves like, not necessarily what the other person wants. These are manipulative gifts: “Look what I got you...” but it ends up in their own room, or it’s a perfume they want the other person to wear because they like it.

If minimalism is trendy, they’ll live simply, for show, but might have a Mercedes Benz parked just around the corner. They rub shoulders with powerful people who have more money and behave as if they’re part of the same elite group, masking deep insecurity. Even if they don’t have money, they act like they do, with the manner of a noble patrician they know how to adopt. It would be very hard for a social E3 to obey the command of a new Messiah who came saying, “Leave all your possessions and follow me.”

Attached to the image of their house

A social E3 cannot live just anywhere; they seek large spaces they can decorate with their personal style. Theirs is a home with charm. It's not just a place to live, but a showcase of who they are and what they have. They enjoy hosting friends or important people who can appreciate the aesthetic of every corner. They attend to every detail, filling the space with flowers, candles, and incense, striking a balance between stylish disorder and spotless cleanliness.

Scatologically reserved

This is a topic the social E3 would rather not discuss. They are extremely clean, sometimes to the point of a reactive compulsion, which leads them to shower multiple times a day. Bodily functions like *farting, snot, feces, or urine* are considered by them disgusting and unfit for public mention among "civilized" people. With a refined sense of smell, they abhor unpleasant body odors.

They are often constipated, due to a masochistic fixation to withhold. They'll keep working rather than take time to satisfy basic physiological needs. They keep their flatulence to themselves, only releasing it in a sealed-off bathroom, far from others' ears. If caught, they'll claim "it was uncontrollable," and if it wasn't them, they'll worry people might think it was. When away from home, they find it difficult to defecate.

Seductive

The social E3 isn't particularly passionate or sexually active; sexuality for them becomes a tool to be liked, used only once they're certain they're loved. What matters most is feeling desirable to the other person, more than the actual sexual experience. They care more about seduction than about deepening intimacy. They have sex with the other person's preferences in mind, more than their own pleasure. Being a good lover becomes just another duty, and sex, just another product to sell. In intimate moments, just before orgasm, they fear losing control, an interference that blocks deep emotional surrender in the act of lovemaking.

If they connect with their instinctual side, they may enjoy aggressive sex, which they filter as something dirty and shameful. They prefer a lover with whom they can unleash their wild side, while maintaining a less exciting relationship with their main partner.

Men can experience issues like impotence, premature ejaculation, low desire, and penis pain; among women, there is a tendency toward frigidity.

Studied

The social E3 gives meaning and attributes to clothing, using it as a tool for their social endeavors. They dress to be admired, visually striking and bold in styles and colors. They have a carefully curated style, designed to ensure they never go unnoticed. Their wardrobe mixes casual clothing with designer labels, ranging from outfits for an African safari to the most elegant evening attire. They carry themselves in a way that makes even cheap clothes look expensive.

Cheat/Liar

For the social E3, cheating is not a moral dilemma; it's a way of life. They turn their tricks into strategy and feel no guilt about it. As Francesco puts it: "I start studying a couple of days before the exam and tell myself I'm so good I'll pass without breaking a sweat. And I do." They build schemes to get what they want from others, selling themselves as genuinely interested in others' needs or using flattery as a tool.

They invent themselves just as they invent stories, characters, or events to enhance their image or support their social ascent. Lying becomes a defense whenever someone tries to expose them. The identification with their mask is so complete that lies become part of a character indistinguishable from the real person.

Self-employed or independent in labour

They avoid bosses and rigid schedules. For the social E3, freedom is of utmost importance. If they do have a boss, they aim to maintain independence by charming authority figures, gradually gaining influence and privileges. If they succeed, the boss eventually even becomes a friend.

Repressed fear, shame, and violence / Counterphobic

Social E3s deny fear and bypass it through action. "In childhood and youth, I had a lot of fear, and out of shame I masked it with counter-phobic behaviors," Ana recalls.

When they release anger, it's with surgical precision. They live with the sense that there's a murderous instinct inside so great that, if unleashed, it would turn them into criminals. "I feel so dark inside that I think I could kill; that's why I repress myself," Francesco admits. Haydée agrees, "When I feel rage, my first reaction is total hatred and the urge to kill." Giusy says she has at times felt diabolical, while Yolanda confesses, "I'm not usually aggressive at first. I'm reactive. And I tend to direct aggression inward. I'm afraid I might commit suicide."

Indolent

When working, the social E3 forgets basic needs. They postpone eating, sleeping, even going to the bathroom to finish what they're doing. Despite being busy all day, they still feel lazy. As Ana says:

If I don't stop, it's because I feel that if I did, I'd never get out of bed again. Ever. The way I work at the computer is like a machine, like a mantra. I can work 11 or 12 hours straight in front of the screen without even asking if I'm tired.

Eustaquio adds a layer to this paradox: "We're reliable and hardworking, but only when it comes to external tasks, tasks for others. We don't take care of what does us good personally." Ana agrees: "If you reserve something for your own free time, it never happens, because there's always another task. So it never gets done."

This laziness is mixed with a lack of discipline; they struggle to keep commitments to themselves, especially when it comes to self-care or nurturing their spirit. The spiritual seems too abstract to trust in its value. So, with the same force they apply to ego-driven efforts, they neglect their more subtle, deeper aspects.

This type becomes an expert in giving advice they themselves don't follow—unless it's imposed as a task. As Francesco confesses:

In front of patients I act like I practice everything I recommend. Now I have twenty patients in my dynamic meditation class... and that forces me to do it. Because it's work, I do it. I trick myself into doing things that are good for me.

Selective friend

The social E3 knows many people but has few actual friends. They tend to choose friends from the gender they're attracted to, and their relationships are rarely disinterested. They struggle to be with someone as "just a friend" because there's often a transactional motive at play: if the other person has money, power, prestige, wisdom, or beauty... then they want them as a friend. They look for something in others not only to appreciate, but to *use*. They don't know how to connect from the heart; it leaves them feeling exposed and vulnerable. "If you tell me you're going to introduce me to the President," says Francesco, "it won't take me five minutes to show up. But if you tell me 'Go out and make friends,' I'll get really anxious and scared."

Because they mask their emotions, they can be envious and manipulative without it being obvious. They may subtly signal superiority even while seemingly praising others. They expect to be recognized and valued, and rarely break this automatic pattern to simply relax and enjoy friendship. Their sense of prestige depends on who they're associated with, as confirmed by Giusy:

Without explicitly saying "I'm friends with so-and-so," without openly bragging, even pretending to be humble, I subtly let it slip into conversation what high-level contacts I have. Through that I communicate that I'm someone of value. My clients include famous models, friends of the Kennedys, etc.; the crème de la crème of my city.

In romantic relationships, they may perceive themselves as faithful even after being unfaithful. They justify themselves because they spend so much time seducing that they're not even aware it's cheating. They can abruptly end a relationship overnight while having maintained, outwardly, the impression that everything was fine. They avoid confrontations and would rather send a lawyer than create a scene.

Envious

They envy material possessions, but rarely envy inner qualities. Such is their inner disconnect that they only reach for what is external. "Today," says Francesco, "it's different for me: I see other good therapists and I wish I could manage the therapeutic relationship like they do. But that's recent. Before, I wanted objects, things, and it never satisfied me. I'd buy them and feel just as empty. It was a fixation, bordering on obsession." Giusy also talks about envy:

Imagine this: I'm with Eustaquio and Ana. Two women and one man. I couldn't openly compete with her; that would be too shameful for me. So my strategy would be to speak well of her while slipping in manipulative comments like: "Ana is dangerous, a man-eater, be

careful with her,” all while not overtly praising myself, because my vanity would be too obvious. Beneath that manipulative strategy is an envy I deny.

Jealous

Jealousy arises especially when they sense a rival. This may seem normal, but what sets the social E3 apart is that they usually neglect their partner. There's a lack of intimacy, and they *stop looking at them*, until someone shows up who threatens their position. They perceive the rival as more valuable, more attractive, or possessing something of great worth. It's not just their relationship that feels at risk, but their power, status, significance, and prestige. The presence of a rival stirs the monster of social failure.

Ambitious

Their drive for social climbing and career advancement is different from the ambition of social E2s. Both strategize and seduce those who can elevate their status, but social E2s present themselves as wonderful and use their warmth and generosity, while social E3s market their work, organizational skill, and above all, their effort, though they hide a deep insecurity. They aim to be useful and carefully analyze what's needed to gain multiple advantages, but always strive to come across as correct and appropriate.

Cold

Emotional coldness obviously has to do with disconnection from their inner emotional world. The social E3 does not know what they feel and for them, feelings are more like obstacles that get in the way, rather than guides for making life choices. Likewise, although they may exhibit empathy, they tend to disregard the feelings of others; they're just not part of their mental map. People become objects, entries in an internal ledger of what's been given and received. It's not surprising that they may appear unshaken in emotionally distressing situations—they never drop the mask.

Impatient

For the social E3, time is something to use: to get things done or wait for results. It's not time to *live*, but to *achieve*. And the faster, the better, since they can't tolerate emptiness or inactivity. This type is propelled into the future, toward imagined or urgently needed success. Living in the here and now would mean flowing with life, enjoying themselves, but they lack the trust or hope that this could ever be enough.

V. Emotionality and fantasy

Experiencing emotions

Regarding the emotional dimension of their own life, the social E3 tends to experience a kind of depersonalization. Their life is full of stories, but they struggle to feel it as truly their own and connect with it on a deep emotional level. When discussing their life experiences, even dramatic events, they describe them with a sense of detachment, as if they were narrating a movie. Francesco explains it this way: “The E3 identifies with the content (the experiences) but not with the container (the one having the experiences). If someone asks who you are, you say, ‘I’m a psychologist.’ But you should say, ‘I’m Francesco, and I work as a psychologist.’” Haydée adds:

I’ve been trying to write an autobiography for days, but I just can’t. I’ve realized that the things I’ve done in my life were influenced by external circumstances, but I haven’t done something that is truly mine. They’re like borrowed experiences for specific moments. I can’t connect with my feelings. It’s as if nothing has really happened in my life.

Francesco echoes the sentiment:

It would be easier to talk about things as they’re happening. But once they’ve passed, I recount them without emotion, as if they had happened to someone else. It’s easy to build a biography like a résumé, with facts. What I would need is someone to interview me and ask about the subjective experience and emotions. For example, if I say, “I graduated,” the interviewer could ask, “And how did you feel at that moment?”

“For me,” says Giusy, “expressing emotions meant risking humiliation, being laughed at.” Sometimes, fiction serves as a pretext for releasing personal emotions or coping with them. “During my battle with cancer,” Ana recounts, “I would go to see movies featuring dramatic stories about illness. I could cry using that as an excuse, because I held myself back when it came to my own situation. I didn’t want to wallow in self-pity.”

Emotionality expressed through fantasy

The social E3 is highly energetic, and their joy is lively, bright, and witty, always in the service of self-promotion. Among all E3 subtypes, the social E3 is the one most likely to express negative emotions (sometimes even being confused with E8). However, their emotional expression is generally regulated by what the situation calls for. (In a gestalt group that encourages open emotionality, for example, they’ll display an intense emotional range in line with what the therapist expects.) Yolanda recalls how she learned to adjust her emotional expression to social expectations: “At my mother’s funeral, I started to sing because we used to sing together a lot, and my father slapped me. That’s when I started asking myself, ‘Oh, what is it that you’re supposed to feel in this kind of situation?’”

Emotion is directed by whatever each situation or person demands. If those around them are emotional, the social E3 may allow themselves to be carried by the moment and connect with their own affectivity.

When anger is expressed, it usually doesn’t appear directly. It may come out as irony that can be cutting or even sadistic, yet presented with a veneer of elegance. The aggression looks accidental or

only becomes clear on a second reading, leaving the person who delivered the blow seemingly untarnished.

The fantasies of the social E3 often revolve around the concept of prestige. These may involve thoughts of grandeur, being above others, and belonging to an elite group of powerful people. And they want that to be seen (to be looked up to). This can appear in material ways (often with branded items), as noted by Eustaquio: “My brother gifted me a very expensive watch. If I see someone who knows watches, I’ll roll up my sleeve so they notice it.” But it can also play out in more intangible areas of prestige. “For me,” says Ana, “it’s about academic and intellectual credentials. That’s where I place my social ambition. Like which club or university I belong to: I prefer the most prestigious ones. Or I’ll make sure my résumé is presented in the most favorable light.”

However, behind this fantasy of brilliance lies a negative self-image. Haydée describes it as “a darker part of me, where I feel horrible, ugly, like a thief or a liar.”

In the context of romantic relationships, this fantasy of prestige may show up in the desire for a partner who is, as Yolanda puts it, “good-looking, eye-catching”; someone flashy “to show off and be proud of. He’s the most handsome and most wanted, but he chooses to be with me.” Giusy adds, “He has to be beautiful, but not stupid. Desirable, fascinating.” Through their partner’s value, the social E3 gains secondary value themselves (“tell me who you’re with, and I’ll tell you who you are”), elevating themselves through their pedestal.

In general, when you ask an E3 how they know they love someone, they don’t say, “Because I feel love.” They struggle to explain what it means to love or to want someone. Instead, they say things like “I enjoy looking at them,” “I like what they do,” or “Because they love me.” These are explanations that don’t evoke any feeling. They may even feel cold and question whether they really love their partner at all.

When and how the social E3 comes into contact with emotion

This character needs to turn their gaze inward, away from the constant need for approval. Only by looking inside can they begin to recognize their own feelings, rather than performing the emotion (usually a positive one) they believe they’re supposed to feel in every situation. The hard part, at first, is feeling anything at all, because the emotional version of the inner emptiness of the social E3 is coldness, a lack of affectivity.

At times, this emotional detachment comes with a lack of compassion for others’ suffering. Haydée recalls her experiences teaching: “I was very harsh in how I said things in class, and students would cry. I just thought they were idiots—how awful. I didn’t realize it, but I wasn’t able to feel anything in response to a small child crying!”

When asked what the worst thing would be if they expressed the emotions they hold back, they reply: “It would mean losing control. You’re no longer in charge of your life; other people start making decisions for you.” Additionally:

If I come into contact with sadness, I feel completely defenseless. I lose the tools I use to function. Weakness is the opposite of everything I do all the time; I show I’m strong, that I can handle anything. If I allow myself to feel weak, I feel very small and physically incapable of acting. I lose energy and my defenses. It’s literally as if my structure had cracked open.

(Haydée)

This past year, when I meditate, I cry. Constantly. I've convinced myself it's a release of all the tension from control. I don't know if it means anything else. I lose energy, I lose my defenses...
(Francesco)

The crying and the defenseless sadness that arise in the inner work of the social E3 probably relate to a kind of self-compassion for the child who wasn't seen, who had to perform and achieve to be acknowledged.

Among the range of emotions that begin to surface, there are two traits from E6 that start to emerge as the social E3 becomes more self-aware and begins to deconstruct their apparent confidence. One is fear, a blind spot that must be faced on the path to awareness. For someone as seemingly self-assured as the social E3, another key shift is the loss of certainty and the emergence of doubt. This means loosening the idealized self-image and coming into contact with uncertainty: "I'm not sure of anything, and I'm also afraid."

When you go through life playing the successful winner, you might get admiration, envy, and people might use you for your capacity to work... but you don't receive affection. When the social E3 shows weakness, they discover that others protect and care for them despite their flaws. Accepting others' compassion is, for the social E3, an act of humility that brings to the surface the emotions long repressed beneath the image of the competent adult.

In safe, structured environments like the SAT process, the mask begins to fall away and social E3s may start to feel fearful, fragile, introverted, serious—and, as their contact with deeper truth grows, increasingly relaxed and softened. "When I connect with myself in silence," says Haydée, "I come out calmer, I walk more slowly, I speak more slowly, I find a sense of renewal... I see more clearly what isn't mine, what I've adopted. In SAT, people tell me: 'You seem so much more human now.'" For Francesco, "a social E3 starts to develop when they stop depending on *others*, on work, on proving themselves. Choosing freely what commitments to take on, what work to do... that's where true strength is found. That's when you become authentic."

How sexuality moves through fantasy

As Francesco points out,

E3 already feels guilty just for existing. Beneath that guilt is an even deeper emptiness: the feeling of not existing in the eyes of your parents, according to their expectations. You idealize what you could have been, and you know you're not living up to it, and that makes you feel guilty. Sex also gets wrapped up in that guilt. Deep down, you feel like a whore, but you repress it.

The social E3 is turned on by power and social glitz. A person who is endowed with elite traits (economic, social, intellectual) is more attractive than someone who simply offers love. Emotional worth is measured in material terms: *My value equals how much they love me.*

The fantasy of the social E3 is to be admired. They know they can't rely on their body the way the *sexy* sexual E3 can; that's an effective but time-limited strategy anyway. Their path is to be admired for qualities like brilliance, elegance, sophistication, worldliness, glamor. They seduce through attitude and symbolic or intellectual attributes. What they seek isn't so much sexual desire as admiration and respect. Not raw sexual craving but something mediated by the refinement of culture.

Since their staging is calculated, the social E3 shines in brief encounters where they can leave a strong impression on their interlocutor (if it's a group, even better), but secretly fears being seen beyond the facade and exposing their inner void. That's why their strategy is to play with the fantasies of others, to be seen in the studied and flattering lights of the stage, only to disappear and linger as an echo of fantasy. To be seen but not touched. To fascinate many but commit to none. *If someone prestigious loves me, then I must be worthy...* But all this is still just an illusion. Pure theater.

It's good for the social E3 to ask themselves what they actually want, without smoke and mirrors, without anyone else's gaze on them, without needing to spark any desire (not even from that fantasized or imagined partner that lusts for them). They may then discover they don't know what they want, or realize they've distanced themselves from their desires out of fear of what might happen if they expressed it.

VI. Childhood

Character formation

During childhood, the essential ontic wound is formed first (not being loved simply for being, in that which is unique to each individual), followed by the false compensation that is characteristic of the personality structure.

The social E3 believes that they've essentially been valued based on a lie. This falseness, reinforced by adult applause, revolves around being proudly displayed for an audience. Often, the child is treated as a possession by narcissistic parents, who encourage them as extension of their own inflated self-esteem (the child might have been born with certain privileges, and feel "naturally" superior).

Thus, the child grows up believing they can do anything,¹³ acquiring a sense of omnipotence, privilege, and favoritism. This status tends to endure, as they often have talents and the motivation to develop them in order to keep proving their worth.¹⁴ The child is typically self-aware, capable of calculated strategies, and may not feel like a child at all. It's not uncommon for them to feel ashamed of their family background and to try to compensate or cover it up with their own brilliance (such as in the case of those born into poverty who, driven by ambition, manage to climb the social ladder). The child becomes, in a sense, the family star, the chosen one, the redeemer of the clan.

Generally, the social E3 is the favorite of the parent of the opposite sex and identifies with them. However, this bond often contains ambivalence, because in addition to seduction, there may be hostility and competition in the relationship.

There's a film that clearly illustrates how an E3 is formed from childhood: *Little Miss Sunshine*. Parents go about dressing up their children, creating little monsters; everything is controlled, and terrible. They create pure illusion using their children. It's a real festival of Threes that get lost in appearance and pretense.

¹³ In a psychoanalytic sense, both their parents and they identify themselves with the ideal self.

¹⁴ In this they resemble the E2, but E2s may feel that they should be loved for the sake of it, without the need to perform to deserve it, and sometimes they lose their status and their personality mechanisms, such as pride, become compensatory. The E3, on the other hand, works to prove their worth (and can never rest), and continues to grow in their feeling of being chosen, because they do not lose status.

The parents

Social E3s were children burdened with excessive responsibility. They had to suppress their real needs to please their parents and secure their affection. They often showed anger more readily with the parents of the opposite sex and emotionally froze to avoid pain and frustration. The grandiose expectations placed on them by their parents in childhood later make it difficult for them to form mature romantic relationships.

They often don't remember any scenes of reconciliation between their parents, who would publicly humiliate their spouses. They themselves were victims of physical or psychological abuse at their hands. This leads social E3s to discredit them and distrust authority.

Some key scenes

Below is a collection of childhood memories from future social E3s:

When I was two or three, I didn't know how to read yet, but I had memorized the story of "The Vain Little Mouse." When guests came over, my parents would say: "Come on, Haydée, read the story for our friends." I'd play along and fake the reading, turning the pages at the right time, and my parents would show me off and applaud the act. They knew I couldn't read, but let the guests believe I could. I was fulfilling their narcissistic expectations: they shined through me, and I was being false. And that's how my parents and their friends came to love and admire me so much. Through this, I learned that I'm worth a lot without truly knowing anything, which actually gives me a deep internal insecurity.

(Haydée)

When my mom went to the hairdresser, I would read for the other kids. I read poorly, but when I got lost I'd make things up on the spot and even put on different voices like an actress.

(Giusy)

I wasn't old enough to attend school (I must have been around three), but I pretended I was coming out of school so someone would come pick me up. It was a strategy to seem older than I actually was.

(Yolanda)

My grandfather was a teacher; it was assumed that I would turn out to be extraordinary, but that came from my grandparents' side of the family, where things were in order. On the other side (my parents), everything was a disaster, and I felt deeply ashamed; I wanted to hide the mess that was my family.

I lived in two separate worlds. At home, it was a tragedy. My father was extremely violent, constantly beat us, and there was always shouting; everything was very dramatic. But at school, I found peace. I worked really hard and was a great student because otherwise, I'd be punished at home. It was very important to me that no one at school knew, or even suspected, what was happening at home. No one ever knew anything about my family life.

Outside the house (at school), I seemed happy and cheerful. If I had bruises, I would say I had fallen off my new bike instead of explaining that I'd been hit.

(Giusy)

My mother sent me to a school run by Ursuline nuns, which catered to the upper class, because she wanted to be on the same level as the ladies she associated with, even though our own socioeconomic status was lower. At school, I would lie about my family or hide the things I didn't want others to know. For example, my father had a Citroën 2CV, and I was so ashamed of being seen arriving in it that I would ask him to drop me off far from the school entrance, because my classmates were getting out of chauffeur-driven Mercedeses.

It wasn't that I told outright lies, but I would make small distortions. I would boast, for instance, that in the summer we went out to a country estate, letting people believe it was ours, when in fact it belonged to some friends.

(Haydée)

My parents were migrant workers in Switzerland, but they made an effort to put me in a good school. I lived in Spain with my grandparents. I lied about my parents: I said they owned companies. I even said they were dead!

(Yolanda)

I must have been six or eight years old, and my birthday brought together many children for a party. One of the games involved a hidden treasure hunt. Just before it started, my mother called me over and whispered in my ear where the treasure was. That act made me an unwilling accomplice in a deception. I found myself caught between the temptation to "win," the compulsion to obey my mother, and the overwhelming, unbearable, and shameful feeling of deceiving everyone. By not giving me the chance to participate fairly, my mother had poisoned my spontaneity and childhood innocence. I didn't know how to resolve the conflict or stand up to her.

When the treasure hunt began, I pretended to search randomly, and after a while, I went to where it was and "found" it. The whole time, I was filled with a deep unease, suppressed rage, and a hatred that no one ever noticed. I felt disgust, and I don't even remember what the prize was. Well, actually, the prize was the feeling of deceit and moral contamination, and the effort to seem like I was just like my peers, even though I knew I wasn't

(Ana)

At school, it was considered that a student was behaving well when they stayed very quiet, looking at the teacher, with their hands behind their back. When we were told to be silent in class, I would put my hands behind me, press my lips together, puff out my chest, open my eyes wide, and nearly suffocate from holding my breath. I would stiffen into that ridiculous posture so the teacher would see how well I was behaving and how perfectly I was doing silence.

(Giusy)

For me, as a kid, attracting attention was a mixture of embarrassment and neurotic urge. At school, I used to perform as the singer Raphael. The more people looked at me, the more I inflated myself and became more theatrical. I love receiving applause; I feel like it gives me something I desperately need.

(Eustaquio)

I don't remember specific instances, but I recall the feeling that when there was an audience, I did everything better. If I didn't win, I would do whatever it took to be recognized. I Itched to be noticed, even if it was for something negative. I couldn't stand the idea of being a nobody. It's as if I needed there to be a witness, someone to see and acknowledge me.

(Francesco)

When I studied piano as a child, in my imagination, there were people watching me practice. I didn't practice just to learn; I did it with the fantasy that someone was appreciating how well I played. My mother used to sit nearby to listen. I needed an audience, real or imagined.

(Haydée)

At the pool, when I was little, I ran to dive in while calling out to my mother so she would see me jump. There was a slide, and I had such a need to be seen that I threw myself down it... without even noticing the pool had no water! More than the injury, what hurt was the public embarrassment.

(Yolanda)

When I was seven, my father enrolled me in a swimming course, where the instructor was an old diving buddy of his. I felt the instructor's eyes on me, and perhaps my father's as well (though I was too embarrassed to check if he was really watching). We had to swim many laps, and I was exhausted. I felt like I was dying, like I couldn't take another stroke, like my heart was going to stop, like I was going to drown. But out of shame, for not living up to expectations, I kept swimming, pretending I wasn't at my limit. I couldn't follow my common sense and stop, because I wanted to be up to the task; I couldn't bear to disappoint. I went against my survival instinct, just for the sake of image.

(Ana)

I remember that when I was a child, my father, who was a member of the Civil Guard, was wounded in an armed conflict with terrorists. I remember being with him in the hospital, holding his hand. Press photographers arrived and, when I saw them, I stopped looking at my father and turned toward them, striking a pose to be photographed. I was twelve or thirteen.

(Francesco)

When I was little, a boyfriend asked me if I could ride a bike, and I said yes, even though I had no idea how. We made plans, and I left home with the bike. "Where are you going with that bike?" a relative asked me. "To ride," I replied. "But you don't know how to ride!" she shouted. I got on the bike and coasted downhill, without knowing how to brake. I managed to stop by making a dramatic turn right in front of my boyfriend. Just to avoid telling him I didn't know how, I got on the bike and went ahead anyway... and that's how I learned how to ride.

(Yolanda)

When I was little, I was very athletic and used to run; I did hurdle races. One time, during a race, they accidentally placed one of the last hurdles too far from the previous one. Since the strides are measured based on standard distances between hurdles, I couldn't adjust my steps to the unexpected gap and I fell hard. I scraped up my knees, but more than the fall, what horrified me was the scene of failing in front of everyone, the public failure—it made me burn

with shame. I decided enough was enough, and I never ran hurdles again. Image was so important to me that I gave up something I loved because of it

(Giusy)

In Mexico, where I was born, I remember being stuck in traffic on a ring road. I started putting on a little show for the car next to us, totally hooked on the fact that the driver was watching me. But my brother kept giving me strange looks, and it made me feel ashamed.

(Eustaquio)

VII. Persona and shadow: destructive to themselves and others

As we have already observed, what is most obviously a destructive force in the social E3 is their emotional control, fueled by the quest for recognition, competitiveness, and their compulsive need to be seen, to stand out – to “shine.”

The Social E3’s destructiveness is evident in their cold and calculating way of presenting themselves to the world, often through blame and by projecting a false image to fill internal voids or disconnections. They sell a carefully crafted image of themselves.

Additionally, their self-destruction extends to an “emotional corset” related to physical pain. The Social E3 surrenders to emotional pain while feeling detached from it. Although their conscious mind might not fully understand their emotions, their body responds to this constraint, acting like a prehistoric animal defending itself from emotional bonds.

The Social E3’s demanding nature is also harmful, as they sometimes use their standards as a reference, unforgiving when others don’t measure up. They possess a profound fear of rejection, of not being recognized, which is, paradoxically, exactly what they do to others: they reject and overlook them, without drawing too much attention to the act. They unconsciously blame others for their lack of recognition, creating a double-edged game: “This person doesn’t see me, doesn’t like me. Well, I don’t care, as they hold no value for me!”

This pattern of blaming and demanding, often accompanied by intransigence, remains in the shadows (“I accuse others of something I don’t like about myself”), and this way the social E3 effectively absolves themselves of guilt. By keeping this aspect hidden, they heighten their expectations of others while refusing to leave themselves alone. They are compelled to either do everything perfectly or, at the very least, put great effort into concealing their imperfections from others.

We have already demonstrated that among the vain subtypes, the social E3s are the best salesmen of themselves... or, rather, their emptiness. They are the ones who establish the most shallow relationships and often fail to recognize the coldness and rigidity they convey, which others readily perceive. They seem to have many close friends, but these connections often remain superficial, only serving their needs. As long as the motivation behind these actions stays hidden, they won’t fully embrace the responsibility of letting themselves be caught red-handed.

The less significance the social E3 appears to attach to their properties, the more important they believe they seem to others. This disguised ostentation includes, first of all, their homes, which they prefer large and beautiful, designed to impress. When they show their home, they try to diminish its

value and don't mention the effort it has cost them to obtain it. Others are then left in awe of the power they seem to hold.

Their enormous self-doubt, combined with their need to be liked or admired, leads the socially vain to nurture an image that pleases many, while simultaneously distancing themselves from what they genuinely like. This authentic part remains in the shadows as they focus on showcasing what sells well to others.

This disidentification with their true self and identification with what they believe is appealing is fundamentally based on their capacity to feel everything and, at the same time, feel nothing. We are talking about emptiness. The social E3 has an aversion to emptiness and, seeking to quell the anxiety it generates, inadvertently amplifies it. By trying to safeguard their intimacy, their secrets, they construct a delusion that they believe shields their emptiness, when, in fact, it only serves to reinforce their passion of vanity.

To connect with their feelings, they try to feel what others feel. Sometimes, faced with the impossibility of connecting with pain, they believe they are not capable of feeling anything. They often require a cathartic release or the stimulation of anger or aggression to access their emotions. It can only happen through the body.

Social E3s' fixation on image extends beyond merely doing well; it is not so much about doing well, as it is about others recognizing how well and how much they accomplish. In their mania to be continuously recognized, they develop an illusive power through self-deception. They fill their inner emptiness with a multitude of tasks, to which they are addicted. The hunger to be the best, be indispensable, leads them to use other people to fulfill their tasks, often appropriating their merits, and exercising over their eventual collaborators a rigid and, at times, condescending authority.

The mastery of bodily control comes at the price of a stark disconnection from their own physicality. The social E3 controls themselves mentally and disconnects physically, resulting in an eerie rigidity that almost appears to freeze any meaningful physical contact. Their body, operating largely at an unconscious level, becomes the canvas upon which emotions are expressed through symptoms like illnesses or eating disorders. It's as if only through this channel can the social E3 express their emotional turmoil. This peculiar mechanism allows them to circumvent the more profound introspection that would require confronting their inner monster of fear, or contacting pain, inferiority, and psychic emptiness itself. They perceive their body almost as an entity distinct from themselves, bearing wounds that feel foreign, as if they don't belong to the core of their being.

Showing emotion "weakens" them, detracts from their good image. As such, their emotional self must be pushed to the back burner, concealed behind the scenes, while their controlled, self-assured and "safe" persona takes center stage.

This detachment from what they truly feel generates such insecurity that they try to compensate for it with a facade of quick responses and apparent security presented to the outside world. All to ensure that their secret fragility, stemming from a deep-seated fear of not being loved, remains unnoticed. Yolanda's testimony is eye-opening:

I hate feeling uncertain when making a decision, so sometimes I choose impulsively, without taking the time to consider what I really want.

I always feign confidence. For instance, as soon as I walk into a café, I immediately order coffee. However, if someone were to ask, "What would you like to drink?" or if my companion opts for something different or takes a moment to decide, I'm thrown into a state of inner indecision. Doubt creeps in as to whether what I've ordered is what I'm really in the mood for, and the hesitation forces me to confront the unsettling realization that I might not be entirely sure what I want. But I rarely change my initial decision because doing so would call into question the image I portray: that of someone who is swift, sure, and decisive.

And so, I project an image of confidence while concealing the part of me that dwells in the shadows—more doubtful, insecure, and disconnected from my genuine feelings and desires.

The image presented by a social E3 is one of correctness. Everything else is hidden behind the façade. Hostile impulses or aggressive tendencies are skillfully transformed into a seamless adaptation to the world, creating an appearance of pure composure. When anger arises, it is carefully concealed beneath a serious demeanor. What irritates the social E3 is met with silence. What is incomprehensible to them is met with feigned interest, accompanied by gestures mimicking understanding. What makes them nervous is responded to with a smile. Vulgarity is cleverly reframed as appropriateness, aggressiveness as emotional firmness, and fear turns into counterphobic mechanisms.

The expression of tender emotions is challenging for the social E3 due to a lack of reference points. In their formative years, they learned to gain affection by becoming a well-behaved “doll.” Consequently, they tend to express tenderness through actions, by giving or sharing something with others, effectively turning it into a form of generosity. In some cases, this generosity may be insincere, driven by the underlying belief that “if I give, others will love me more; if I don’t burden them, they will appreciate my correctness.”

Showing vulnerability or expressing affection is a daunting task for them. To begin with, they think they might do it *wrong*, concerned that if they show their emotions, whether it’s a tender, aggressive, or painful one, they will not come across as credible. They also worry that others may perceive them as weak and potentially hurt them. In any case, they prefer to present a dry and tough exterior, concealing their true tender, emotional, and vulnerable self.

Their genuine tender side often conflicts with the mask they wear. Occasionally, they may connect with feelings of tenderness, which can be felt throughout the body. However, if they realize they need others during these moments, they become tense once more. The alarm bells go off, warning *this doesn’t pay off*. The fear of feeling, of what might happen, keeps them away from real emotional contact. They revert to their learned helplessness – the belief that if they’re vulnerable, others will abandon them. Once again, they return to prioritizing the perceptions of others over the authenticity of their feelings.

Motivated by their narcissistic drive to ascend the throne of prestige, they may subtly exhibit their contempt for authority figures, indirectly signaling that they’re ineffective leaders, while *literally* assuring them that they’re performing just fine.

The decapitation attempt might also have its origin in another dark aspect of the social E3: envy, hidden so deeply because it attests to their sense of lack, contact with which would be intolerable. Envy thus serves as an automatic mechanism for diminishing the value of others. Competition is something that the E3 will hardly, if ever, acknowledge (doing so would dismantle their entire character), and most of the time it takes the form of strategic actions or traps aimed at undermining the value and competence of others in the eyes of both themselves and the surrounding observers. “I assume so many identities (through the ego and its masks) because deep down, as I truly am, I’m horrible, I’m a demon,” says Giusy of a secret fear echoed in other testimonials:

I wear an appropriate mask for each occasion to conceal my inner demon, the part I can’t reveal. Underneath is my rigidity, envy, anger, sadness and my desire to be admired. The ego is demonic because it craves to be unique, adopting many faces and identities, yet there isn’t a single one that is good.

(Eustaquio)

I carry a primal, shapeless, generic form of guilt, along with the immense responsibility of trying to make amends for it. It's more than an internal monster—I wish I could give it a tangible form, but what I experience is a more fundamental nihilism, a basic kind of guilt. I have a need to permanently justify my right to exist through my performance and brilliance. Even when I let go of it during meditation, the question haunts me whether it's genuine, or whether I'm escaping again.

(Ana)

In the shadows, as we've mentioned before, anger and aggressiveness also dwell. Furthermore, the emotional self-regulation is so great because the inner self is perceived by the social E3 as harboring genuine, formidable monsters that are difficult to control once unleashed. Giusy illustrates it this way:

I have a homicidal instinct. I used to fear for my children, worrying that something might happen to them, and it was really because I believed that I myself could hurt them, or even worse, kill them. During nights, when I'd check on them while they were asleep to confirm they were breathing and still had a pulse, what I really wanted to verify was that they were alive despite my homicidal ideation.

But the truth is that I'm totally incapable of harming a child. Once, when I gave my son a few cookies, I ended up apologizing to him. He looked at me with such a look of humiliation that I felt terrible. And my baby, I once gave him a little nibble on the ear, and then I felt the worst.

VIII. Love

Love is a difficult emotion for a social E3. Their experience is that love, once frozen, constantly “cools down” and “heats up.” When they sense love, it triggers confusion and distrust, and they ask themselves: “Is this really love?” One of the questions that can throw a social E3 off the most is: “How do you know you love someone?”

In the social E3’s childhood, love was confused with recognition. “If I’m recognized, I’m valuable. And if I’m valuable, they love me,” Yolanda explains. “If no one acknowledges me, I’m not valid. And if I’m not valid, they don’t love me.” This early lack of affection has led them to seek love outside of traditional emotional references. Yolanda continues:

When I see a couple kissing on the street, I get emotional; I think, “that’s love.” But then I immediately invalidate the scene, assuming that when they’re alone it won’t be the same. I’m unsure if the kiss is just for show or if it’s a genuine expression of their feelings. Deep down, my interpretation comes from my own distrust, because there’s a disconnect between what I’m supposed to feel and what I actually feel.

For the social E3, love has to do with feeling seen, loved, wanted, and desired – being the center of their partner’s world. Even if their partner is not the center of theirs. In romantic relationships, they

need to be the one and only for the other person. And even if it's not the case the other way around, they pretend it is, and make their significant other believe it.

With their primary attention focused on the social sphere, their partner doesn't hold as much importance. Their radar is tuned to being seen and liked by many people. In love, they encounter a sense of emptiness connected to the act of surrender, and for the social E3, distrust makes surrender difficult. So they *sell* affection: they appear trusting, generous, kind, and accommodating... all to make their partner love them. However, they never truly connect with their real feelings for that person.

Once they've successfully charmed them, an inner alarm goes off: "Watch out—when you least expect it, they'll abandon you!" Their deep-seated fear of abandonment, stemming from a painful and unhealed wound, is unconsciously activated when they enter into an intimate relationship. They feel vulnerable, and fear surfaces: "If I don't protect myself from love, I'll get hurt."

If we add to this their irrational belief that "once they truly see who I am, they'll be disappointed," we start to understand the magnitude of the threat. In the face of love, the social E3 plunges into emotional confusion they try to hide.

Seduction allows them to dangle a carrot in front of their target, inciting desire. But if they offer sex, their lover's desire dwindles. Goodbye to the longing gaze through which the social E3 feels validated and valued:

For many years of my life, making love felt like a chore, merely a means to please others, whether it was my partner or someone else. I just wanted to hear "You're so good at this" or "You make me feel amazing." This would momentarily satisfy my craving for physical contact and sensations. Making the other person experience pleasure was the source of my own pleasure, and it counted as emotional bonding. But I did it without at all connecting with my own body or desire.

(Yolanda)

In falling in love, I've been looking for that "good vibe" through experimenting and having fun. I used to seduce using various tactics that weren't sexual in nature. It's only in the later part of my life that I've truly embraced my sexuality. Previously, it was more of an instrumental thing, a tool. Now I can open up, burst with energy; sex comes naturally from within when I connect with someone.

(Eustaquio)

Social E3 doesn't typically engage in emotionally intense relationships characterized by dramatic ups and downs. On the contrary, since emotional connection serves as the gateway to their inner world, they often come across as cold. In arguments with their partner, they appear distant, displaying sharp verbal dominance.

For the social E3, love is closely linked to trust, their compulsive need to be liked, the irrational belief that they must adapt to please everyone, and their interpretation of approval as a genuine sign of affection. Their "experience" of love remains on a surface level. Yolanda provides a powerful testament to this:

When I'm with my partner, I need him to verbally express how much he loves me. He hugs me, kisses me, but that's not enough for me; I don't understand it. I ask him to put his love into words, and he says, "Enough." Then he hugs me tightly again for a long time. I freeze, not knowing what to do. I wonder, "How long is this hug going to last? What am I supposed to do?"

I might have had only three occasions in my life when I briefly felt erotic love. Just a few fleeting seconds each time. Generally, I can't distinguish my love from the other person's, or from its utility, from image, and from so many other things.

In authentic love, the kind that doesn't seduce but genuinely gives, one can reveal their true self with openness and vulnerability. Such authenticity sparks a more profound and genuine bond. If, on the other hand, interpersonal relationships are built upon a facade (in this case, a social one), that very barrier makes real connection and, consequently, true love impossible.

In the case of social E3 individuals, there is often a strong identification with the parent of the opposite sex and a sense of competition with the parent of the same sex. There's also a feeling of lacking instinctual resources (sexual ones, among others) when relating to others. They tend to have low self-esteem about their physical appearance; the body doesn't feel perfect enough to express themselves freely and to simply be themselves. Despite that, they may employ techniques to present their bodies as more attractive than they perceive them to be, as Ana explains:

I guess this has to do with my second subtype, the sexual one. I tend to present myself as more interesting, erotic, and perfect than I actually am. Being natural makes me self-conscious. I'm afraid to transition from appearances to the real thing. I think I manage to project a certain ideal that isn't really me. And it's hard to maintain that facade, although, at this point, it has become an automatic strategy.

Social E3s often idealize love, though they lack a healthy reference for it. They haven't felt truly loved, and become very lost and robotic in its presence. "Yes, I think about perfect love..." Francesco says, "but the reality is that I've found a kind of love that's built day by day, a love that requires effort. I believe there's no such thing as perfect love, only the effort to love."

The sole way for them to access an authentic emotional space is to break free from dependency and identification with the needs of others. The social E3 struggles to understand love as a free-flowing energy that doesn't need to be proven.

In some cases, their mother was overly touchy and invasive, giving the impression of using the child, who then felt objectified and disrespected. More commonly, they had a critical or openly hostile mother who was always correcting them. Love, in such cases, can be confused with being too soft or weak. Yolanda describes it this way:

I falsely equate tenderness with weakness. I used to be incapable of feeling tenderness. I think my mother's lack of affection clouded my ability to perceive it. When I recognize it in others and allow myself to feel it, I lose control, I lose my footing. It's like I'm playing a role; I'm not sure I can actually embody tenderness. As if behind it there's a fear of real contact, of needing a hug. The need for tenderness is hidden; it stays in the shadows.

When I feel tender, I feel weak. It's like I lose my strength and people will walk all over me. I connect with a feeling I don't have a script for.

Naranjo's classification of love into erotic, compassionate, and admiring is synthesized in the social E3 as follows:

Erotic love is in this subtype utilized to seek validation. It is not experienced as a free expression of instinct and sexuality but rather as a means of being affirmed. Disconnected from sensuality and sexual pleasure, erotic love serves the purpose of maintaining the false image. They exchange erotic love for compassionate love (in romantic relationship) or admiring love (social acceptance).

The social E3 strives to be admired, but finds it difficult to admire others. Every time someone else displays worth, it reflects their own low self-esteem, triggering envy and feelings of inferiority that get displaced into a disdainful attitude.

The childhood lack of maternal tenderness, and of parents with empathy for their emotional world, makes compassionate love something the social E3 both endlessly longs for and meets with deep mistrust.

IX. Historical figures

Klemens von Metternich

by Giusy Carciati

Power abuses generate revolutions; revolutions are worse than any abuse. The first statement should be addressed to sovereigns, the second to the people.

~Klemens von Metternich



Prince Metternich (detail)

Sir Thomas Lawrence

Klemens Wenzel Nepomuk Lothar von Metternich-Winneburg-Beilstein (born in Koblenz on May 15, 1773, and passed away in Vienna on June 11, 1859) held the titles of Count; from 1813, Prince of Metternich-Winneburg; and from 1818, Duke of Portella. He was an Austrian diplomat and statesman who, from 1821, served as the State Chancellor of the Austrian Empire.

He was born in Koblenz, into the House of Metternich, an old German family of high nobility. In 1795, he married the granddaughter of the former Austrian chancellor, Count Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz.

Political career

Metternich embarked on his political journey at a young age, serving as his father Georg's private secretary before he turned twenty-five. His diplomatic talents soon enabled him to become his country's ambassador to Berlin and, in 1806, to Paris.

Following Austria's devastating defeat at the hands of Napoleon in 1809, Metternich was appointed foreign minister, and pursued a pro-French policy, which led him to orchestrate the marriage between Napoleon and Archduchess Maria Luisa of Habsburg, the daughter of Franz II.

After the Napoleonic defeat in Russia in 1812, Metternich inaugurated a more neutral policy and attempted to mediate peace between Bonaparte and his Russian and Prussian enemies. In June 1813, he met Napoleon in Dresden, announcing that the mediation had failed. Austria then declared war on France.

Towards the end of the war in 1814, Metternich came to a conclusion that peace with Napoleon was impossible, and supported the Bourbon restoration. This brought him closer to Lord Castlereagh, the British Foreign Secretary.

Metternich was one of the main negotiators during the Congress of Vienna. He had a bitter dispute with Tsar Alexander I of Russia over his plans for Poland. Metternich's attempts to form a united front with Castlereagh and von Hardenberg, the Prussian chancellor, against Alexander I, fell apart due to Prussia's reluctance to oppose the Russians. He then surprised Prussia by forging an alliance with Castlereagh and Talleyrand, the French envoy, which saved the kingdom of Saxony from Prussian annexation. Simultaneously, he negotiated with Prussia, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Hanover the creation of the German Confederation.

In the years following the Congress of Vienna, Metternich's primary concern was preserving diplomatic equilibrium and safeguarding the interests of monarchies and empires amidst the burgeoning democratic sentiments of the era.

The revolutionary uprisings of 1848 signaled his end; subversive movements in Vienna demanded his resignation in March, and Metternich and his third wife had to flee the country. They returned three years later, with Metternich assuming the role of adviser to Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria. He died in Vienna on June 11, 1859.

The political man

Metternich's conservative perspective on the nature of the state significantly influenced the outcomes of the Congress of Vienna. He believed that, since the people were informed how the old institutions operated, national revolutions, such as those that had taken place in France and Greece, were not legitimate. The principle of legitimacy played a pivotal role in restoring former states, including the Papal State in Italy and the Bourbon monarchy in France under Louis XVIII. Through the Carlsbad

Decree (1819), Metternich introduced measures that strictly limited liberal developments, monitoring the activities of professors and students, whom he considered responsible for the spread of liberal and radical ideas.

Character analysis

Klemens Wenzel Lothar brought together the maternal charm and spirit, the paternal attitudes dictated by his rank, along with a penchant for enjoying life's pleasures, in an amalgam that ended up changing history.

It's fair to say that he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, an aristocrat from head to toe by birthright, and the epitome of a gentleman according to the prevailing model at the time. His peers would soon say that only those who lived like he had known what true sweetness of existence means. It's understandable that he wanted to prolong this status for as much as he could, even more for personal than political reasons.

He wasn't rooted, contrary to some claims, in the pre-revolutionary 18th century because, if he had been, he would have had the opportunity to grow and adapt to the changing times. He was born already an adult in his world, where he was denied the possibility of development, and he never wished to stray. At the age of forty-five, he claimed to be the same person he was at fifteen, and maintained that, even in different circumstances, he would have always been the same.

Everything that came to him from birth—natural talents, intelligence, and the social background of his family—ensured him a happy present and a secure future. His mother spoiled her favorite son, his father was pleased with the progress of the gifted boy, flattering him excessively and indulgently tolerating his unbridled adolescent escapades.

His sister and brother were subordinate to him, as they acknowledged his natural superiority and understood that, in any case, he would always be right.

As a child and a young man, he had perfected the art of winning the favor of many, sometimes without any conscious effort on his part. People found him charming, with his handsome looks, blond hair, and blue eyes. He seemed kind-hearted, still innocent and shy, but already gallant and chivalrous.

It appears that, from the beginning, Metternich was careful to cultivate this impression, demonstrating obedience and a calculated approach to kindly condescend and gracefully satisfy. He knew how to win people over, but without being overly ingratiating or at all bending to their will. He mastered the art of dealing with human beings.

If all this served to consolidate his social and political standing, it certainly did not shape his character. Because he knew how to garner sympathy so easily, Klemens ended up becoming too proud and self-congratulatory. He never doubted himself, and he was never inclined to introspection or self-critique. At heart, he was an egocentric man, determined not to let himself be diverted in any way from his own course.

Since others always agreed with him, he considered himself always right. And since he wasn't prone to fighting to assert himself, he often fell into a certain laziness, and was given to letting others do things their way, thus demonstrating little political sense.

He did not like to say "no," and he seldom needed to, at least not directly to his interlocutors, so others usually held him in high regard.

Narcissus incarnate, he was deeply in love with himself. He admired himself in the mirror, and more than anything else, he liked to arouse general admiration. He often posed, performed on stage, and sought spotlight, much like a peacock (a favorite animal of the rococo era).

He took pleasure in lavishing courtesies, which seemed to be motivated by affection toward those who were the recipients of his attention, and said words that he knew others wanted to hear from his mouth.

It was his mother who had encouraged him to behave in this way, because she saw in these arts the indispensable promise for his social ascent. On one occasion, young Klemens, while in Strasbourg, had declared his preference for Italian music, which prompted his mother's admonition. From that moment on, in Germany, it was said that he loved Germanic music; in France, Gallic music.

His father once gave him advice of a practical nature: he should be polite to everyone and never neglect the older ladies, whose gossip influenced the world's opinion of young boys far more than was generally believed.

The son followed his father's suggestion, but soon the approval of older women alone was not enough for him. Stories circulated about his first love affairs from the mouths of those who, in the future, would envy him his great conquests. According to these malicious rumors, the young Metternich was to rummage under the skirts of waitresses, have fun with the maids... These would have been, however, the only encounters he likely had with the common folk.

He, who was perfectly at ease in salons and courts, a brilliant conversationalist, so eager to please, was little loved, neither by his contemporaries nor by posterity... with the exception of women. He had, indeed, good looks, and was a cajoler. With them, he behaved like a libertine, an eighteenth-century man.

If towards politics he felt a cold, cerebral passion, he devoted himself to women with inextinguishable ardor. The list of his conquests is remarkable. He married three times and had many distractions from the conjugal bed. As an adult, he had already given up his youthful propensity for dalliances with maids, and aspired, out of vanity, only to women of the highest social echelons.

From a young age, he inhabited an exclusive sphere, the feudal world, and aristocratic circles. His first scholastic environments were his father's study and his mother's salon. One of the fundamental teachings he received was the unquestionable truth that the fief represented an intangible asset, hereditary by right, and that it was necessary to increase it, since it was the foundation not only for the wealth of the old nobility but also for social order and political tradition.

In his mother's parlor, he learned how to comport himself among his peers and distinguish himself from the rest of the crowd. It didn't take him long to acquire the social skills to navigate society with the same ease with which he played. As a child, he liked to boast that he outshone his peers in terms of poise, and stumbled less often. Of himself, he said: "I never ran in a hurry, and always kept my eyes wide open."

He was quick to learn good manners. In social interactions, he paid attention to formality; rather more, in fact, than to the content of what he was saying. In conversations, he chatted, rather than truly engaged; he exuded kindness and charisma, dazzling effortlessly. In short, he was a superficial, salon-style courtesy. French was the language spoken in the court environment, and he used it so often that one day his father felt it his duty to admonish him to prevent him from forgetting his mother tongue. He expressed himself in French more elegantly and with less clarity, which, in fact, was not a contradiction, since French was not only the language of philosophers, but also that of diplomats.

He learned rapidly, treating it as a game, and this turned out to almost be a handicap. His good memory led him to the erroneous assumption that he did not need to exert himself thoroughly in his studies. He lacked the perseverance necessary to delve deeply into what he understood in a hurry, and the will to translate what he learned into meaningful work. On the other hand, he already had everything he needed, and in time, he would—certainly—get whatever he fancied.

His natural propensity to see the present as rosy, and the future no less rosy, was formulated with a rationally motivated optimism and confidence in progress, characteristic of the Enlightenment.

In line with the Enlightenment's emphasis on autonomy and autonomous morality, Metternich sought the autonomous disposition of himself, aspiring to personal happiness and living guided by his own pleasure. His attempt to elevate these concepts to principles of absolute validity and prioritize them over all rules aligned with his vision of political order, which hinged on—he thought he saw with certainty—the continuity of his world. In his private matters, Klemens was somewhat less rigid, occasionally deviating from principles and making exceptions to rules.

The essential demands of the spirit of the times coincided with his individual mental disposition, and this explains why Metternich bore, throughout his life, the imprint of the Enlightenment or, rather, of the enlightened phase: autonomy for the elite and enlightened despotism for the rest of mankind.

He assimilated the maxim of his Protestant tutor Johann Friedrich Simon: "Experience and thinking are the only major forces which form the human mind." But Metternich did not assimilate so thoroughly the morals and pedagogy preached by Rousseau and practiced by Simon, according to whom "the natural man was good, and the return to nature should begin with gymnastic exercises, swimming, excursions, life in the open air, spending the night in a tent..." This lifestyle did not coincide with the tastes of the young Count Metternich, who appreciated comforts and would not have forsaken *motu proprio* powders, ointments, and wigs, objects that his preceptor considered to be the cause of physical and spiritual ills, which softened and effeminated the soul.

From Metternich, one could not anticipate a *Sturm und Drang*, tumult of the spirit, nor extravagances, or overwhelming passions. At the age of fifteen, it could be said that he was already a man. Receptive, precocious, and haughty, he epitomized, in every way, the nobility from which he hailed.

Already as a teenager, he was considered mature enough to commence higher studies at the University of Strasbourg, a destination for future diplomats, a career well-suited to the rank to which he felt predestined.

The young Metternich had an aversion, out of natural laziness, to contemplation. His willingness to accept readily what had already been thought by others was certainly more pronounced than his will power, and his capacity for autonomous mental activity. He was not passionately devoted to study, nor did he need to be, for it was stipulated that he wasn't required to take examinations, and that he was free to pursue a diplomatic career even if he had not attained the degree. It was considered more important for a diplomat to know life than to possess book smarts. He had to learn, above all, how to navigate society and move about with ease.

The young man therefore discarded libraries and opted for the salons; the ballrooms pleased him infinitely more than the classrooms, and he applied himself diligently to his practice, behaving in an exemplary manner and obtaining excellent results.

Wherever he went, he aroused sympathy and admiration. One of his first biographers describes him as follows: "That beautiful face with its slightly aquiline nose, framed by a mass of blond curls that fall over his shoulders, illuminated by large blue passionate eyes, noble and pure like the countenance of a young gentleman in the old German paintings, to which was added the haughty and yet harmonious bearing in his movements, the surprising security of each gesture, the graceful decorum of his whole person."

However, those who observed him more closely, appraised him differently, and did not refrain from criticizing him: his face did not reveal depth of thought; its beauty was rather insipid, and his pronounced nose could pass for an indication of character but, pointed as it was, betrayed presumption. There was something subtly sensual about the mouth that seemed to indicate lasciviousness and, beneath his perennial smile, a sardonic edge was evident. There was something faun-like about the youth.

Metternich came from a time when there were different sets of conventions. The lives of individuals and communities were to be regulated by divine order and human moral laws; this

safeguarded Christian *humanitas*. It was necessary to preserve the “best of all worlds”; to aspire to beauty, goodness and truth, and respect agreements: *pacta sunt servanda*.

As a political figure, the French historian Albert Sorel summed up Metternich in this way: “He was a diplomat of the highest caliber, without equal in his time and in his kind, and he deserved to lead Europe while Europe deserved to be led by diplomacy.” Swiss diplomat Henry Vallotton wrote, “Metternich advocated a union of European states and was the forerunner of the men of good will who founded the League of Nations, what would later be called the United Nations.” U.S. Foreign Minister Henry Kissinger applied the Metternichian method, which he defined as follows:

Metternich made a policy that was that of the status quo par excellence, the purpose of which was to maintain stability, not the realization of ideals. And equilibrium is the classic definition of historical experience, which teaches us that no order is solid unless it also guarantees material protection against aggression.

Teresa of Ávila

by Haydée Nozal



Portrait of Teresa of Ávila
Peter Paul Rubens

“A woman of open and communicative character, of extreme sensitivity and personal sympathy, Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada, possessed at the same time an energetic temper that allowed her to face the greatest setbacks. Passionate and enthusiastic, intrepid and willful—a woman of action, in a word—she always kept her feet on the ground, despite her numerous incidents of supernatural nature. She managed her milieu with a difficult balance between idealism and practice.” This splendid description by Dámaso Chicharro¹⁵ paints a picture of the personality of a fascinating woman: Saint Teresa of Jesus.

She lived between 1515 and 1582, entangled in her personal vicissitudes and events of enormous importance for the spirituality of the sixteenth century; she founded 17 convents and reformed many others, particularly in Castile and Andalusia.

We find in her body of work a singular text: *The Book of Her Life*, penned at the age of fifty in spiritual and psychological plenitude. In its introduction, we find the words: “The life of the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus and some of the favours granted to her by God, written by herself at the command of her confessor, to whom she submits and directs it.” This is an exceptional document brimming with experiences, sometimes narrated with grace and irony, and infused with a profound spirituality that is contagious to the reader. The manuscript, like Teresa’s life, underwent its own *via crucis*, including the intrigues of the Princess of Éboli, until Anne of Jesus¹⁶ directly requested the text from the Inquisitor General. The book’s intended recipient was Fr. García de Toledo, O.P., one of her confessors, whom the saint had met in 1562. When she sent him the manuscript, he responded, “Here I give you my soul.” This book piqued the interest of the highest intellectual and political circles of her time, from St. John of the Cross to Philip II.

In line with Virginia Woolf’s principle that to know whom to write for is to know how to write, Teresa authored *The Book of Her Life* in order to account for her spiritual experiences and provide guidance to the nuns. It’s not an autobiography in the strict sense of the word; in fact, on the surface, it’s a didactic treatise for the practice of mental prayer. But the book goes beyond this, blending biographical accounts with testimonies of her spiritual journey without disregarding the sensory. The author crafts a style that almost resembles a modern essay, where the narrator and the narrative converge in a sea of trust and confession, revealing the epic of a true “spiritual warrior.”

“The life of Teresa, written by herself,” writes Azorín, “is the deepest, densest and most penetrating book that exists in European literature. Beside her, the most acute analysts of the *self*, a Stendhal, a Benjamin Constand, are inexperienced children. And yet she has put in this book only a little of her spirit, but everything in these pages, without forms of the outside world, without color, without externalities, all pure, dense, concise, is of a tragic drama, interest and anxiety.”

Graphology has enabled us to uncover aspects of her personality and character. For Suzanne Bresard,

St. Teresa’s writing, marked by expressive depth, [...] reflects a personality of strong will and thought [...] her passionate and lyrical sensitivity is not characterized by fragility or complacency before herself or others. [...] Feminine in her nature but not in her force of expression, [...] there is in St. Teresa’s sensibility, a source of conflict, fecundated by her actions, but generating personal suffering. [...] In her spiritual purification, a detachment is evident, along with an affirmation of the essential facets of her being.

¹⁵ D. Chicharro, Santa Teresa de Jesús, Vida, Cátedra, Madrid, 200, pp. 20-21

¹⁶ Anne of Jesus was the founder of the Convent of Madrid

The extent to which inspiration, in its most intricate sense, influences the chosen form of expression is a mystery, says D. Chicharro: “To her, it is often God Himself who speaks through her words. Teresa is aware that she will not be able to convey a certain thought without God’s assistance in summoning the precise words, even guiding her pen,” “because I see clearly that it is not I who say what I write; for neither do I plan it with the intellect nor do I know afterward how I managed to say it. This often happens to me,” writes the saint in one of the most quoted fragments in all the Teresian literature, as a confirmation that the mystics are merely conduits.

Family environment

“My father was fond of reading good books and had some in Spanish so that his children might read them too. These books, together with the care which my mother took to make us say our prayers and to lead us to be devoted to Our Lady and to certain saints, began to awaken good desires in me when I was, I suppose, about six or seven years old.” Teresa tells us of a “secret” library that her mother possessed, and that of her father’s brother, Don Pedro Sánchez de Cepeda,¹⁷ “very prudent and virtuous,” who possessed good devotional books. She felt very close to her father: “I was my father’s favorite”; “So excessive was my father’s love for me, and so complete was the deception which I practiced on him, that he could never believe all the ill of me that I deserved and thus I never fell into disgrace with him.” Remembering the death of her father, she wrote: “Yet so dearly did I love him that, when I saw his life was ending, I felt as if my very soul were being torn from me.”

Woman of action

“It wasn’t necessary for me to think anything but that God did it all. I saw there was no reason for me to be startled but to praise Him. Indeed the difficult things He does cause more devotion in me; and the more difficult, the more devotion they cause.” According to Víctor García de la Concha, “since she was a child—that’s just the way she is—*Ahumadita* hadn’t known how to do anything without fully applying herself.”

The entrepreneurial and traveling spirit of the saint is striking, especially considering she was a cloistered nun in a Spain where long journeys posed significant challenges. J. Pérez notes that the locations for her foundations were chosen in regions with better road infrastructure, and some were conveniently close to prosperous manufacturing cities. Adding to this, when we take into account her delicate health—she didn’t feel fully healed until 1542, and between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-seven, suffered remarkable physical hardships—we get an idea of what it meant to be involved in such endeavors: “I want to explain myself further, for I believe I’m getting mixed up in many things.” “The little time at my disposal is little help to me [...] for I have my work to do in the community and many other occupations”; “And I can’t help but leave a lot out, because otherwise I would be wasting much more time [on my writing]—and I have so little as I said—and perhaps would not put down anything worthwhile.” Despite her frank admission about the constraints of time and efficiency, we will now outline her “agenda” for three years:

¹⁷ A friend of all kinds of readings. He later retired to the monastery of the Jeronimites, and it was there he died.

1562	1575	1582
<p>January-June: attends confession with Fr. Pedro Doménech, S.I.; meets Fr. García de Toledo, O.P., the addressee and confessor of <i>The Book of Her Life</i>.</p> <p>June: completes a version of <i>The Book of Her Life</i>. Leaves Toledo for Ávila.</p> <p>August 24: the new St. Joseph's convent is inaugurated. Teresa is given permission to leave the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation in December; she moves to St. Joseph's and changes her name to Teresa of Jesus.</p> <p>May 30: leaves Toledo on the way to Pastrana. She stops for eight days at Las Descalzas Reales convent in Madrid.</p> <p>June 22: founds a convent in Pastrana.</p> <p>July 9-10: founds the Discalced Friars in Pastrana.</p> <p>July 21: from Toledo, she sends Isabel de Santo Domingo to Pastrana as the prioress, and brings Ana de los Ángeles from Malagón to serve as prioress in Toledo. Writes <i>Exclamations</i>.</p>	<p>January 2: traces her route to Beas de Segura (province of Jaén), passing through Medina, Ávila, and Toledo.</p> <p>February 1: arrives in Beas, where she finds a convent on the 24th of the same month.</p> <p>May 18: leaves Beas by order of Father Gracián on her way to Seville.</p> <p>May 2: arrives in Seville, where she finds a convent three days later.</p> <p>July 7: Domingo Báñez, O.P., approves <i>The Book of Her Life</i>.</p> <p>December: a novice accuses the Discalced Carmelites of Seville before the Inquisition. Effects of the resolutions adopted at the general chapter at Piacenza: the Discalced confessors of the Incarnation are imprisoned in Ávila. She receives the holy order to retire to her institution in Castile; Father Gracián postpones the order. In 1579, all cases against her, Gracián, and others are dropped.</p>	<p>January 2: leaves Ávila, accompanied by Fr. Gracián, and travels to Burgos, passing through Medina del Campo. Successively visits Valladolid and Piacenza.</p> <p>January 20: the Discalced Carmelites are founded in Granada by Anne of Jesus.</p> <p>January 24: leaves Piacenza and heads to Burgos, where she purchases a house for the foundation, which takes place on April 19.</p> <p>May 7: Gracián bids farewell to the saint, and they won't meet again.</p> <p>July 2: Teresa departs from Burgos, with a stop in Piacenza, and arrives in Valladolid on August 25.</p> <p>On October 1st, she foretells her death. She passes away on October 4 at 9 pm in Alba de Tormes.</p>

Social relations

Teresa moved among the most significant hubs of religious fervor in her time. Another crucial aspect of her development and social connections was her daily contact with scholars, humanists, confessors, and others, from whom she continued to learn. In fact, in *The Book of Her Life*, her reference to these individuals plays a fundamental role.

Márquez Villanueva has reconstructed Saint Teresa's social affiliations, stating that she naturally moved within the bourgeois milieu of professionals and bureaucrats, small ecclesiastics or provincial noblemen, all of whom were part of the most densely converted stratum of Spanish society. She

demonstrated a certain rebelliousness against the social norms of her time, and when she had no choice but to accept them, one can detect a gentle touch of irony in her approach. W. T. Walsh mentions that the Princess of Éboli “appeared scandalized by the discovery of such a worldly and commercial spirit in one of whom she had expected nothing less than miracles.”

Studies by Narciso Alonso Cortés, Homero Seris, Américo Castro, and others indicate a converted background of the saint, whose grandfather, Juan Sánchez de Toledo, was prosecuted by the Inquisition in 1485. Dámaso Chicharro explains that this origin, albeit an indisputable fact, does not sufficiently convey its implications in Saint Teresa’s biography, as well as that of any Spaniard from her time. A Spaniard not considered an Old Christian, even under mere suspicion, faced dire consequences. To be accused of Jewish ancestry, even several generations back, was the gravest disgrace; she had to endure, therefore, the social stigma of being seen as an “impure Christian.”

Américo Castro points out how she had to use her intelligence and tenacity to fight against the “arrows of public opinion.” Teresa was acutely aware of her social status, and in her transformation, she struck a delicate balance between the longing for integration and the fear of rejection. It appears she compensated for the humiliations she endured with spiritual privileges, as if her union with God symbolized a victory over the society of her time. She believed she had received a “spiritual lineage,” although in *The Book of the Foundations*, she says: “I have always valued virtue more than lineage.”

She was always conscious of the social caste, and in her social interactions, she welcomed aristocratic personages who had earned her trust and who had influence. She got along better with businessmen than with aristocrats, whose manners she found convoluted, and prejudices unfounded, says J. Pérez. These capitalists, when necessary, could become patrons, investing not only in business but also in spiritual matters.

For her, the hierarchy was clear; for spiritual matters, she dealt directly with God and relied only on wise confessors; for matters of influence, she associated with the powerful, and, if necessary, with the King himself, to whom “she often used to refer to as ‘my friend the King,’ and asked her nuns to pray for him.”

In 1577, she wrote to Philip II, pleading for prompt intervention and reminding him that the discalced friars had been imprisoned before:

a discalced friar, he is so great a servant of our Lord that the nuns are truly edified [...] and so they consider him a saint, and in my opinion, he is one and has been one all his life. [...] The whole city is truly scandalized. [...] I feel very sad to see these confessors in the hands of those friars. [...] I would consider the confessors better off if they were held by the Moors, who perhaps would show more compassion [...] I fear for his life. I beg your majesty for the love of our Lord to issue orders for them to set him free at once.

Her insistence on placing women at a certain level of equal participation with men, and her recognition of their distinctive physical condition and sensitivity due to their gender as something worthy of celebration, seem to hint at some form of feminism, considering the limitations of her era: “There are many more women than men to whom the Lord grants these favors. This I heard from the saintly Friar Peter of Alcántara—and I too have observed it—who said that women make much more progress along this path than men do. He gave excellent reasons for this, all in favor of women; but there’s no need to mention them here.” She specifically prohibited illiterate women from entering Carmel, instead attracting vocations from the educated, bourgeois New Christian class.

Teresa was indeed a brilliant woman, and despite her deliberate effort not to appear “learned,” she sought prestige among the peaks of the intelligentsia. She reformed Carmel against all odds, facing numerous obstacles, and overcoming the “false scholars” she encountered along the way: “I

have already said that a spiritual director is necessary, but if he has no learning it is a great inconvenience. It will help us very much to consult learned men.”

For the saint, the teacher should possess good understanding, experience, and knowledge. If he lacks these qualities, the preferred order is: virtue and discretion and, as the soul progresses in prayer, wisdom. “So it is very important that the master have prudence—I mean that he have good judgment—and experience; if besides these he has learning, so much the better.”

Teresa’s relationship with her spiritual mentors was not one of equals; she always held great admiration for those who possessed knowledge and valued wisdom: “There was a meeting of a number of people in whom I felt a great and justifiable confidence.” She appreciated educated men: “My opinion has always been and always will be that every Christian should endeavour to consult some learned person, if he can; and the greater his learning the better. Those who take the path of prayer have great need of learning; and the more spiritual they are, the greater the need.”

At the same time, she despised those who, without ethical principles or training, set themselves up as spiritual counselors. This led her to pass over dozens of confessors: “The beginner requires advice, so that he may see where his greatest benefit lies. To this end a director is most necessary. But he must be an experienced man, or he will make many mistakes, and may guide a soul without understanding its ways or allowing it to understand itself.”

From the first chapters of *Life*, she notes the differences between the educated and the uneducated: “For I have always been attracted by learning, though half-educated confessors have done my soul great harm, and I have never found any with as much of it as I should have liked. [...] A really learned man has never led me astray.” She resented false authority, accepted what was established, but allowed herself to ironize: “Although He is the Lord, I can speak to Him as to a friend, because He is not, as I believe, like those whom we call lords on earth, whose entire lordship is conferred on them by others.”

Teresa portrayed herself as a saint, but there is a clear appreciation for the intellectual in her writings. She found a wealth of wisdom and support within the Society of Jesus, saying, “I see that this was all for my good, so that I should get to know and consult those holy people, the members of the Society of Jesus.” There, she encountered teachers, wise confessors, and friends, all of whom she held in high regard: “His Majesty brought here another very spiritual one who had great courage and understanding and a good background in studies, and at a time when I was in dire need.”¹⁸ “This father began to lead me towards greater perfection.”¹⁹ “During this time Father Francis, who was once Duke of Gandía, came here. He had given everything up some years before and entered the Society of Jesus. My confessor and the gentleman I have spoken of arranged for him to visit me, so that I might talk to him and give him an account of my experiences.”²⁰ But it was Friar Peter of Alcántara—who championed a reform of the Order and provided the saint with practical guidance regarding the establishment of the first foundation—that held a special place in Teresa’s heart: “He had a very nice understanding.”

In Christmas of 1560, a confessor refused to grant her absolution unless she abandoned the Reform, a situation that undoubtedly heightened her inclination towards distrust: “This greatly helped me not to put much trust in anybody, since no one can be relied on except God.”

The saint continued to look for someone who could teach her, and whom she could trust: “If I heard anyone preach earnestly and well, I felt a particular affection for him rise in me unbidden; I do not know how this came about.” “When I do this I cannot come to any harm, but must reap great benefits, as the Lord has often told me. What I am saying is that I reveal my whole soul to a confessor,

¹⁸ Speaking of the Jesuit Gaspar de Salazar, who greatly assisted in the Teresian reform.

¹⁹ This refers to the Jesuit Juan de Prádanos, who eventually became the rector of the College of San Luis.

²⁰ This is about Saint Francis Borgia.

and describe to him the favours which the Lord grants me. I choose a man of learning and obey him; I confess frequently, and never give it up.” “This fault of mine has troubled me in my relations with some of my confessors. I always feel a great affection for those who direct my soul. I think of them as so truly taking the place of God that my mind is largely taken up with them. I have always felt perfectly safe, however, and have therefore always behaved warmly towards them.”

Although she could be overly self-critical (“this miserable creature, so lacking in humility and so presumptuous as to have dared to resolve to write upon subjects so sublime”), Teresa transformed obedience into a source of inspiration, which became the structural axis of *The Book of the Foundations*:

Besides what I have read in many places, I have seen by experience the great blessing which it is for a soul to continue in the practice of obedience. In this, I believe, lies the secret of continually making progress in virtue and covering the progress with humility: in this lies our security from the doubt. [...] In this is to be found that peace so highly prized by souls who desire to please God.

This whole groundwork of prayer is based on humility and that the more a soul lowers itself in prayer the more God raises it up.

The cultivation of authenticity, even to the point of risking her life at the stake,²¹ proved to be a powerful catalyst for her spiritual growth: “I gave him a summary account of my life and manner of proceeding in prayer as clearly as I knew how. I always tried to speak with complete clarity and truthfulness to those with whom I conversed about my soul.” In *The Book of Her Life*, Teresa of Jesus reveals her fears, her longings, her deceptions, her distrust, her doubts, her perfectionist tendencies, and vanity that she openly acknowledges and often refers to. We can appreciate in her account how she harnessed these traits, took advantage of them, and how she managed to transcend them, “Since I thus began to go from pastime to pastime, from vanity to vanity, from one occasion to another.”

We can feel her dissatisfaction, her demands, her doubt: “I don’t know if this comparison is holding together”; “Perhaps I don’t know what I’m talking about”; “I don’t know how it’s all going to end up”; “All the favors the Lord had granted me were forgotten. There only remained the memory so as to cause pain; they were like a dream. For the intellect became so stupefied that it made me walk in the midst of a thousand doubts and suspicions making it seem that I had not understood”; “For until the present moment, when I see the fulfillment of everything the Lord told me in regard to this house, I never succeeded in definitely believing that what the Lord told me would come about; but neither could I doubt that it would. It happened that often on the one hand the fulfillment seemed to me impossible, while on the other hand I couldn’t doubt it—I mean believe it would not come about.”²²

It’s interesting to see how this powerful woman, capable of taking the world by storm, spoke of her fears: “I was extremely fearful, as I said.” “This vision caused me great fear; any supernatural favor the Lord grants me frightens me at first, when it is new.” “I feared that I would have no one who would hear my confession, but that all would run from me. I did nothing but weep.”

Of her image and how she aimed to please, she said: “*Of the natural attractive qualities the Lord had bestowed on me (which others said were many).*” “I began to dress in finery and to desire to please and look pretty, taking great care of my hands and hair and about perfumes and all the empty things in which one can indulge, and which were many, for I was very vain”; “I looked more to pleasing my sensuality and vanity than to what was good for my soul”; “For the Lord gave me the

²¹ One of the few times she mentions the Inquisition.

²² Referring possibly to the Monastery of San José.

grace to be pleasing wherever I went, and so I was much loved.” “He [uncle] asked me to read these books to him; and, although I did not like them, I pretended to. For in this matter of pleasing others I went to extremes, even when it was a burden to me [...] for I very often acted without discretion.” “For although sometimes my vanities leaked out, they were not recognized since other things that appeared good were what were noticed.” “In wrongdoing, curiosity, and vanity, I was especially skillful and diligent. May the Lord pardon me.”

She didn’t shy away from expressing her anger, “for the devil gives a spirit of anger so displeasing that it seems as if I want to eat everyone up, without being able to help it.” It’s remarkable how careful she was not to reveal her shortcomings:

Among my faults I had this one: Because of pure negligence and involvement in other vanities, I knew little about the Office in choir and what had to be done there; but I saw other novices who could teach me. It occurred to me not to ask them so that they wouldn’t find out that I knew so little.

Frequently, we come across a lighthearted and spontaneous tone in her writing: “Tear up what I have just said, if your Reverence thinks you should, as though it were a private letter to you, and pardon me for I have been very bold.” “That this vision from God could be the work of the imagination is the most impossible of impossible things.”

Lies – authenticity

“I was deceiving people,” says Teresa, “since exteriorly I kept up such good appearances. No blame for this is to be attributed to the house in which I lived, for I was clever enough to see to it that the nuns had a good opinion of me.” “Matters aren’t as they are here on earth, for all of earthly life is filled with deception and duplicity: when you think you have won a friend, according to what is shown you, you afterward come to understand that that was all a lie.” “O my Grandeur and Majesty! What are You doing, my all-powerful Lord? Look upon whom You bestow such sovereign favors! Don’t You recall that this soul has been an abyss of lies and a sea of vanities, and all through my own fault? For even though You gave me the natural temperament to abhor the lie, I myself in dealing with many things have lied”; “out of a sheer cult of honor I was so disturbed that I said much less than I knew. I afterward took it upon myself, when I didn’t know the assignment very well, simply to say so.”

Josep Pérez points out how the saint did not resign herself to mediocrity and aspired to a more authentic interior life. She was wary of the temptation of mediocrity, against which she would warn the Carmelites: “One must always have ambition; to believe oneself incapable of great things is a lack of humility.”

It’s interesting how her perfectionistic demand led her to title another of her books *The Way of Perfection*,²³ but she really saw herself as imperfect: “I am imperfection incarnate [...] and the many imperfections I see in myself sadden me.” Her aspiration was seemingly to reach the pinnacle of perfection: “If beginners with the assistance of God struggle to reach the summit of perfection, I believe they will never go to heaven alone; they will always lead many people along after them.” “And I thought that the first thing was to follow the call to the religious life, which His Majesty had given me, by keeping my rule as perfectly as I could.”

²³ Commissioned by Father Báñez as a continuation of her autobiography and advice on prayer.

She had a curious relationship with money. Her earliest preserved writing is an order for payment, and even her final dated letter touches on financial matters. She employed the currency system of her time and often used precious metals like gold and diamonds as metaphors for familiarity with God. There is extensive documentation of the accounts that St. Teresa signed, where she records in meticulous detail even the smallest amounts of income and expenses, almost with the care of a modern accountant.

Her pragmatic nature also led her to advocate for monasteries to support themselves economically through work and, in part, through almsgiving; in doing so, she was breaking with a long-standing tradition, ahead of her times. According to J. Pérez, the decision to admit a new postulant was made by the convent's chapter. Teresa was more interested in their qualities than their fortune, and the selection criteria were: vocation, health, and intelligence.

Transformation

Teresa's spiritual journey involves a powerful case of body psychotherapy. It's through physical pain, at times excruciating, that she forges an intimate connection with her inner self. First, she feels her own pain and miseries; then, the suffering of the world; and ultimately, the agony of Christ's Calvary. Through this sensitization, she opens her heart, and is saturated with love and wisdom amidst "such unbearable pains that I found no rest either by day or by night—a very deep sadness." "And God changed the dryness my soul experienced into the greatest tenderness."

Following a vision of hell, Teresa is graced with a revelation of divine glory by the Lord: "it is the beginning of contempt for the world because of a clear perception of the world's vanity." "It understands that authentic honor stands not with falsehood but with truth, judging what is something to be something, and what is nothing to be nothing, since everything that comes to an end is nothing and less than nothing and is not pleasing to God"; "[...] the glory I then experienced in myself cannot be put in writing or described, nor could anyone who hadn't experienced it imagine what it is like. I understood that everything desirable is brought together there, yet I didn't see anything. I was told, I don't know by whom, that what I could do there was understand that I couldn't understand anything and reflect upon how in comparison with that glory everything else was nothing at all"; "Often I had been as though bewildered and inebriated in this love"; "I began to understand the truth I knew in childhood (the nothingness of all things, the vanity of the world, and how it would soon come to an end)." "This experience doesn't seem to me to be anything else than an almost complete death to all earthly things and an enjoyment of God. [...] This prayer is a glorious foolishness, a heavenly madness where the true wisdom is learned; and it is for the soul a most delightful way of enjoying."

Emptiness

[...] what His presence does, and that He wants to begin to work in the soul in a special way. All of this that the Lord desires is manifest in the great interior and exterior satisfaction He gives the soul and in the difference there is, as I said, between this delight and happiness and the delights of earth, for this delight seems to fill the void that through our sins we have caused in the soul.

We should fix our eyes on the true and everlasting kingdom which we are trying to gain. It is very important to keep this kingdom always in mind, especially in the beginning. For

afterward it is seen so clearly that rather than striving to keep remembering the short time everything lasts and how everything is nothing and how rest should be considered no more than a trifle, it is necessary to forget these things in order to live.

Portrait

Her confessor, Francisco Ribera, drew Teresa's portrait as follows:

She was of very good stature, and in her youth she was beautiful, although even when she was old she seemed quite well: her body was bulky and very white, her face round and full, of good size and proportion; her complexion white and reddish, and when she was in prayer it lit up and became very beautiful, all of it clean and peaceful; her hair was black and frizzy, and her forehead broad, even and beautiful; the eyebrows of a blond color that tinged a little to black, large and somewhat thick, not very arched, but somewhat flat; the eyes black and round and a little fleshy; not large, but very well placed, lively and graceful, that in laughing all laughed and showed joy, and on the other hand very serious, when she wanted to show gravity in the face; The nose was small and not very high in the middle, the tip round and a little tilted down; the nostrils were arched and small; the mouth was neither big nor small; the upper lip was thin and straight, and the lower lip thick and a little droopy, of very good grace and color; the teeth were very good; the beard was well made; the ears were neither small nor big; the throat was wide and not high, but rather a little tucked in; the hands were small and very pretty. On her face she had three small moles on the left side, which gave her a lot of grace, one below the middle of the nose, another one between the nose and the mouth, and the third one below the mouth. All together she seemed very well and of very good air in her gait, and she was so kind and gentle, that all the people who looked at her were very much appeased.

Trivia

“The tomb of Teresa of Jesus is locked with nine keys. The Duchess of Alba has three, the nuns of the convent where she is buried have another three, and the confessor of those nuns, the remaining three.”

X. Cinematic examples

“*Being Julia*”

by Ana Iribas

Original title: Being Julia (2004, 105 minutes)

Based on the play *Theatre*, by William Somerset Maugham

Directed by István Szabó, with screenplay by Ronald Hardwood

Character: Julia Lambert, played by Annette Bening
Social E3, with sexual as a second subtype

According to the director, the movie is about masks. Society urges us to play roles, not just in our professional careers but also in our private lives. The film centers on how Julia, an actress (a profession that already embodies the art of wearing masks), gradually “educates” herself and comes to know who she is.

It begins with the protagonist in the middle of a midlife crisis. She feels bored, empty and unmotivated, fearing that her advancing age will relegate her to unimportant theatrical roles. However, a change occurs in her life that breaks this impasse: she falls in love with a younger man. This rekindles her intensity and vitality, only to disappoint her, make her sink even deeper, and finally reclaim her power through a glorious revenge on stage, which catapults her once more to the top as an actress, restores her dignity as a person, and helps her reconnect with her true self and become more authentic.

The starting point

Julia is an energetic, charismatic, cheerful (she smiles very often), attractive, diva-like theater star with a great talent as an actress. She’s suffering from existential fatigue, the proverbial midlife crisis at forty-five; both life and the theater no longer satisfy her.²⁴ She realizes she will be less and less young and beautiful, so she’ll stop getting interesting roles, and her fame will fade.

In the first conversation with her husband, after an outburst of anger, Julia admits: “I’m tired. More than that: I am utterly exhausted. [...] I’m near to breaking point. Everything’s so tedious. I want something to happen.”

She dramatizes in front of her husband to convince him to cancel the play she’s grown sick of performing: “I’m exhausted. [...] I feel twice my age which makes me 90. I’m bored. Life has nothing in store for me. [...] I’m near to having a breakdown. I feel as though my life’s come to an end.” At this point in her life, there is a hint of an existential void.

A new breakthrough

An affair with a young man half her age. At first, Julia is radiant, rejuvenated, and full of hope. Everything happened—she tells her friend Charles in a roundabout way, as if she were narrating a script—“as a shock to her. She’s fallen in love with the boy. And it happens just when everything seemed to her so dull and unpromising, as if her life was over. She finds the affair exhilarating. And everyone keeps telling her she looks ten years younger.”

²⁴ This feeling of discontent with a mediocre life that falls short of the ideal, and the need to construct an identity with the help of fiction, is a point of contact with Emma from *Madame Bovary*, the novel by Gustave Flaubert. However, Emma—who, due to her inner emptiness and need to shape herself according to external standards, shows traits of social E3—also suffers from an anxiety that drives her to long for things or identities she does not possess, only to discover, once she attains them, that they do not satisfy her, and so she abandons them. In this respect, Emma Bovary has a touch of E4. Julia, on the other hand (a true E3), genuinely identifies with being a good actress and an attractive woman (“she actually believes it”), and what she wants is to solidify those identities, not to abandon them in search of supposedly better ones yet to come.

Development

But Julia loses control, her defenses and composure, and ends up being humiliated by her lover and then also by her son (who calls out the falsity of his mother's entire existence) and her husband (who is also having an affair with Avice, Tom's young actress hookup, and predicts that she will be "the new Julia Lambert.")

Resolution

After hitting rock bottom, Julia regains control and makes everyone dance to her tune... starting by "fucking" Tom, objectifying him as a parting shot. She rises from the ashes in an apotheotic act of revenge, combining cunning with inspired improvisation on stage. She reclaims her husband, the respect of her son and friend, and regains her dignity, all while publicly dragging the young duo of social climbers, Avice and Tom, through the mud. In this act of self-assertion, laden with insult and raw talent, Julia not only finds herself again but also confirms that she is, after all, "the best actress in England."

The mask and the blurring of fiction and reality

"To seem to be real: that's the art of acting." (Jimmie Langton to Julia Lambert)

The mask is a false identity presented to the world. Acting means bringing that mask to life. The more real the fiction appears, the more effective it becomes, and the better the actor performs when they identify with their mask.

From a cinematic perspective, the interweaving of fiction and reality is executed on several levels. The most literal is that of physical masks, symbolized when Julia, in a moment of great vulnerability, cries out from jealousy and heartbreak, and then, immediately after, covers her face with makeup (a beauty mask). This act signifies donning the social mask. Thus, Julia goes from sincere moments (usually without makeup) to those of concealment and pretense (usually with makeup), in which she brings out her charm, talent and intelligence.

Another layer of this interplay between fiction and reality operates on a psychological level, embodied by Julia's late acting teacher, Jimmie Langton (portrayed by Michael Gambon). Langton, though dead for fifteen years, is still alive in Julia's consciousness ("We'd be nothing without Jimmie," she says at the beginning of the film), and has, interestingly, the same initials as Julia Lambert (J.L.). That's because he represents her *alter ego*, or the Jungian archetype of the "wise old man."

The teacher appears, like a very real ghost, at key moments in the film and in Julia's life, when she's most in touch with her feelings. The film opens and closes with interventions from this teacher-consciousness of Julia, almost identical, addressing the illusory nature of life and the authenticity of the theater. "Remember this, when you're on the stage acting, theater is the only reality. Everything else, the world outside, what civilians call the real world, is nothing but fantasy. And I bloody well won't let you forget it."

But Jimmie Langton also symbolizes Julia's ability to see herself from the outside. He comments on the events happening in her actual life as if they were performances; whether she has overacted,

underplayed, lacked credibility, and so on. Langton becomes the gaze of others internalized in Julia's consciousness, a constant reminder that she's always performing.

When Julia meets her platonic friend Lord Charles at the museum—significantly, in front of a portrait by Tamara Lempicka, the painter famous for her decadent sophistication—instead of talking to him openly about her relationship with her young lover, she does so indirectly, telling him about a role she's been offered, in which she would play a woman who falls in love with a much younger man. Charles understands, of course, that Julia is talking about herself, but he doesn't break the illusion either. He advises her against accepting the role, warning it's a sham, and saying that he'd tell the woman to end the relationship or it will all end in tears. Julia doesn't give in to his pretense and persists, even though she knows she's been exposed: "But, Charles, she can't do that. Because she's fallen in love with him. That's why. She's helpless... the character in the play."

There's a play that Julia performs on three separate occasions, which alludes to her own life. In one scene, she says goodbye to her beloved. "No one will ever know how much I loved him. He was my earth, my moon, all the stars in the firmament. Farewell, my love," she declaims, as a final line before the curtain falls. This same scene is repeated, but acted in different ways,²⁵ because the real Julia's mood is reflected in how she brings the character to life on stage.

The first time Julia recites another tragic monologue, in which she wishes to avoid parting ways with her friend Lord Charles, it seems believable. (Julia is wearing a full face of makeup, and the scene takes place in a café.) What is unsettling is that the same monologue is repeated, almost word-for-word, when, clad in a robe and without makeup, in a premeditated pose, she tries to hold onto her lover, Tom. This unexpected encore creates an impression of insincerity and pathos, which enhances the dramatic impact of her words: "I don't want to lose you. I have few friends. Real friends. And you're the only person in my life with whom I can be entirely myself. Let's go on seeing each other. Please."

Another *leitmotif*, which almost appeared twice in the film,²⁶ is the script of the final play Julia is set to perform, *Nowadays*. In the grand scheme of the story, it tacitly alludes to the figure of her lover, Tom Fennell: "We should have seen through him. Then it would never have happened. But nowadays we're only interested in appearances. And he did have the most beautiful appearance." Julia has difficulty memorizing it²⁷ ("but you've given me a monstrous speech at the end of the play. I hope I can learn it"), even though it actually contains an important thematic key to her life and, therefore, to the film.

Although, in her actual life, Julia pretends; in the closing theater scene, which serves as the film's dramatic climax, she deviates from the script and instead improvises, finally expressing herself and her emotions openly. She is, as her teacher used to say, being fictitious in reality, and real in fiction.

After her triumphant improvised performance, in which she boldly asserts herself, Julia breaks free from societal expectations, choosing to skip the after-party and dine alone at a restaurant ("I want to dine alone tonight. Quite alone.") She orders a beer. This final scene of the movie is underscored by the lyrics of the song playing in the background (*Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*) and the expressions of the protagonist, featured in the foreground:

²⁵ Always with a powerful voice and grand gestures, which from our current sensibilities may seem forced and anything but naturalistic, but which in the 1930s was the desirable acting style, suited to the large theatrical spaces of the time.

²⁶ If one of the scenes hadn't been cut from the final version. (The film's DVD includes the deleted scenes, along with a highly recommended audio commentary track featuring István Szabó, Annette Bening, and Jeremy Irons, sharing insights, anecdotes, and reflections related to the film.)

²⁷ In a deleted scene she is seen repeating it over and over again, always with mistakes.

They asked me how I knew my true love was true. [...] All who love are blind. [...] Yet, today, my love has flown away. I am without my love. [Julia takes a few sips of the beer]. Now, laughing friends deride [Julia laughs] tears I cannot hide [her eyes water], so I smile [already the smile is faint] and say: "When a lovely flame dies, smoke gets in your eyes." [With a distant look and a serious expression, Julia sighs].

Even the extras in the film pretend: when the mother and the aunt receive a telegram for Julia from the mail carrier, they are shocked, fearing it's bad news. The aunt tells the mother: "Just say, 'Here's a telegram,' as if it's the most natural thing in the world."

The role of the mirror

In portraying Julia's psychology and actions, the mirror has at least three symbolic functions: it's the internalized gaze of others; a surface for the superficial display and falsification of her true feelings; and a means of coming into contact with herself, enabling self-recognition.

Throughout the film, Julia frequently appears either in front of an audience, performing, or looking at herself in the mirror. Before the mirror, she also often acts, albeit not in an exaggerated theatrical manner, falling into histrionics (as she does in her job), but in a natural, close-to-life interpretation. Julia speaks to the mirror as if it were a generic "other," and the mirror reflects back the image she presents to the world; it's a kind of "private audience." It could be said that, in a continuous loop, Julia examines herself, fine-tunes her image, directs it to the mirror, and the mirror reflects it back to her. By the time she steps out into the world, she has her mask completely studied.

She also turns to the mirror when she feels like she's losing control and, in the presence of this familiar ally, she pulls herself together and regains control over the situation. Thus, for example, shortly after being kissed in bed by her young lover, Julia sits up, covers her mouth, goes to the mirror, and exclaims, "Oh... Look at my hair. [...] And I thought you were such a shy young man." Then she hastily leaves Tom's apartment.

This scene foreshadows another one later on. Julia has already gone to see Avice Crichton, the young aspiring actress, and is plotting her revenge after making Tom (scared and under her control) confess that he is in love with Avice. Stirred by pain and anger, she stands up, distancing herself from Tom, and heads towards a large mirror. In an unconscious reinforcement of her act, instead of speaking face to face with Tom, she positions herself with her back to him, in front of the mirror, and speaks partly to Tom's reflection and partly to her own image:

I've liked going to bed with you. And it pleases me to think that you liked going to bed with me. [laughs] But let's face it. I've never been in love with you. And you, you've never been in love with me. [chuckles] We both knew it couldn't last. You're in love with that girl, aren't you? You might as well admit it.

Tom nods. Julia lets out a sob, her face contorted, her back still turned to him, and then quickly composes herself. She finally spins around to look at Tom, and with a small smile says, "Go now. Please." Alone, she sighs, stops the tears that were about to flow, and looks at herself again in the mirror, with an expression of deep and intimate sadness.

The mirror also acts as a kind of diary on which Julia projects her thoughts. In the first scene this happens, Julia has fallen in love. She laughs, gazes at her reflection flirtatiously, and says to herself:

Damn it all, Miss²⁸ Lambert, you don't look so bad. You can go on playing 25-year-olds, 30-year-olds for a good long time yet. And then what? Whoo! Mothers, grandmothers and old maids. [snorting] Bugger playwrights. Can't write for women. They're all men, that's the trouble.

In another scene later in the movie, Julia, having just successfully put on a show to reconcile with Tom, stands in her dressing room, preening herself in the mirror (essentially putting her mask back on) and laughing. Looking at herself (it's unclear if she's speaking to herself or rather to Evie, her assistant), she says, "I can't help feeling... I wish I didn't, but deep down, I can't help feeling... a certain contempt for that boy. He's so transparent." (In contrast, she is more indirect and manipulative.)

It's interesting to note that to come into deepest contact with herself, she doesn't need the mirror. This suggests that it merely reflects superficial aspects of her being, while her most profound intuitions and feelings emerge when she connects with her heart and instincts, without being able to see and, therefore, control herself.

These apprehensions are usually represented by the voice of her conscience, her master Jimmie Langton. A disheartened and humiliated Julia sets about plotting her revenge after her breakup with Tom, and Jimmie appears to her, encouraging her with the words, "You can't just stand there like a spare prick at a wedding. For Christ's sake, Julia, assert yourself—it's you that matters. You. Only you. All's fair in love and theater, ducky."

However, in the final scene, after Jimmy's last appearance, Julia dismisses his ideas, saying, "Rubbish!"²⁹ and reconciles with reality and herself, at last indulging in the beer she denied herself for so long. In solitude, without needing the gaze of others (friends, lovers, servants or family), without anyone to reflect her image back at her, she connects with her desires and with herself. (In this scene, not only are there no mirrors or an audience, and her split consciousness is gone, but there is also a lack of color – Julia is dressed entirely in black.)

A sense of lack

If Julia is not "brilliant" and doesn't play a role, what is left of her? A void, as her son tells her with resounding cruelty: "I don't think you really exist." It's as if Julia doesn't know who she is, and covers it up by doing (in her case, acting). Throughout the film, when she follows her desire for revenge and treats herself to her culinary cravings (like cake and beer), she becomes more in touch with her true self, and feels more in control, without relying on others (be it a lover or an audience) to fulfill her needs.

Passion (distorted emotion)

There are three primary passions that drive Julia's actions: first, vanity (as an E3); second, prestige (as a social E3), manifesting in her goal to be an acclaimed actress; and third, attractiveness (since her second E3 subtype is sexual), her quest to maintain her allure as a male-attracting female.

²⁸ Everyone calls her "Miss Lambert" (her maiden name), even though she's married. She didn't give up her stage name when she got married.

²⁹ This is a contribution from the screenwriter, Ronald Harwood, not found in Somerset Maugham's original play, which is more pessimistic and less compassionate toward the protagonist.

Julia must dazzle to see herself in the admiration she arouses in others. Proof that talent is more important to her than beauty is in the conversation she has with her maid in her room.³⁰ Julia, her face free of makeup, asks her if she thinks she's attractive, to which Evie replies, "You're no beauty, you know that." Julia then responds, "The best actresses never are."

Fixation (distorted obsession)

The fixation is deception (falsehood, self-deception), as the cognitive reinforcement of vanity. The idea is that one can't truly be themselves, and therefore must act (in the double sense of "doing," and "performing.") For Julia, as an actress, it's enough to appear as something rather than to be it. As her inner teacher tells her, "You're still going over the top. You've got to learn restraint [...] so that it seems real. Seems to be real, that's the art of acting." She also possesses a multitude of masks suitable for each context; it's the chameleon-like attitude her son criticizes: "You have a performance for everyone! For the servants, for daddy, for me, for everybody."

Neurotic need

Her first neurotic need is to "shine," to be admired for her talent. Second is to be attractive. In reality, both of these aspects converge in acting, in embodying masks that elicit admiration. "Jumped-up little tart, that's what she is. Never stops acting, on-stage or off," a childhood neighbor, who recognizes Julia in a restaurant, says of her. Even her secretly smitten business associate, Dolly, reproaches her, "You mean that or are you acting? I never know when you're acting..." Julia turns her focus too much to the outside, seeking the real or imagined gaze of others (if she's admired by others, she's worth something) and forgets to connect with herself in private or to fulfill her own needs.

Interpersonal strategies

She presents a favorable image (well-groomed, stylishly dressed, with a face full of makeup) and exudes *charm*.

She competes with other women who enter her territory to play with her toys (for example, the aspiring star Avice Crichton). This competition isn't openly declared but is carried out through indirect manipulation, without ever losing her composure or her good public image.

Around devoted male and female admirers of her facade, who don't know the real Julia (and, by extension, what lies beneath the mask), she uses her usual persona of a renowned actress, seductive and charming, elevated to a pedestal. She even manages to seduce Michael's financial backer, Dolly, by offering her the chance to swim naked in her pool if she agrees to cancel the play.

With the people who genuinely love her (her husband, her son, and her friend Lord Charles—who will later reveal himself to be gay, so around him she won't need the mask of seduction), even though she occasionally pretends like with everyone, she can reveal some of her vulnerabilities. Eventually she realizes that, despite them, they love and protect her even more.

With her lifelong companion, maid and longtime assistant, Evie, there's maximum intimacy. Julia can afford to be her authentic self, and to use harsh, vulgar language.

³⁰ Scene also cut from the final version of the film, but included in the commercial DVD release.

Against those who have wronged her, she enacts a grand artistic revenge, all for the glory of her stage persona.

Emotionality

Julia is very extroverted and cheerful, always appearing to be conveying her feelings... though in reality, she is almost always acting. ("If I truly felt all the emotions I was representing, I'd be a wreck!")

This doesn't mean she doesn't experience emotions or doesn't show them; rather, what she exhibits is often what's socially appropriate or convenient, not necessarily a direct reflection of her inner emotional state. She can outwardly manifest one emotion to cover up another she'd rather not reveal. As a result, she can laugh or cry with either authenticity or insincerity.

She maintains a broad, sociable smile, and is capable of laughing while saying things that are painful to her or hurtful to others. As for crying, "we all know you can turn your tears on and off like a tap," her ghostly mentor tells her. Her maid Evie adds: "I wish you'd teach me to cry real tears... The times I've needed them! [...] I've always said you're lucky you can cry without your eyelids swelling."

Beneath this outwardly expressive demeanor lies emotional restraint (necessary, above all, to avoid appearing weak or vulnerable in public), which can also (although on fewer occasions) take the form of inexpressiveness (such as when her husband casually mentions her lover, and she responds with indifference, engrossed in reading a newspaper, as though the matter doesn't concern her).

The ultimate consequence of deceit is emotional disconnection, but that would be more characteristic of other subtypes or different examples than Julia's. Julia feels a lot, she almost always shows emotions; the question, in any case, is whether they are genuine. She can express her anger only around those with whom she's very intimate (in at least two scenes, she raises her voice or slaps her husband, who responds to these outbursts calmly, without getting upset.)

Love

Although they may appear to have a picture-perfect marriage from the outside, Julia and her husband, Michael, have not had marital sex for some time. Nevertheless, their relationship is characterized by genuine affection, so they're more like accomplices or friends than husband and wife. They do not confess their affairs to each other, instead keeping up appearances. Therefore, their marriage is built on falsehood, even if their affection is true.

During a meeting in a café with her friend Lord Charles, who suggests they stop seeing each other to avoid gossip, Julia justifies herself: "Michael and I lead separate lives. That's why we're so happily married... more or less." Michael, in turn, explains to Dolly: "We're very devoted, united, but not... How shall I put it? Not possessive. We're a very modern couple."

As for her lover, Tom, it's curious how, during their first meeting, Julia seemingly ignores and even appears to disdain him (as evident from her eloquent expressions of weariness in the elevator). It's the young man's unrelenting enthusiasm, and the fact that he didn't turn out to be an annoying and obsessed fan, that ultimately win her over. By falling in love with Tom Fennell, Julia seeks to recapture her youth, intensity, the illusion of truly living life and feeling idolized (in addition, of course, to the physical pleasure it brings).

She allows herself to be led by her instincts, prioritizing them over her reputation and self-control (the ghost of her master says that she lets herself be treated and behaves like a ‘tart,’ at which she nods in agreement), and it makes her lose control of the situation (a plaything in the hands of her lover, who shamelessly takes advantage of her), and suffer from unrequited love, humiliation (she accepts Tom’s blaming reproaches: “I should never have accepted anything from you”), and jealousy (due to Tom’s relationship with the young actress, Avice).

But Julia also learns that those who really know her, and for whom sexual intimacy isn’t a requirement for expressing affection (her frivolous husband, her homosexual friend, her son, and her maid) are the ones who truly love, support, and care for her. Therefore, for Julia, true love doesn’t necessarily depend on sex.

This is illustrated when her husband, Michael, tells Dolly that since Julia gave birth to their son, she has lost interest in sex and “all those instincts went into her acting.” Later, when her affair with Tom ends, the protagonist redirects her sexual energy entirely into her expression on stage. At the culmination of her brilliant theatrical improvisation (paraphrasing Jimmie Langton’s maxim of “all’s fair in love and theater”), Julia exclaims: “All’s fair in war and... war and... ph, hell, the word escapes me,” replacing what was “love” (in Jimmie’s phrase) with “war” (in hers).

Shadow

If outwardly Julia is bright and charming, her shadow is foul-mouthed, perfidious, and evil. If she is to succeed, someone must suffer defeat. The protagonist is aware of her dark side, and she even takes pride in it (and no wonder, because it will bring her her greatest stage triumph). When Julia’s revenge has been exacted, her husband bursts into her dressing room, calling her a “wonderful, glorious monster,” and lifts her up in an enthusiastic, whirling embrace. In response, Julia exclaims with fervor, “That’s why you love me!” and Michael passionately agrees, “Yes!” kissing her chastely.

Virtue

Authenticity involves embracing and openly expressing one’s genuine emotions. Julia is capable of this when she is with her husband or her maid, or when she simply gets carried away by her feelings and can’t control herself, as it sometimes happens to her in front of Tom.

Authenticity requires contact with one’s inner impulses, and knowing how to distinguish them from external expectations. It also requires assertiveness, once that contact has been made; expressing desires and opinions in the outside world, and acting accordingly. For example, toward the end of the film, despite everyone’s expectations for her to attend the afterparty, Julia decides to have dinner alone and enjoy a beer, something she previously denied herself.

As an actress, Julia comes close to perceiving herself as an observer, not identifying entirely with the characters but rather the spectator. She consistently watches herself, even during the most emotional moments, sometimes assuming the role of her acting teacher who critiques the protagonist’s real-life experiences as if they were theatrical performances. The acting profession demands the skill of engaging with emotions, conveying them, all while maintaining a certain detachment to ensure the sincerity of their expression.

Contrast with other subtypes

Let us now compare Julia's way of navigating the world with that of her husband. Michael Gosselyn is a sexual E3. A retired actor of little talent, he now works as a producer for the plays in which his wife acts. In reality, he focuses on being one of the most attractive men in England, taking care of himself, and enjoying life's pleasures, with little professional ambition.

On the other hand, Julia, as a social E3, is above all talented, brilliant, dynamic, active, ambitious and manipulative. Unlike her husband, it's not enough for her to just be attractive; she must constantly be "performing," acting, and maintaining control over the situation.

In the absence of a self-preservation E3 character in the film to compare her to, suffice it to say that Julia needs an audience for her actions, which is exactly why she's an actress (her existence revolves around performing in front of others). If she were a self-preservation E3 subtype, she would only need to feel that she excels in what she does, put meticulous effort into any task, even if it were private and trivial, and wouldn't have to be as charming, magnetic, and constantly smiling.

"All about Eve"

by Juan José Herrera



Eve Harrington (Anne Baxter) in the movie *All about Eve*, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz (1950)

Original title: All about Eve (1950)

Screenplay and direction: Joseph L. Mankiewicz

Character: Eve Harrington, a twenty-four-year-old who wins an important theater award. Played by Anne Baxter

Social E3, with self-preservation as the second subtype.

*Other characters*³¹

– *Margo Channing*, accomplished stage actress, Broadway star. Played by Bette Davis.

“Margo is a great star. A true star. She never was or will be anything less...”

– *Lloyd Richards*, famous Broadway playwright: Hugh Marlowe.

“Always on the lookout for the ideal actress for his characters.”

– *Karen Lloyd*, Lloyd’s wife, homemaker, and Margo Channing’s confidante: Celeste Holm.

“The lowest form of celebrity.”

– *Bill Sampson*, famous Broadway director en route to Hollywood, Margo’s boyfriend who’s deeply in love with her: Gary Merrill.

“Wherever there’s magic and make-believe and an audience, there’s theater. It’s just that there’s so much bushwa in this ivory greenroom they call the theatuh, sometimes it gets up around my chin...”

– *Addison DeWitt*, sharp theater critic: George Sanders.

“I have lived in the theater as a Trappist monk lives in his faith.”

– *Max Fabian*, theatrical producer who emigrated from Europe in search of fortune: Gregory Ratoff.

“One to whom each production means potential ruin or fortune.”

– *Miss Casswell*, an attractive aspiring actress with the same ambition as Eve, but a different strategy: Marilyn Monroe.

“You next move, it seems to me, should be towards television.”

– *Birdie Coonan*, Margo Channing’s maid who was also an actress years ago: Thelma Ritter.

“A fifth-rate vaudevillian.”

Not just the character of Eve, but the entire film and its other cast members are steeped in the traits of social E3. Set in the world of theater, the film revolves around the hidden dramas behind the generational handover between seasoned actresses and the emergence of new “promising talents” full of ambition. The “theatrical greats” are surrounded by those who, with less visible effort, keep the gears of the performing arts turning: producers, critics, directors, and playwrights, along with their partners, servants, friends, and assistants—many of whom suffer, to varying degrees, from the passions that the Enneagram identifies on the vanity axis (hysterical-histrionic types): E3, E4, and E2.

³¹ The quoted lines have been taken from the film to summarize the characters’ personalities.

Within this swarm of characters, the social E3 (embodied mainly, but not exclusively, by Eve) feels the neurotic need for public recognition, to dominate the gaze of others. A gaze that, once internalized, becomes an internal judge as well. What better metaphor than the theater to describe the social E3, where in both cases it is a fictional character—a representation of the real—that stands between the person and others? The actress at the height of fame wants to be seen as a woman, as a human being (a dimension she abandoned at some point), while the newcomer yearns for the opposite. The confusion between person and persona, between reality and its narration, and the difficulty of reclaiming the former, are core features of the social E3.

But the film is not only about the jealousy and aging of a celebrated actress resisting maturity, nor about the ingratitude of Eve, an ambitious young woman “on the rise.” Numerous references (so fast and sharp they are easy to miss) make it clear from the first scene that something deeper is at play. The film portrays with biting irony a fundamental episode in the history of the performing arts: the arrival of the “seventh art” (and the “entertainment industry”) and the resulting decline of theater, which, destabilized, tried as best it could to adapt to the mass migration of its artists to the screen, chasing the new *idealized dream* of the masses: to become a dazzling “star.”

In the United States, a tremendously powerful industry was built around the most consumed art form in human history: Hollywood. Thanks to that, Joseph L. Mankiewicz was able to make this magnificent film, which, both mercilessly and subtly, mocks the “American” vulgarity of Hollywood, even as it elevates cinema to the heights of excellence through this very work.

In an interview, the director expressed his preference for witty tragicomedy with a sharp edge, a kind of “white-gloved” vitriolic humor, featuring the new kind of woman emerging in America, whose profile aligns with the social E3.

With no exterior scenes and action confined to salons and stages, the film draws inspiration from theater as the “mother” of all performing arts. Everything seems to foreshadow what the “offspring” or “daughter” of theater will become. And the fact that her name is Eve hints that even in those years—and ever since Paradise—a character like this was considered feminine.

Tragicomedy requires a verbal wit and loquacity that the social E3 possesses and can share, as happens in the film, with the social E4 and E2. But only the social E3 adds the inhuman coldness and subtle cunning of a “white-gloved” gangster.

Like those characters who never appear but feel omnipresent, Hollywood is the *subtext* suggesting that a woman with guts can aspire to something more lucrative and glamorous than Broadway. Anything goes to get to Hollywood; anything goes to stay in the Olympus of the industry...

Statements of (lack of) principle gradually start to surface in Eve’s thoughts. These are quintessentially American *motifs*: “Don’t let anything stand in your way,” “Success is within reach if you fight for it,” “Don’t back down,” “Get what you want”... Forms of boundless encouragement typical of societies that grow very rich, very fast. Wealth—and its most glamorous form today, success and fame (prestige)—justify morally questionable means. In fact, Eve triumphs completely, and is only checked by someone just as ruthless as she is, both of them facing a dazzling future.

The film presents a remarkably subtle gradation of behavior models and value scales; just as discreet, if not imperceptible, is the initial formation of Eve’s ambition, at least to the viewer.

From the very first moment, in the alley, Eve absorbs huge amounts of information with an almost childlike eagerness. She doesn’t ask Karen about her idol, Margo Channing, but (note this) about her boyfriend, Bill Sampson. To fulfill the ambition that instinctively self-generates in the mind of a social E3, Eve displays that typical hypersensitivity to the external (to form and *forms*, to propriety, manners, and other social codes), and the ability to instantly detect and assess the market value of appearances. Image is thus automatically turned first into “reality,” and then into merchandise.

To portray this character (already being framed by Hollywood as feminine) Mankiewicz³² moves the action to the ultimate stage of vanity hierarchies, to its birthplace: the theater, with all its stardom. By definition, it is the actor's "fraud," or "technical deception" in performance, that produces the audience's delight—an audience that, in turn, consecrates them with its recognition.

Eve is the prototype of the heroine who doesn't suffer, only *achieves*: an active, resilient, alert, discreet, and efficient person who gets what she sets out to get. The kind of independent, unprejudiced woman urgently needed by postwar capitalism, in the making of the *American way of life*, with its: "Do it your way; get a life."

The film industry reflects the *New Frontier* through the *dreams* of the *movies* and the *star system*. The careers of actors and actresses—like Eve or Margo—are likened to industrial figures like Rockefeller or Dale Carnegie, who came "from nothing," a favorite expression of the E3 to highlight their worth without having to speak of their cumbersome origins. Because, for a social E3, what they possess is possessed "naturally," as a unique and indisputable gift, and there's nothing worse than having to describe its true origin, the shadow behind the shimmer.

Eve is a social E3 who also carries the ways of a fundamentally E3-based society that sees the behaviors of pathological Threes like her as logical and forgivable, as long as they are successful and at least minimally legal.

Mankiewicz turns the Hollywoodian Eve into a compendium of ruthless ambition, lack of scruples, intrigue, and blackmail. All the lowest arts of deception that many are quick to excuse if they stand to benefit from the "rise," whether it be of a Wall Street shark or a diva.

To ambition, let's add youth: Eve is twenty-four years old, compared to Margo Channing's forty. Age (or more precisely, physical appearance) is a fundamental concern for the E3. And the generational handover, whether in the stage world or elsewhere, is a motif used *ad nauseam* in both tragic and comedic scripts, striking right at the heart of this basic fear of the social E3, especially the female kind: not aging—or, more abstractly put, not losing the desirable appearance (remember the drama of *Dorian Gray*?)

Another key issue for Eve as a social E3 is, as we've already said, the confusion between the character and the real individual. It's something that happens to many actors; you could say it's their natural breeding ground. Margo delivers a line that's very telling for social E3s: "I wish someone would tell me about *me*." In other words, "Could someone please tell me who I am? I've lost myself among so many reflections in the mirror."

The film's atmosphere is steeped in what this trait perceives as its "natural" habitat. Eve is one of its possible human incarnations.

Status

The perception of life as a ladder of achievements and positions to be secured—and quickly left behind to climb to the next—perfectly describes the neurosis of the trait, especially in the social

³² Mankiewicz was a keen observer of female characters and, especially, of the world of actresses, but what fascinated him most was the social E3 woman, as can be seen throughout his filmography. Other tragicomedy directors of the era looked to the biblical Eve as a reference. That's the case with Preston Sturges and his dazzling comedy *The Lady Eve*, filmed ten years earlier, in 1941, where the protagonist—another magnificent example of social E3, in the key of high comedy—has two names, depending on the persona she wants to inhabit: the aristocratic Lady Eve Sidgwick or the vulgar con artist (surprise! with the same last name as our Eve from *All About Eve*) Jean Harrington. In other words, Sturges's Eve is the seed of Eve Harrington. Mankiewicz paid tribute to Sturges because the character was already becoming archetypal.

subtype, obsessed with “being someone.” That is, being someone “according to others.” The movie places so much emphasis on this that you could say it’s its main theme.

Status is understood as the position a person holds in society or within a specific group. For someone sensitive to status, everything is a sign of their social standing and that of others: from the words they use to what they drink, who they talk to and how they dress, where they studied, what they’ve read, where they’ve been...

In childhood, the social E3 has overadapted so much to systems that grant recognition or fame in exchange for specific behavior that they come to believe the world simply works this way. This character has developed a “natural instinct” for knowing what’s appropriate and rarely comes off as garish. They know their need for status will be better satisfied if it’s subtly concealed, so it’s rare for them to be overtly flashy about it, even though they are constantly working toward “being someone,” as we’ll see Eve doing.

The world of theater

During an award ceremony held in the lavish headquarters of the Sarah Siddons Society, the film unfolds as a long flashback narrated by several of its characters. The action takes place between the final speech of the ceremony, delivered by an elderly actor, and the handing out of the last and most important award: to Eve Harrington, for her “distinguished achievements” in theater.

We’re in the heart of the theatrical world, on the East Coast, in New York, on Broadway. It’s only at the end, once the prize has been awarded, that we understand that neither the grand speeches nor the “heartfelt” words of gratitude correspond to the realities that led to this moment. Almost nothing being said is actually true. And yet this ruthless fraud that is the awards ceremony shines with the idealized appearance of “virtuous authenticity.” Because it isn’t exactly a lie either; it has the “inflated, sparkling” essence of a fable (like photos of European monarchs, actors, or millionaires in glossy magazines).

In the life of a social E3, behind the immaculate and “important” facade (often bordering on “deification,” as they say in Hollywood), the messy human kitchen behind the award reveals tragic and dismal imbalances. Nothing is said in the movie about Eve’s emotional or sexual life, how she eats, or whether she has friends (she describes herself as an orphan, which, of course, isn’t true). And most importantly: at no point is there any hint of what her actual relationship or sensitivity to her art is. Is theater her life? Does she feel passion for it?

No. That would be another movie. One that would likely begin with her personal or professional crisis, from which she might begin creating “her own” theater, instead of being a “carbon copy” of another actress... But Eve’s attention isn’t focused on herself, her own qualities, or her sensitivity. It’s focused on those of others, which she seeks to appropriate, believing that by doing so she will capture the glow she sees in Margo; that this way she will “be someone,” and therefore be happy. Almost all her energy, as we will see, is spent on this “doing” demanded by her strategy. What she does barely matters.

Synopsis

Margo Channing (a sexual E4) is an actress who has just turned forty, at the peak of her fame. Only after a long and difficult personal process—which the movie shows—does she come to realize that playing young heroines no longer suits her or interests her, and that maturity for her lies in fulfilling

her real priorities: marrying and building a home with the man she loves, Bill Sampson, a famous theater director who is heading off to Hollywood the very day the story begins. His month-long absence influences her decision to take in a seemingly helpless young woman when she returns from the airport.

Moments earlier, at the theater, while she's removing her makeup and wig after yet another performance of a play with the symbolic title *Aged in Wood*,³³ her best friend Karen Lloyd (possibly a self-preservation E3) introduces her to a tenacious fan who claims not to have missed a single Margo Channing performance in years. Eve Harrington has made her way into the star's dressing room.

Eve quickly wins everyone over with her *life story*... everyone, that is, except the maid, Birdie Coonan, who instinctively recoils from how exaggerated it sounds: "What a story. Everything but the bloodhounds snappin' at her rear end..." Eve has now entered Margo's world, who takes her in as an assistant (just as she once did with her friend Birdie).

Eve progressively takes charge of almost everything with irrefutable efficiency: Margo's schedule, scripts, contracts, phone calls... Margo lives in paradise, relieved of the daily management of her affairs, having found the perfect secretary and companion, in a mutual servitude that suits them both. The only difference is that while Margo's needs in drawing Eve closer are very clear to the audience, Eve's needs are twofold: the obvious ones (she's no longer living precariously) and the hidden ones, which the film will reveal bit by bit, with the same delicacy with which a spider weaves its web. This harmonious arrangement lasts a few months,³⁴ until Margo, alerted by Birdie, realizes that if she lets her guard down, she could lose everything, from her boyfriend to her own name.

Eve, the "perfect" and indispensable secretary (her second subtype, after social, is self-preservation), controls and filters everything the actress has neglected (using a sensitivity more like radar or sonar than a microscope) and swiftly picks up everything she does onstage. After the stunning *chameleonic* process of a social E3, there comes a point where she can not only imitate Margo, but actually replace her and usurp her place.

Naturally, one doesn't have to be a social E3 to pull something like this off (professionally, it happens at all levels), but one *does* have to be a social E3 to do it *in this way*: without perceiving the content of what is being swallowed, only the immense pleasure of craving it and being approved for doing so.

We've said chameleonic (because of adaptability), but there are more animals in the shadows of the social E3, from the spider (slowly and silently spinning their invisible web), to the eel (in the way they move and speak), to the silent vulture of the heights (the social E3 would say condor). Still, it's the film itself that nails the most accurate zoological metaphor for Eve: the bee. She makes honey, she's industrious, and, boy, does she have a sting.

Without Margo knowing (or wanting to know), and with the necessary *collaboration* of other characters (some innocently, like the gullible Karen; others, not so much), and through *exhaustive exploitation* every favorable circumstance that comes her way, Eve wastes no time and ultimately becomes Margo's *understudy*.³⁵ The day comes when she finally gets to replace her in a performance (the only one, or one of the very few in her life, that Margo doesn't attend... and not because of Eve).

With that single performance, earned through her cunning tricks, Eve makes a splash with the critics—who just "happen" to be in full attendance that evening to witness a show that otherwise would have gone unnoticed. Naturally, she is also assisted in "becoming somebody" by the most influential of theater critics, Addison DeWitt, a hawk for young and beautiful starlets (like Miss Casswell, who seems to be another social E3, but with sexual as her second subtype, unlike Eve's

³³ A phrase used for wines "aged in wooden barrels," which the director humorously uses from the start to allude to Margo's age, foreshadowing a crucial theme, especially in the world of theater and, of course, in Hollywood.

³⁴ They meet in October, and the award is given the following June.

³⁵ "Substitute" in the performance, in case of illness or unavailability of the lead actors.

self-preservation.)³⁶ The hawk is taken in by Eve’s “arts” (her “stage animality”) and won’t leave without his prey. Addison DeWitt will, in the end, be the one to uncover her real story and expose Eve’s “original lie.”

Not satisfied with having triumphed in Margo Channing’s wake, Eve now sets her sights on absolute prestige in the theater world—and even sniffs out the greater allure of Hollywood. In her delusion, she even tries to entangle herself in pseudo-romantic schemes involving the partners of Margo and Karen (Bill, the famous director, and Lloyd, the renowned playwright), both of whom have supported her. Driven by her hunger for stardom, nothing seems to stop her from building the persona she has created for herself. Blinded by her thirst for prestige and recognition, she resorts to blackmail to land a role that was meant for Margo in one of Lloyd’s plays.

When Eve tries to draw Addison into one of her many manipulations as a serious accomplice, the ruthless critic shuts her down instantly, threatening to expose her publicly and destroy her if she refuses to submit to him. He reminds her that it was always implicitly understood that the “winning tandem” was created for the two of them to be together... (This kind of E3-E2 tandem, especially social and sexual types, has produced many prototypical gangster couples in Hollywood.)

Eventually, Margo Channing, unaware of the blackmail, decides to decline the coveted role, admitting it’s better suited to a younger actress, even Eve herself...

Once Eve’s frenzy is tamed, the critic boosts her career and secures for her the Grand Award for “Distinguished Achievement” from the Sarah Siddons Society—the ceremony with which the film begins. Eve receives her award after pompous speeches which, true to her character, present a fictional tale of personal success that has little to do with what actually happened (nothing is said or shown about artistic merit). The critic DeWitt, who narrates the event off-screen with his signature vitriol, silently mocks this age-old, hypocritical (but necessary) ceremony of consecration.

At the peak of that “authentic fraud” which is the lived reality of the social E3, Eve Harrington steps up and, without batting an eye, dedicates the award to Karen, Bill, Lloyd, Max, and Margo Channing (in other words, to those whose names and supposed closeness bring her instant prestige, but who would never have lifted a finger to help her win the award, knowing her true nature)... all while omitting Addison, the key architect behind her recognition. Margo, present at the ceremony, bids her farewell with a cutting remark: she shouldn’t worry about the void in her heart because she can always put the award in its place (a perfect metaphor for the social E3).

Eve and the “original sin.” A fabricated life.

In Eve’s first meeting with Margo in her dressing room, we can already see the hallmark traits of the social E3:

- an irresistible need for attention, captivating an audience to imprint the right image for the occasion and her goals;
- living life as a performance, a story, a movie;
- tending to fantasize and embellish her own life;
- inserting that fantasy into her behavior in a smooth and believable way, with a natural flair for verbal manipulation.

³⁶ The viewer will also notice that in the cocktail party scene, Eve and Miss Casswell are symmetrical E3 characters in the story: both are ambitious up-and-comers (one openly, the other in secret), although Marilyn is much livelier and more outspoken. This difference in expressiveness may be due to Eve being a social-self-preservation E3, while Miss Casswell seems more like a social-sexual one.

Starting with the weakest link

Through the unsuspecting Karen, Eve found a way in—just as many admirers do with their idols—reaching Margo’s dressing room, where she tells her story to those present. In every word, you can sense the pleasure she takes in the attention she’s receiving, and the invisible but constant control over her narrative (part of this character’s “coldness”), all to keep reaping recognition while subtly dosing in the standard elements of a fabricated story, so that it sounds real, and people believe it.

What more could a talkative personality hungry for recognition want? The stage provides Eve with an attentive, renowned, and discerning audience (the value of this audience multiplies because it’s made up of stars themselves—not family, friends, or some anonymous public). It also offers her the chance to subtly launch into the market an image that’s emerging from her imagination in that very moment—an image that takes shape as she gradually realizes that others are simultaneously weaving in their own minds the “authenticity” she carefully doles out to them. This social E3 also knows that not just any story will do, that she must sell the right image. Her narrative mustn’t be shrill, but built on banal yet broadly accepted elements that touch the heart of any average American. And that’s exactly what she does: she pretends to be a young war widow, with a more or less grey childhood,³⁷ somewhat of a fantasist due to her devotion to Bill, Lloyd, and Margo, and a woman who loves the theater.

Faced with her tale, the great actress weeps, and everyone is moved: the theater has generously shared its magic. Even the maid is seduced by the story, despite being the only one to show disapproval of the stranger’s presence because she senses the threat: Eve could, in a heartbeat, come between her and her mistress (as indeed, will happen).

Theater: a metaphor for vanity and the “interposed” character

Expert at positioning herself within any social stratum, the chameleon-like versatility of the social E3 is like an inner theater with multiple stages, allowing her to play whatever role suits the moment best. As Eve narrates and invents her life story, she performs, before an improvised audience, an “artistic fraud” very similar to what every actor does on stage. Eve is giving “the performance of her life”—the one that will lift her out of anonymity and open the door to her true, hidden, and overflowing ambition: the applause of the public and the magical brilliance of a great actress. These are aspirations she would never dare to confess to Margo, as they would make her look like just another sycophant, an image she knows all too well would get her discredited. If everyone accepts her, it’s because she has said and done the right things.

³⁷ Mankiewicz, from a German family settled in Pennsylvania, seems to be poking fun here at the simplicity of the American character. As happens with E3s, the average American loves to quickly identify with a clear, simple image of what should be done, what one should aspire to, and what one should feel. With the falsehoods in her story, Eve knows she’s going to stir up a kind of favorable patriotic “pity,” the kind no good American should be able to resist (she knows it, and so does the director). The brilliance of this scene lies in its theatricality: by exploiting the typical story of the young war widow that everyone already knows by heart—but that still makes them cry—an aspiring actress, not even a beginner really, manages to bring the best actress on Broadway to tears. Margo cries over a story that, at the time, was sacred in the U.S.: the fallen of the war. When the critic Addison exposes Eve, he reminds her that this lie was disgraceful because it offended the pain of many American families. The film takes place just a few years after the end of World War II, after the atomic bombs in Japan, and barely a year before another extremely bloody war for the U.S.: Korea. Eve has chosen her lie well—one that goes straight to the heart—and she will pay for it.

This scene highlights two elements of utmost importance to the social E3: the trick, the lie, the fraud, the mask (however we choose to name it), and the vehicle—whether narrative or not (fashion, tastes, vocabulary)—through which it is expressed. The E3 may win people over, but at heart, is a highly skilled self-marketeer, wrapping the product—herself—in a highly appealing first package. Margo Channing, driven by her own need for companionship (her partner is about to leave for Hollywood), makes Eve more than just her secretary; she makes her a companion.

But let's go back a moment—just before this happens: Eve hasn't entered the dressing room yet. She waits outside, wearing a shabby trench coat and a man's hat. When Margo is told she has to greet a fan who's seen her show dozens of times, she immediately recognizes her and describes her in scathing but strikingly accurate terms: "Ah! The mousy one, in a trench coat with a funny hat?" On some unconscious level, she has already x-rayed her. But despite all her years as an actress, she's tired and in love, and so she overlooks her gut instinct. What's more, Margo has just been complaining irritably about her fans: "They're not people—those little beasts that run around in packs like coyotes—[...] juvenile delinquents, mental detectives, they're nobody's audience."

Now let's shift the lens to another perspective: the admiration Eve feels for Margo. She's supposedly seen her perform "dozens" of times (some of them only in her fantasy, but still), and her admiration seems genuine... overwhelming, even. But in truth, that's not really the case. What really interests her is Margo's boyfriend, Bill, because she knows that only a good director can launch an actress's career. In fact, one of the very first things she says to Karen is: "Bill Sampson is the best." It seems Eve feels a "soft" social E3 envy toward Margo: silent, extremely well-disguised, and perhaps not even consciously acknowledged. It resembles a kind of disoriented filial love, spread across all those who hold the spotlight and applause in her world: Margo as the actress, and Bill, Lloyd, and Addison... By the time she enters the dressing room, she's read and reread their work, observed them in action... in short, she knows them inside out.

Her admiring love is distorted by her professional ambition: to her, people don't truly exist, only characters do. This disconnection from her own emotions and sense of self, often experienced externally as "coldness," is very characteristic of E3s, and particularly of the social E3: to admire what aligns with the target image or the values accepted by the environment ("what is logical and useful to value"), and quietly discard anything that obstructs the path—anything that suspiciously resembles real life.

Spiritual sloth

Eve doesn't dare openly express her ambitions. Her true (and not blameworthy) longing already seems laden with guilt. Her admiration has turned into a kind of imperceptible cannibalism: an urge to imitate the star down to the tiniest details, to replace her, to *be like* her, to *appropriate* her talent and success. Despite possessing her own obvious gifts, a deep-seated *acedia* (spiritual sloth) seems to prevent her from awakening them and living them as her own (E3 within the E6-E9-E3 triangle). Instead, she follows the rudimentary docility of the "good little girl" who imitates her role model.

She is not a nurturing woman; she seems to have completely rejected both her maternal spirit and her inner child. Her "childlike coldness" is nothing more than the transformation of life into a series of transactions for immediate benefit—rewards exchanged for effort. Her mercantilism is as cold and exact as a ledger.

The relationship of mutually convenient servitude is what best accommodates her longing: two phallic, competitive women who coexist by maintaining a strict hierarchy. But the social E3, an expert saboteur, will know precisely how to reverse the roles when the time comes. Her unshakable behavior is stealthy because, like any good E3, she's not entirely sure of her own worth deep down (if she had

high self-esteem, she wouldn't resort to low tactics). Instinctively, her strategies are careful, skillfully exploiting the weakness of the strong (to which the social E3 is highly attuned) and always entering through the back door (didn't she sneak into the dressing room uninvited?), never drawing attention for anything "wrong" or "inappropriate," in order to avoid direct confrontation.

Self-invented

Let's revisit the story Eve tells about her life; what it reveals about her, and how she tells it. On an impromptu stage, under the watchful eyes of Margo and company, she keeps spinning the tale, adding more and more as she goes. One thing is clear: the more attention she receives, the more convoluted and grandiose the story becomes. While Eve isn't yet an actress capable of navigating the emotional spectrum quite like Margo, she proves to be a skillful storyteller with a vivid imagination.

She admits this sincerely before sinking into the quicksand of fabricating her life: "I used to make believe a lot when I was a kid—acted out all sorts of things... what they were isn't important. But, somehow, acting and make-believe began to fill up my life more and more. It got so I couldn't tell the real from the unreal except that the unreal seemed more real to me..." In short, she is like Baron Munchausen. As she says this, Eve drifts into a daydream for the first time; pay attention to her face as she speaks: her gaze is only truly human in those moments when she's lost in fantasy—her expression lights up, transforms, as if she's reconnecting with her roots and grounding.

Only once it's clear she's a natural-born fabulist does the attention she's receiving push her into an inevitable impulse: she's from Wisconsin, an only child, poor farmer parents... and that part is true, but everything else is not. She invents a husband, Eddie, a radio technician she supposedly met in a theater group at the distillery where she worked. Then comes a wedding, the war, a furlough, widowhood—which she confirms while in San Francisco... where she sees a play, cashes in the insurance, and discovers Margo for the first time. She lies without needing to, because it's almost certain that if she had simply told the story of how Gertrude Slescynski ended up in Wisconsin, it would have been more astonishing—though perhaps less effective for the heart of the average American of the time. But as has been said elsewhere, Mankiewicz prefers that she agree to and invent the typical patriotic tearjerker story, as it resonates more with the audience.

Subtlety, intrigue, business, and everyday malice

Margo has already realized that there's more to Eve's eagerness than just efficiency (for instance, a dangerous and excessive interest not only in her, her wigs and costumes, but also in her boyfriend, Bill). When he returns from Hollywood, Margo throws a cocktail party, but her jealousy and mistrust ruin it before it even begins. Everyone adores Eve: so feminine and sweet, competent, polite, proper... so helpful and accommodating, always staying near Margo without a single complaint... And Margo, meanwhile, does everything "inappropriate": she smokes nonstop, raises her voice, drinks to the point of drunkenness, and lashes out in a verbal, almost physical fury.

The contrast between the two becomes almost cartoonish. Eve never loses her composure, even when insulted. Her unshakability is her armor. This is a highly characteristic trait of the E3. She seems not to feel, anesthetized to the pain being inflicted on her (just as she's unaware of the suffering of others around her).

Eve's first reaction is a *mental* effort to remember what she might have done to deserve Margo's mockery. She neither defends herself nor appears offended. It never even crosses her mind that her

hidden motives might have been discovered, and it's possible she hasn't yet fully articulated them to herself. She takes no responsibility for her own pain, for Margo's fury, or for the offense that's occurring. Her internal reaction is to pretend "as if it weren't happening" and, if anything, to search for the cause of Margo's insults within herself, not in Margo.

Because of this gap between feeling and acting, E3s tend to have great endurance in difficult situations or those requiring long-term stamina. They hold out until they reach the limit of their own "incompetence," as happens with Eve. But they can also be very impatient and develop razor-sharp tongues. Mankiewicz attributes this quality especially to the critic Addison DeWitt (a social E2), who is in fact quite close in nature to Eve herself, and perhaps for that reason, they end up as a fitting pair in the script.

The confrontation gives rise to a revealing conversation: the critic Addison (with the debutante Miss Caswell), Bill, Karen, and Eve sit on the stairs, speaking openly about the theater world and the roles they each play in it. The viewer has already been warned that Eve doesn't waste time, but there is still nothing clearly giving away her flexible morality.

In the bedroom-turned-dressing-room, she has asked Karen to convince the producer Fabian to let her be Margo's understudy in the play. After all, she already knows the whole thing by heart, she has nothing left to take care of, and the actress's affairs are perfectly in order. Between appearances by Margo—slightly drunk and humiliating Eve (and anyone else within reach)—several key traits of the social E3 can be glimpsed in Eve:

- *Seduction.* Eve has captivated Addison, who showed great interest in her from the moment he saw her. But not just him: Karen, Bill, Lloyd... She is well aware of the attention she elicits and that it's being gained at the expense of the great actress's status—the hostess whose behavior that evening leaves much to be desired. Eve doesn't need to *do* anything to seduce; hers is a passive seduction: simply being looked at and watched as she moves about, proud yet discreet, like a bee making her honey (the metaphor Mankiewicz³⁸ astutely uses to refer to women like Eve or Karen).
- *Commercialism.* Behind Eve's sweetness lies the calculated "commercial" mindset of weighing gains and losses according to her values. Words and gestures are evaluated by Eve like commodities in the marketplace of her interests, closely resembling an internal auction to decide what to bid on or what to offer in return. This is the unconscious, everyday mental backdrop of the E3. She cannot conceive of life as anything other than a transaction, barter, a *tit for tat*, a constant exchange.

Living with Margo no longer stimulates her, now that everything is in order and she has already devoted enough time to her. Meanwhile, her ambitions have solidified, and she resumes her schemes by once again using Karen (the most innocent and unprotected avenue) to help her find a new job... But now she aspires to nothing less than becoming Margo's replacement.

The critic Addison will also be used to serve her ends (she invited him to the party without him being a friend of Margo's and without her knowing). Just like the playwright Lloyd, who becomes the target of her seduction once she sees that Bill, Margo's boyfriend, rebuffs her advances. Every man at

³⁸ With great subtlety, Mankiewicz evokes a pagan creation myth (distinct from the Christian one alluded to by the name "Eve") by comparing the characters in the film to a swarm of *melissae*, or bees: diligent, organized builders of the world for the ancient Greeks, always in need of a "queen" whom they serve but never see, and of "drones" who obey. "The boys will do as they're told," Karen says to Eve at one point in the film, referring to her husband Lloyd and to Bill, Margo's boyfriend. It's a sharp and fitting image of the world of the social E3. As it's said elsewhere: "work, honey, and sting."

the cocktail party had her on his mind. And she achieved this without lifting a finger, reaping the benefits of Margo's jealousy-driven blunders. They end up defending her against Margo, praising her talent and humiliating the seasoned actress. What's more, it becomes apparent that it was Eve who compiled the guest list, and that she invited people Margo had explicitly crossed off *hers*.

In other words, Eve invited the people it was convenient for *her* to meet, brilliantly seizing the opportunity and wringing every possible advantage out of a single action (a unique gift of the social E3), which from the outside appears to be part of her "good and generous" effort to help Margo. It is, just like in the final awards-ceremony scene, a flawless self-promotion machine.

Because she "doesn't feel," she assumes others don't "feel" either, and so she acts without a trace of scruple. Eventually, she'll overestimate her strength and fulfill the pattern: she'll push her crystalline efficiency to the point of blatant incompetence—a downfall that someone else, as we'll see, will take advantage of by setting clear boundaries.

Daydreaming. A "divinized" vision of anticipated success

She herself (perhaps these are the very lines that gave rise to the script; the seed from which the film grew)³⁹ speaks, unwittingly, of her own passion and gives a rather precise definition of vanity. With sparkling eyes, as if under a spell, she says:

"So little?" "So little," did you say? Why, if there's nothing else, there's applause. I've listened backstage to people applaud. It's like... Like waves of love coming over the footlights and wrapping you up. Imagine, to know every night that different hundreds of people love you. They smile, their eyes shine, you've pleased them. They want you. You belong. Just that alone is worth anything.

She's just described the neurotic need of the social E3: applause; recognition. In other words, the seed of fame, whether it's within the family, the profession, the neighborhood, the media, the encyclopedias... anywhere, tailored to each individual's scale.

That gentle wave that rises and stirs Eve once again reveals, now with more depth, the distortion between her intense emotion at imagining success and a passion for acting that seems almost secondary. When Eve utters these words, she's on the verge of tears... and everyone watches her, captivated. Except the critic, who's evaluating her acting skills and recognizing the "fraud," which, at that point, even she is unaware of. She can cry over something as cold and abstract as imagining anonymous applause. Knowing this "fraud" gives the critic definitive power over Eve. Not only

³⁹ Mankiewicz and producer Darryl F. Zanuck wrote the script for *All About Eve* based on a short story published in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, the epitome of the American social E3 world (alongside *Vanity Fair*, *Harper's*, *Vogue*, *Condé Nast*, and *The New Yorker*). They developed it around the figure of the woman as seen in the Bible—as a being radically different from man, that is, as Eve and her legendary role in the expulsion from paradise. It doesn't seem far-fetched to attribute to the social E3, whether man or woman, that "evil" side of pragmatic Eve who gets what she wants at any cost, defying divine design. She is, in fact, a general example of what any liberated woman can be and do, and is presented as an archetype of the American woman of the first half of the 20th century seeking recognition of her worth. Hollywood, which embodies the core traits of the E3, vigorously promotes its three subtypes as varieties of the "normal" behavior of the upright, honest citizen: hardworking, compliant, and unproblematic; the kind who doesn't see the hidden side of things. For America and Hollywood, aspiring to a "dream" is the highest goal in a life conceived as a movie role. The E3 doesn't just believe they are living a script. They believe they were chosen to play a starring role in it, thanks to their abilities. It's a character that finds it difficult to redesign their life (if the opportunity even arises) outside the "ideal" or unquestionable guidelines they construct, and which they take as real and essential.

because he has uncovered her weak spot, her hidden ambition, but also because he knows that to fulfill it, she will *inevitably* have to go through him.

The social E3's storytelling (*make-believe*) tendency leads them to live inside "milkmaid fantasies" (grand imagined outcomes like in the fable *The Milkmaid and Her Pail*) and these dreams double as the marketing pitch for whatever product they're selling. The internal "story" they tell themselves about the success they're destined for often carries a tone of "divine enthronement." And that's exactly the look on Eve's face when she accepts the award at the end of the film. In fact, if we pause the film and look closely at the actual award, we see it's a statuette of a woman seated on something like a throne; like a triumphant Judith (who has just decapitated General Holofernes).

This internal feeling of self-glorification through achievement is what makes social E3s productive, industrious, and competitive beings who feel called to be unique in what they do, in a relentless "abundance of action" that fuels them to keep going.

But nothing is said about the content; about Eve's life beyond her ambition and her carbon-copying of Margo Channing. This is why, at the beginning of a therapeutic process, the social Three often experiences intense anxiety at the mere idea of stopping activity, of ceasing to do, or of doing something by letting themselves be guided by someone or something unknown or unimaginable. Especially activities that don't involve recognition (monetary or otherwise): creating, meditating, helping others selflessly, loving, or making a personal art outside of convention. For now, Eve has done what so many Americans do when traveling or listing things to see in the world: "Done it!" She carries a notebook, and life consists of checking off what she's done, presumably to end up with the notebook full of the most checkmarks.

We can clearly see in Eve's behavior the two meanings of *prestige*: fame, and the illusion, deception, fraud, or *sleight of hand* she uses to achieve and maintain it.

"I'm doing it for you"

The conversation between Eve Harrington and Bill Sampson in what seems like a "transition" scene reveals the deep psychological insight Mankiewicz had into the social E3 female, a figure who fascinated him and whom he saw as the new prototype of the American woman: a fighter undeterred by anyone or anything.

Eve has just performed her first full show of *Aged in Wood* as Margo's understudy, revealing her great potential as an actress. Bill, the director—who had quarreled with his girlfriend, Margo, and didn't accompany her on the weekend getaway to the countryside—congratulates Eve in her dressing room. But Eve is not satisfied.

The scene clearly reveals the existential confusion of the E3. Symbolically, it takes place in the same dressing room where, at the beginning of the film, Bill had told her in a few blunt words what it meant to be an actress:

BILL: "[...] You were better than alright. You rang a bell. Little things here and there, but it doesn't matter. Be proud of yourself. You've got a right to be."

EVE: "Are you proud of me, Bill?"

BILL: "I admit I was worried when Max called. I had my doubts."

EVE: "You shouldn't have had any doubts."

BILL: "After all, the other day [when Eve auditioned as Margo's stand-in] was one scene. The woods are full of one-scene sensations. But you did it. With work and patience, you'll be a good actress. If that's what you wanna be."

EVE: "Is that what you want me to be?"

BILL: "I'm talking about you and what you want."

EVE: "So am I."

BILL: "What have I got to do with it?"

EVE: "Everything."

BILL: "The names I've been called, but never Svengali.⁴⁰ Good luck."

EVE: "Don't run away, Bill."

BILL: "From what would I be running?"

EVE: "You're always after truth on the stage. What about off?"

BILL: "I'm for it."

EVE: "Then face it. I have. Ever since that first night in here, in the dressing room."

BILL: "I told you what every actress should know."

EVE: "You told me that whatever I became, it would be because of you..."

BILL: "Make-up's a little heavy."

EVE: "And for you."

BILL: "You're quite a girl."

EVE: "You think?"

BILL: "I'm in love with Margo. Hadn't you heard?"

EVE: "You hear all kinds of things."

BILL: "I'm only human, rumors to the contrary, and I'm as curious as the next man."

EVE: "Find out."

BILL: "Only thing: what I go after I want to go after. I don't want it to come after me."

[Tears well up in Eve's eyes.]

BILL: "Don't cry. Just score it as an incomplete forward pass."

Eve finally reveals that her goal is Bill. The blend of ambition, manipulation, and a talent for fabrication, where personal convictions are mistaken for reality, accompanies every social E3 until they encounter firm boundaries. For Eve, Bill is the first to set those boundaries, once he realizes she's capable of anything, although he still doesn't fully grasp her aim, unsure whether Eve's passion for the theater is genuine.

After her suggestive hint that something unspoken has existed between them, Bill responds that she's letting her imagination run wild: invention, trickery, or *make-up* (terms that in English all converge in the same word) have distorted reality so thoroughly that they shatter the discreet, silent, sweet image of Eve, exposing her spider-like strategy of invisible threads. This is the first outburst of anger, frustration, and resentment we see from her (the second will be the final and conclusive moment of her unmasking). But perhaps what's most characteristic of the social E3 trait is not so much this perverse identification with others, but rather the total assumption that her own constructs *are* reality, to the point of warping and inventing it to the edge of delusion—stemming from her difficulty in connecting with herself or with real conflicts beyond her fantasies about life.

Yet neither identification nor imitation (what is commonly called the “chameleonism” of the social E3), nor instinctive fabulation, fully defines this aspect of the subtype. In this scene, we see her need to “identify” with someone who possesses something *she* values, and her “imitation” of the other (a few minutes later she admits that her performance is that of Margo’s, and that she’s merely “a

⁴⁰ Svengali is the name of the fictional hypnotist in George du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*. The story caused a sensation in its day and created the stereotype of the manipulative hypnotist, which has persisted ever since. The word “svengali” entered the language to refer to a person who seeks to manipulate someone else with malicious intent. It is very often used to describe acting coaches who exert an excessive influence over their protégés, especially when the protégé is a woman (as is the case here), or, regardless of gender, when they come to believe they can only perform in the presence of their coach.

carbon copy"). But there is something even more revealing of the social E3 in this scene. Eve (she doesn't even know why she's doing it!) offers herself to Bill, in a sudden emotional convergence, also submitted to her ultimate goals ("my life is your life"): "Is that what you want me to be? [an actress]." It seems she cannot exist on her own; that when she looks inward, she finds only a soulless mechanism for "being like," but not for simply *being*. In other words, she needs someone else to look at her in order to exist (hence the reference to the hypnotist Svengali).

Eve's declaration stuns and confuses Bill, who replies, "I'm talking about you and what *you* want." He realizes that behind this "stage animal" there isn't even a genuine artistic pursuit, or a longing for fame, wealth, or success, but rather a need to be recognized and approved of by an audience. An audience that could just as easily be him, a partner, or a group of friends. It's a need that reaches far back, possibly to early childhood family dynamics and her relationship with her father. There appears to be in her an overwhelming need to *be*, but one that's framed as a task or performance, not as a spontaneous fact of life—a need that was tragically and prematurely distorted. And the "fall" might be best represented as the abrupt awakening of someone who has been hypnotized, or a sleepwalker, because she is "as if she weren't there"—not truly feeling what she says or does; like a shadow of herself, or like an actor simulating a life on a stage made of plastic and stripped of pain from a very early age.

It's not far-fetched to connect the neurotic drive to *do* and *accomplish* without *feeling* (as in a person under hypnosis) to the life of bees, whose similarity to certain human character types, and particularly to the social E3, was already noted in the previous scene. Taking it even further, one could speak of a perception of the body and life akin to that of a robot (from the Russian *robotat*, "to work"), very much like the movement of someone hypnotized. In both instances, the body is seen as little more than a machine—or rather, a device obedient to a gaze or to a command.

Constantly interpreting the external gaze in order to win approval, for which the E3 "is," and for which they "shape" the image of themselves, is one of their key neurotic mechanisms (each subtype in its own way). This scene lays bare just how deeply the social E3 doesn't so much need to seduce as to be liked, to please: that is their invisible and unhealthy craving.

"I'm nobody," says Eve. "I'm somebody," replies Addison DeWitt. Bill has already left, unsettled by Eve's attempt to link herself to him. In an instant, and after a brief moment of rage, Eve "descends" one rung in the theater hierarchy and goes from pursuing a director to letting herself be courted by a critic, the cunning Addison DeWitt, who overhears Eve say, while showering in her dressing room: "I'm less than nobody."

As a social E3, Eve cannot conceive of "being" unless it is by "being someone." That is, existence means more than merely living: it means fame (what is said about you), recognition (the approving gaze), and prestige (fame maintained by mechanisms already detached from the person enjoying it). This existence, of course, is as fleeting as the image reflected in a mirror—except that, alas, cinema *immortalizes* it.

DeWitt is willing to make her "someone" because he likes her, is fascinated by her skill and poise and, above all, he believes they share a common passion for the theater (he lives only for it). However, the sly old fox ensures, before penning his column, that she falls into his trap. With seemingly innocent questions about false details she's given about her biography, he gets her to confirm what he'll later use to control her: that her life story is pure fiction and that the "unusual" performance she gave in Margo's place had been carefully orchestrated.

It would be interesting to try to put into words what Eve feels when she tries to tear off the wig from the performance, full of icy fury, just before DeWitt enters the dressing room. In the dizzying momentum of action to action, purpose to purpose, any social E3—even one not as pathological as Eve—would have a hard time, if they catch even a glimpse of the possibility, to articulate what they

feel, what they want, what their life is, as well as to take responsibility for their circumstances, instead of attributing it to external adversities or the faults of others.

Especially difficult is the “vomit” of rage that arises from unexpected frustration, since it’s improper to show it. The social E3 tends to concentrate poison in high doses, whether in ill intent (the short, sharp lash of a whip of brief, precise, but wounding fury), in words (biting sarcasm), in mechanical reactions (small giggles or whispered comments), in crocodile tears (quick tears with no substance behind them), or in a vacant, hollow gaze that continues to “look” as if nothing is wrong even though the mind is a thousand miles away (Eve wears this look in the moments when she reveals her passion). Some psychotherapists, when speaking of the E3, refer to “doll’s eyes” or “statue eyes” that look without truly seeing; empty, perhaps a cinematic trick to turn stars into immortal beings devoid of human life.

Unmasking and humiliation

After a web of lies and intrigues that eventually gets resolved without any bloodshed, Eve lands the starring role of *Cora* in Lloyd’s new play. On the eve of the premiere, she attempts one final *imbroglio*, in two acts: she manipulates Lloyd to make it seem like they’re having an affair, and she tries to deceive Addison, who’s been subtly courting her from the moment they met.

Addison had assumed his help came with an unspoken agreement that they’d be joined professionally or romantically. When he realizes that Eve not only plans to marry someone else, but has used him to gain fame and now tries to frame him as the architect of her manipulations, he unmasks her without a second thought.

Due to his reputation for cynicism and a sharp tongue, Eve thinks Addison has many enemies and will be easy to get rid of. Social E3s not only detect others’ weaknesses with great precision, but pride themselves on a kind of “angelic” innocence and are masters at shifting blame. But Addison is already well-acquainted with her tactics. He sees through her strategy and lists all the lies with which she wormed her way into the theater world, threatening to expose them if she proceeds with her blackmail attempt.

Eve is not the young, war-widowed, simple and dignified girl no one would deny help to, one America’s patriotic heart feels proud and grateful for. Her real name is Gertrude⁴¹ Slescynski, and she is the daughter of second-generation German or Polish⁴² immigrants. Her parents, indeed poor (on that she didn’t lie), are still alive and waiting for her since she vanished three years ago without a trace. At the distillery where she worked, she was paid five hundred dollars to disappear after the owner was investigated by a detective hired by his wife. She’s never been to the Schubert Theatre in San Francisco for a Margo premiere because the Schubert is in New York, where she ended up with her severance money and where she happened upon Margo... All petty lies made up that day in the dressing room when she suddenly saw she could catch Margo’s attention and finally escape that “vital anonymity” which the social E3 secretly and profoundly loathes, as it contradicts their craving for visibility and prestige.

In a forceful scene that highlights his power over her, Addison brings her under his control, which ends with her throwing herself onto the bed, staring at the camera, visibly flustered, in a striking shot that reveals how the exposure of her origins makes her writhe like a snake. It’s the spectacle of a social E3 confronting the reality of their lies, or, rather, confronting the need to accept

⁴¹ Nothing got past Mankiewicz, and Gertrude is the name of Hamlet’s mother, who feigns sensitivity to mask her atrocities.

⁴² Joseph Mankiewicz himself, born in Pennsylvania, was the son of German-Jewish immigrants, although the surname Mankiewicz is undeniably of Polish origin.

their origins, which a social E3 is rarely at peace with and tends to hide, if not outright distort, with their overflowing imagination and talent for presenting an upgraded or conveniently adapted version of themselves to the “buyers” of their image, whose offers they know how to drive up through careful manipulation.

By portraying Eve as an immigrant like himself, Mankiewicz seems to suggest with irony that any European can deceive an American,⁴³ whose past and worldview tend to be simpler. America is the land of opportunity, and one of its mottos is: “Don’t stop until you succeed.” In other words: “By their achievements you shall know them” (the social E3’s credo).

And in our mercantile age, success is best measured in money. That’s why the social E3 is often associated with greed, a thirst for material gain. It’s perhaps the crudest way to acquire prestige, although Eve doesn’t actively or explicitly pursue it. In the America of that time, Eve already represents the prototype of the woman who wins and gets what she wants. Mankiewicz clearly wants to unmask her before the whole nation. Despite its subtlety, the film doesn’t escape a somewhat sexist view of the “ideal” woman, associating the E3 with a feminine image of an Eve who is proper, innocent, resourceful, discreet, and enigmatic—a tempting Eve and, to some extent, a dangerous one, who, in the end, reflects an entire society.

Power and contempt: social E3 and social E2

The violence of the unmasking scene seems to fill the void left in Eve’s life by the absence of love, sex, or feeling. Like a sleepwalker, a robot, or a woman hypnotized by her own image, Eve appears to begin a slow awakening after the slap DeWitt gives her.

In that scene, sex is in the air, even if it’s not explicit. For Eve, sex is surely just another currency, perfectly natural in her transactional view of things. She likely gives sex when what’s being asked for is love, and she confuses the two (a confusion typical of the E3). And perhaps Addison is waiting for a better moment to consummate a difficult but professionally fascinating relationship. In any case, it’s clear that they share something. The slap, and her subsequent crying on the bed, somehow carry the force of a rough sexual act, of a virginity finally taken.

Of course, since Eve is now going to succeed thanks to Addison, Addison wants her, yes—but in order to enter Hollywood with her, where she will head without a moment’s hesitation... That, at least, is what a social E3 would immediately think.

What are the similarities and differences between a social E3 and a social E2, two subtypes that often seem very similar and are hard to tell apart? This artistic creation brilliantly contains some clues. A viewer might simply say they’re the same, except one’s a man and the other, a woman. But the energy is very different, and not just for that reason.

Addison DeWitt might be mistaken for an E8, if it weren’t for his refined *dandy* presence (he seems like a parody of Oscar Wilde in the 20th century), and his reluctance to engage in confrontations that don’t take place in a newspaper column. His passion for theatrics and ambition-conquest also point more clearly to E2.

At the door of his hotel suite, seeing that Eve is capable of taking a nap two hours before the premiere, Addison tells her: “The mark of a true killer,” referring to the cold blood it takes to sleep before such a big event. She looks at him, bewildered, not understanding the theatrical wink: “Why

⁴³ Let’s remember that, at the time, Hollywood was an industry run by immigrants or the children of European immigrants. J. L. Mankiewicz’s brother, Herman—a famous screenwriter who arrived in California before him (*Citizen Kane*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, Marx Brothers films...)—immediately saw the opportunities offered by California in those days and sent this telegram to his friend, the journalist Ben Hecht in New York: “Millions are to be grabbed out here and your only competition is idiots. Don’t let this get around.”

did you call me a killer?” He quickly replies: “Did I say killer? I meant champion. I get my boxing terms mixed.”

The confusion is Eve’s, and it reveals a big difference between them. Eve spins webs like few others, but physical violence is another matter, as is her relationship with her own body. Brilliantly, it’s at this very moment that the critic reminds her of a few physical flaws (to which a social E3 is far more sensitive than a social E2). Eve goes to open the door and demands he leave the room after the slap, but he, admiring her dramatic instinct, comments: “You’re too short for that gesture.” Then she lunges for the phone, and he gravely reminds her: “That instinct is worth millions. You can’t buy it, Eve. Cherish it. When that alarm goes off, go to your battle stations.” He knows that if they fought, it would spell the end for both of them, because the wounds they can inflict are hard to heal.

As mentioned before, it’s not uncommon to find social E3s in the roles of sophisticated gangsters and killers (E2s as well, though they’re usually more forceful, or they’re the extravagant *dandies* who take greater risks); evil aristocrats or suave thieves who adore and understand the objects they’re about to steal (perhaps more than their owners) as if those things already belonged to them; people who enjoy life and lie more than they speak; croupiers; spies; vain artists; famous writers with pompous voices; fashion designers and couturiers, experts in poisons... Actors and actresses, theater and film directors... Or business and finance types, where they can be even “tougher,” colder, and more ruthless.⁴⁴

Only someone like Addison, who was born for and lives entirely within the theater, is capable of seeing through Eve, and at the same time (or so it seems) of loving her. Because he sees in her the seductive force of immense and untamed qualities, which she naturally brings to the cultivation of her future as an actress. Let’s look at the dialogue following the unmasking:

EVE: “I had to get in, to meet Margo. I had to say something, be somebody. Make her like me!” [...]

ADDISON: “That I should want you at all suddenly strikes me as the height of improbability. But that in itself is probably the reason. You’re an improbable person, Eve, and so am I. We have that in common. Also a contempt for humanity, an inability to love and be loved. Insatiable ambition and talent. We deserve each other.”

Eve cries, overcome by the shame of being “seen” and exposed, of being at someone’s mercy, of losing all freedom of action, and refuses to perform that evening. Her pride is shattered, but it will be quickly restored by the dose of recognition the audience gives her. Because, of course, she performs and triumphs, earning the award she’s about to receive for her role in a play in which, for different reasons, everyone has a stake. The theater itself needs her to succeed. The play was written by Lloyd, Karen’s husband; it’s directed by Bill, Margo’s boyfriend; produced by Max Fabian; and reviewed by Addison DeWitt. There’s no choice: the theater industry and Hollywood need the cherry on top to be this striking: a young, overwhelming actress. In this case, the model is a social E3, because in America, ambition and female independence are paramount, and myths must grow ever more exaggerated.

The Award Ceremony

⁴⁴ Audrey Hepburn (*Breakfast at Tiffany’s*), Tippi Hedren (*Marnie*), Catherine Deneuve (*Belle de Jour*—perhaps a sexual E3), Meryl Streep (*The Devil Wears Prada*)... just to name a few examples.

The ceremony is narrated by the critic Addison DeWitt. Mankiewicz thus grants him a certain narrative authority, subtly identifying with his reflections and point of view on theater and actors—immunized as he is against the vanities of the profession by virtue of being a critic.⁴⁵

Finally, Eve takes the award in her hands, and a warm wave of “love” washes over her. We see her features light up, stiffened in a kind of dreamlike “deification,” as her gaze blurs and her eyes seem to turn into the hollow glass sockets of a doll. When she begins to speak, she achieves, with astonishing ease:

- Self-promotion through “humility.” Claiming she’s nobody to be standing there, that her early success is undeserved, that she has achieved this with little effort or training... She manages to turn it all into merit precisely by presenting it as “anomalous” or exceptional.
- Self-promotion by appropriating the merit of others. Every thank-you to those who helped her (and now despise her) doesn’t diminish her effort or debut, but instead adds to her credit, precisely because of the stature of those she names. On top of that, it serves to reinforce her image as a good, hardworking, grateful woman. The image of the social E3 is a great *stock exchange* where absolutely everything is leveraged, whether it belongs to them or not.
- The credo of the *ego-go*, which never stops. Eve says of herself (and the American audience, in the background, applauds) this truly revealing gem of the social E3 character: “I regard this honor not so much as an award for what I have achieved but as a standard to hold against what I have yet to accomplish...”
- The shift in tone. Since the scene in which she’s unmasked, Eve has become harsher and more bitter. Paradoxically, she’s now famous and beginning what promises to be a triumphant career. But DeWitt’s metaphorical slap has touched something, as if it jolted her out of a dream, though she can’t yet see a different world. She—still unaware—begins the sad, “Hollywood-style” path (though typical of any social E3) of *biphasic life*, or in other words, the imbalance between the external and the internal: what she lives with the most attention increasingly resembles a cardboard cutout shadow play, while what she truly feels—her inner world—is dismissed as a tasteless illusion. This path led many Hollywood personalities to alcohol or barbiturates. Though without reaching such extremes, it’s true that the crisis of the social E3 often manifests as a death equivalent to “being nothing” (the opposite of “being someone”), which can lead to serious anxiety.
- The hunger for notoriety. Eve’s is insatiable: at the end of the ceremony, the producer throws a big party in her honor. She, staying within her character’s cliché, refuses to go, and Addison reminds her it’s for honor. She doesn’t care: if she doesn’t go, she’ll generate even more of a buzz because now her absence garners more attention than her presence. She’s already starting to become a star, and she knows it. Minutes later, she forgets the bulky award in the taxi: what’s been obtained is easily discarded and discredited by the social E3 (a *sui generis* way of ensuring no one else benefits from it or can capitalize on it after she’s received it). It’s just one more step, like any other, on an endless staircase.

⁴⁵ In various documentaries about the filming, actors and friends of Mankiewicz laugh when they realize that DeWitt’s sharp remarks were the same ones the director made in his everyday life. There’s a certain kind of thing the social E3 thinks and writes with complete freedom and wit, but doesn’t dare—or doesn’t care—to express publicly, something the social E2 has no qualms about doing.

A new Eve emerges

As Eve settles into her apartment at dusk, with her trunks open—she’s heading to Hollywood—the myth is reborn. Another young woman begs her for the chance to work by her side. And when the star retreats to rest, this new girl answers the door and then drapes Eve’s immaculate white cape over her shoulders.

Holding the award in her hands, multiplied by an infinite prism of mirrors in the actress’s dressing screen, she bows before her own image reflected *ad infinitum*, practicing the self-deification rite of the social E3, through which the actress is consecrated as the human being disappears. Ironically, Mankiewicz names the new aspirant *Phoebe*, one of the Titans or demigods, associated with Selene, the Moon, and in charge of the Oracle at Delphi. (From the biblical Eve, we move into Greek polytheism.)

The labyrinth of mirrors and the infinite reflection of the image are a vivid metaphor for the E3: everything seen of them is on screens, in the world’s countless mirrors, and in the minds of others; but at the center, in the person themselves, the being who gave rise to those images can no longer be found or distinguished from them.

Mankiewicz, with cinematic brilliance, portrays the attributes of the social E3—the self-inflation and artificial self-illumination, the prize demanded by ambition—through the metaphor of reflections and glimmers, infinite projections, mirrors, and shimmering light. That is, through the tools of theater and cinema (arts of image and representation), which function like the background of Plato’s cave:⁴⁶ the individual does not feel or see themselves; they are lost in a maze of *lifeless* and *flat* shadows that parade as glimpses of “being,” projected on a *cold* wall, but mistaken for reality and selfhood. What the social E3 experiences pathologically through all this shine is that wall, that flat, lifeless screen full of extraordinary moving images (*motion pictures*). And the need to promote this flattened, curated image of oneself (distorted and disfigured beyond recognition) enters into that “motion” which they believe to be life.

The viewer can also clearly see that the new aspirant is already beginning to covet the Oscar, and that she too will come to resemble the statuette she holds: that queen on her throne, symbolizing the perfect identification of the social E3 with their need, their aspiration, and their achievement.

XI. Jokes and vignettes

“I couldn’t care less that you have a yacht in Acapulco or a mansion in Cancun. All that matters is that we’re friends. By the way, what’s your name?”

When a social E3 politician says “yes,” what they mean is “maybe.” When they say “maybe,” what they mean is “no.” If they say “no,” then they’re not a politician (or not a social E3).

⁴⁶ For many reasons, but also because of the confusion that theater can create in citizens, Plato banned playwrights from living in the ideal city (the Republic).

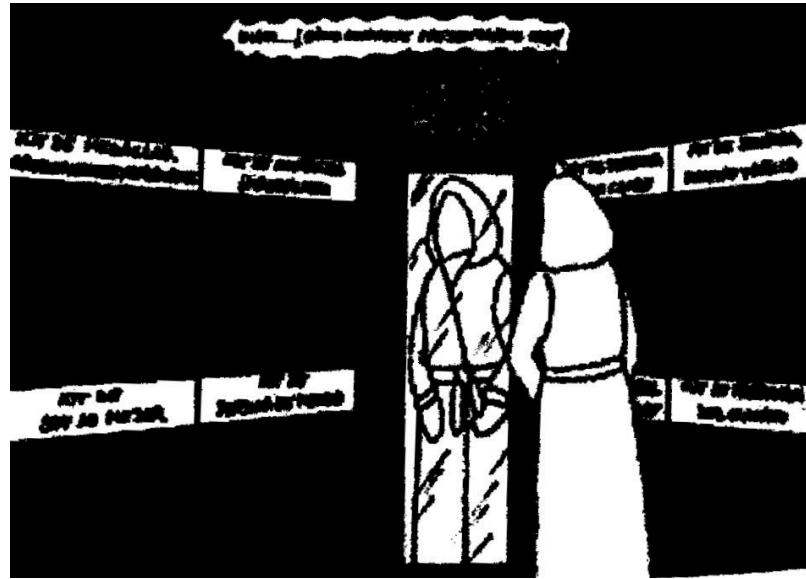


Mark Twohy, 2003

Someone goes to buy a fur coat. As they try it on, the saleswoman says it fits. "Yes," they respond "it's really nice, but it's out of my budget."



Unknown Author



Ana Iribas Rudin, 2007

XII. Transformation process and therapeutic recommendations

What has helped us, the contributors to this chapter, in the journey toward self-discovery and alleviating some of the burdens of our neurosis, are a series of experiences that we believe can be beneficial for individuals like us.

The process of growth entails examining the ideal that the social E3 has constructed for themselves, and with which they identify. This ideal self is omnipotent, childlike, narcissistic, and unattainable, yet the social E3 believes they have to embody it. This pursuit becomes a primary source of their neurosis, as it clashes with a simple truth they have to accept: no one can be perfect.

The social E3 individual has great difficulty facing fear. When it does arise, they counter it with the control that empowers them from the intellect, denying and defending themselves against it. The recommendation, therefore, is to let go and feel, welcome the spontaneous and uncontrolled; daring to dissent and be more assertive, standing firm without yielding to the pressure of accommodating others or the need to look good.

It's healthy for them to practice moments of silence, allowing themselves to experience it and share it. In silence, there's sobriety, and the urge to constantly *do* doesn't exist. Through this silent connection, the social E3 gets closer to self-acceptance, to a genuine understanding of what truly matters—feeling at ease, without giving in to control, without interference. It's like coming home, since such an encounter enables them to experience the process rather than just identifying with the finished product that is presented to others. In fact, it is important for the social E3 to first be centered on themselves before trying to authentically live with others; a certain selfishness is crucial for them to avoid compulsively losing themselves in social interactions.

When faced with the challenge of connecting with others without having to make the effort to adapt, internal discomfort may arise, as a result of this self-contact. It's an exercise to learn to prioritize one's own needs, breaking free from being guided solely by the reactions of others.

It's also good for the social E3 to take a break, not *do*, and try to be inefficient, as well as reveal personal mistakes without disguising them, becoming aware of the discomfort and vulnerability that such self-exposure generates.

Working with social E3 patients already as therapists brings us back to how other therapists described initially working with us. It's important for the patient to feel accompanied in their path towards authenticity, but without being given a concrete direction to follow. The key is in establishing a connection with the here and now.

Within the therapeutic relationship, there is either genuine contact, or there is nothing. It's in the absence of this real contact with things that automatic responses surface. The social E3 is confluent, they adapt to the environment. To evolve, they have to disengage themselves from external demands, and in order to reclaim their true selves, start identifying with themselves.

In therapy's early stages, confronting the social E3 patient triggers a cascade of resistances and defense mechanisms. Anger, sadness, and pain are contacted only after extended hours of exploration in that direction. It's often easier for the patient to access their emotions through anger, which gradually transforms into pain and grief, finally experienced without self-deception.

Embracing the spontaneity that sudden emotional experiences bring can be therapeutic. Tears, sadness, and pain may surface when least expected, providing solace through a connection with the genuine and authentic. Thus, the healing of shame, vulnerability, and defenselessness comes from simply being present, doing nothing. As St. Teresa puts it, "no more can be done."

Creative endeavors, amusements, and theater are highly beneficial to the social E3, allowing them to recognize their theatricality. They can work on their tendency to always portray a positive image by trying to laugh at themselves, fooling around, and occasionally losing face in public. When they connect with their needs, this vulnerability transforms into a creative and positive outlet, undertaken with genuine joy and enthusiasm. Ana highlights how creative work in the visual arts helps her establish a relationship with herself and, at the same time, let go of her need for control:

Watercolor takes on a life of its own, and water introduces surprises. I can't control it the way I can dry techniques. I'm simply a passive witness of what unfolds (I let myself be carried along). I make some movements, but without really changing the course of events. It's more of a co-creation with the medium itself than an ego-driven imposition by the author on the subject matter.

It's crucial for her to maintain the attitude of an amateur, who paints solely for herself, and not a professional, since that would mean creating for an audience, for the scrutiny of others.

Bodywork also proves beneficial as it releases blocked energy and helps break free from habitual emotional containment. It's important not to substitute it with competitive sports, however, as this could once again engage the social E3 in their eagerness to be first.

Meditation, especially the non-doing part, allows the individual to connect with emptiness, and through sustained presence in this state, learn to inhabit that space. Due to their difficulty in staying still, movement meditation can be simpler, at least initially (it offers the feeling of doing something, which can be reassuring).

While the social E3 has a good capacity to work in a group, negotiate, and coordinate tasks, they often assume the role of a leader. Taking another position within the group, one of a cooperator or an equal not seeking the spotlight, working collectively without sacrificing authenticity, could teach them valuable lessons.

Regarding love, Yolanda writes:

To offer... I'm not sure what I want to offer my partner, but I think it's about giving them respite, tolerance, intimacy from my side with fewer words, and waiting to see where this takes us. My fears include the fear of silencing myself and my heart, and of losing contact with my tenderness and love for them. I want to trust that this is a natural flow and wait for whatever comes next.

Healthy aspects and beneficial tasks for a social E3:

- getting tired of and discarding the mask;
- making contact with emptiness, with the shadow;
- confronting fear;
- doing bodywork and getting in touch with anger (both personal and that of others);
- trying to live in chaos and embrace a lack of physical control;
- having someone confront them about their falsehoods;
- observing and enduring unpleasant emotions, instead of acting on them;
- cultivating and appreciating the inner observer;
- understanding the impact of their behavior on others' emotions;
- identifying crazy ideas (irrational beliefs). For example: "I am what I do";
- reformulating them into healthy ones. For example: "I am what I am";
- distinguishing between what they are and what they do;
- developing a strong internal frame of reference;
- connecting with personal needs;
- fostering emotional autonomy;
- establishing permeable boundaries between internal and external worlds, as well as between activities and emotions;
- learning to value their inner world;
- achieving balance, slowing down the obsessive doing;
- learning to validate themselves for who they are, not for what they do;
- healing from childhood wounds related to not being loved just for who they are;
- confronting negative emotions, the shadow, in the form of anger and aggressiveness;
- facing frustration and failure;
- making contact with pain;
- connecting with healing truth and authenticity;
- stopping, pausing, meditating;
- embracing emptiness;
- cultivating anti-mimicry, avoiding blindly copying external models;
- building a stable identity reference;
- getting in touch with sadness: "What are your eyes saying?"
- learning to manage aggressiveness, "being bad";
- publicly acknowledging their mistakes;
- connecting with the love that links us to our essence.

Therapeutic suggestions for working with a social E3:

- The patient benefits when the therapist behaves in an authentic and genuine way.
- As a therapist, you should be careful not to turn therapy into a project of just getting results, but use it to help the patient become comfortable with being themselves.
- Pointing out inconsistencies in the patient's communication can be very therapeutic in the long run.

- The patient needs to be told, “Don’t just do something; *stand* there.”
- Confront the patient when necessary.
- Embrace the therapeutic strategy of befriending the patient’s dark side.
- Prioritize experiential learning and reduce the “mental stuff.”
- Incorporate a body-centered approach.

SOCIAL E3: BIOGRAPHY

by Gloria Casanovas

I was born in Buenos Aires, the eldest of three sisters. I’m now forty-six years old and living in Italy.

My earliest memories

I’m four or five years old, playing alone. I sense my parents nearby, watching me, and saying something like: “She’s so cute, so lovable.” I pretend not to hear their comment and play up the act, exaggerating the gestures and behaviors I think look “lovable” to get a bit more of what I want and now am certain is coming my way: love, paired with admiration. The more I act it out, the more I feel it, and the more I believe I’m adorable; a kind of inner intoxication fills me.

A few years later. We’re standing at the door of my wealthy uncle and aunt’s house. Mom pinches my sister’s and my cheeks so we’ll look more “rosy”—it hurts—and says, “Make me look good in front of them.” I know exactly what I have to do: be friendly and cheerful, well-behaved but just a little rebellious. I know I have to help Mom prove that living in the suburbs (we can’t live in the city center; it’s too expensive) isn’t that bad. In fact, we have a garden and a pool that our rich cousins don’t have. We think of ourselves as freer and happier, even if we’ve lost the economic status they still enjoy.

Every time we leave my uncle’s house, Mom tells me: “You did great.” And I know exactly what she means: that I played the part well, that I conveyed what I needed to, and that she’s genuinely proud of me for it. I feel proud too, a bit like a heroine. “I can do exactly what’s needed to make everything go right. I made my mother happy!”

This happens during family visits, at parties, and at the club, while at home I feel invisible. Dad is lost in his worries and alcohol; Mom, with her head in the clouds, is staring out the window or reading while she cooks. I call out to them, and they don’t answer.

In the afternoons, I play a game where I pretend I actually am invisible. I walk around and do strange things in the house to see if anyone notices me. Nobody does. They only do if someone else is around, or at least that’s the impression I get. In those moments, suddenly, I matter. I feel like an object that can enhance, decorate, or ruin the image my parents want to present. That’s when they see me, expect things from me, and reproach me if I don’t fulfill my role. I almost always do. It’s an unspoken pact: I know that with the spinster aunt I have to be the good and studious girl; with my friends from the club, sporty and outgoing; strong or pretty... depending on the occasion.

I grow up in a home where being my true self never seems right. If I cry when I'm sad, take what I want, or say what I think, it's always out of place.

I don't feel supported by my parents. I feel that what they really don't know how to handle is pain. They become anxious when I suffer, and I don't feel held. My mother's arms tremble when she lifts me and I'm crying. I understand that it's better to hide what I feel because when she gets scared, I get even more scared. Putting on a brave face, showing happiness, saying "I'm fine" calms them down, and calms me down as well.

"You're my son," Dad says with pride when he sees me unafraid. "Yes, I'll be whatever you want: a boy, brave, victorious, if that makes you happy and lets me hear that everything's okay, that there's no danger."

There was another game I played with others, though they didn't know it was a game: I was an alien. I had ended up in that house partly by mistake, partly to learn what these people were like. I had a shelf in my closet with several little jars. Some were empty, which to me were filled with air from my planet, and others with water and sugar, the food of my homeland. I would remember to play this game at various times throughout the day, whenever the emotional atmosphere became unbearable.

I remember one particular day. We're having lunch with my parents, sisters, and grandmothers. They argue without raising their voices, but with sharp words. When silence falls, the air is thick enough to cut with a knife. I feel awful. I start to "play." I look at them like they're strange creatures. I get up with an excuse and go to my room. As I walk to the closet, I pretend I'm about to faint. I open the air jar and smell it, then the water one and drink from it. I recover: "Good thing I have my supplies." I return to the table feeling renewed. Playing something other than what's really happening gives me relief.

I remember being spontaneous around others only when my emotions overflowed. At night, I would cough and cough, a kind of convulsive cough that no one could explain. I think it was the anxiety of feeling alone, of feeling that I didn't truly matter to anyone; what mattered was what I could make people believe, what I could represent. I had to make them believe good things.

When I was twelve, we played a "game" with friends and a catechist: we would tell each other, one by one, what we didn't like about the other. It was called "cleansing." I was sure: "No one's going to say anything bad about me." When my turn came, the barrage of criticism overwhelmed me. I couldn't believe it. I clearly felt two possible responses: I could cry, or I could feign indifference. I looked at everyone; I had to say something. It was an emotionally intense moment I remember perfectly. I heard myself say: "I don't care about anything you just said." I felt tough, strong, pushed to the outer edge of my body like I was wearing a metal shell. Internally, it felt like there was a trembling white larva deep in my gut. I decided that this larva didn't exist. I withdrew my awareness from there and settled into my mind, my skin, and my muscles.

Something in me said this was the perfect solution: deny anything unpleasant and invent something better in its place. Make myself and everyone else believe it. And it worked. I didn't feel pain, just a new, almost exhilarating strength.

Sometimes, when I was bored and alone, I would play "advertising." I'd turn whatever I was doing into a commercial. For example, while removing makeup at night in front of the mirror, dabbing cream around my eyes with a cotton pad, I'd think, as if in a voiceover: "With x cream, your skin will feel like silk..." Or while eating an ice cream: "Made with only the finest ingredients..." while my eyes "focused" on the ice cream like a camera would.

Another game was imagining I was being filmed while doing anything: I was the star of a movie. Again, there was a voiceover describing my actions: "...and she got on the train, gazing wistfully out the window..." and I would actually gaze wistfully. At the time, I never questioned why I did it; it just seemed normal. I think whenever I started to feel something vague and painful, something I was

afraid of, this way of narrating the scene from an outside perspective distanced and soothed me. And it also entertained me.

I spent years hiding what I felt: no fear, no pain, no insecurity, no confusion. I tried to project only decisiveness, strength, enthusiasm, and success. Everything up, into the head, and my diaphragm would tighten, glued to my ribs. Fear would turn into anger, and anger into control.

For years I belonged to different groups, and in each one I would play a different role, the most accepted one. Bohemian and rebellious with my art school friends, refined and aristocratic in my parents' world, intellectual and a bit tortured with the gestalt group, and superficial and materialistic with my office colleagues.

I remember being unable to host gatherings where people from different groups might mix because I didn't know how to behave. These were completely separate spaces, with no possible communication between them, where I felt comfortable and safe in each one, as long as they didn't overlap. To me, this felt perfectly natural, not the least bit questionable.

With boyfriends and close friends, I was possessive and created a kind of alliance. With men, who were always apparently weaker than me, the matter of eye contact became vitally important: "You must not give it to any other woman." And if by chance he glanced at someone else in the club or the cinema, I could cause a scene, not really knowing why. I was just that desperate. The gaze was synonymous with love: I couldn't afford to lose it.

I always had a best friend I would tell "everything" to, and I remember a moment of clarity when I told myself: "If I don't tell V. what's happening to me, it's as if it didn't happen." It was like a sworn friendship: "I protect you, help you, give you relationship advice, and in return you look at me, reflect back my positive image, and give me the feeling that I exist." The roles were clear and fixed.

With people, I became a Zelig of their ideals. As Mina sings in her song, "I'm like you want me to be." Like everyone wants me to be. Even if it means being a thousand different versions. During the day, this satisfied me, like an actress on stage being applauded. But at night I had nightmares. The most frequent one was falling into a void with nothing to hold on to. When I woke up, I'd forget.

At twenty-one I was living alone, studying, working, and starting therapy; partly because it was trendy, partly because I felt I needed help.

Every night before falling asleep, I'd write down everything I had done during the day in a detailed list. Remembering each night what I had been "capable" of doing gave me the impression I could handle life. My father used to tell me life was a struggle. Against it? That's how it seemed to me, and doing what *I* wanted felt like a way to stop life from doing what *it* wanted. Which was to destroy me.

During that period, my body and appearance took center stage. I felt desired and accepted. As therapy brought my insecurities to light, my inner self seemed less appealing. My exterior, on the other hand, seemed better. "What's visible (the body) is better than what's not (emotions and thoughts)." I strongly clung to my external appearance: that was who I was. I began to see myself only as a body. It became compulsive but oddly comforting. "If you like how I look, you like all of me, because all of me is what you see."

I remember walking down the street was for me an exhilarating experience. I would notice who turned their heads when I passed, and every lingering gaze felt like an internal victory.

At eighteen, I had a beautiful body, though I wasn't as skinny as Twiggy, the model of the moment. Mom took me to a doctor to lose weight, and he gave me amphetamines. I realized that when I took them, I was happier, more effortlessly charming, and the center of attention. They felt like friends. I took them, sometimes off-schedule, before going out.

At the club, a certain group stood out to me like the gods of Olympus. I both envied and admired them: blonde girls with straight hair (I had dark curls), dark-haired boys with blue eyes. I'd watch the

girls out of the corner of my eye, unnoticed, and copy their gestures and attitudes in the mirror. Even the flaw of one of the leaders, who walked with her feet turned inward! I wanted to be among them, not with my shyer, plainer friends from Catholic school. I still remember a moment of looking at them and feeling an equal mix of intense desire to be “there” and rejection of being where I was. I experienced exclusion as if I were being actively rejected, even though they didn’t even know me. I promised myself that one day I’d be among those who matter.

In that group, M. stood out—handsome, uninhibited, cocky. Every night I’d go to bed an hour early to “think.” I would carefully imagine a scenario in which M. fell in love with me. I envisioned it with incredible consistency and savored it as if it were real. When I looked over at my sister, eyes closed in her bed, I was convinced she too was “thinking” about something she wanted to come true. I believed everyone did this before sleeping.

Eventually, the scenario came true, more or less as I had imagined it. I concluded I’d discovered a technique: whenever I wanted something, I would imagine it and it would happen. I felt immensely powerful, like someone who could control everything. A “queen” because M. had chosen me.

We dated for several years, in a relationship that had two sides: private and public. In private, I felt natural. We loved each other and we fought, laughed and suffered. Sometimes we’d just look at each other in silence, and the ecstasy we reached began with seeing our wonderful reflections in each other’s eyes. My heart would open, and I’d feel a huge swell in my chest. I now call that love.

In public, though, it was the height of performance. During that time, my tendency to view myself from the outside intensified. I enjoyed what I saw so much when I was with him. M. was perfect for the perfect image. I imagined everyone admiring us. Even at the rugby matches, I was convinced people were watching us (even during the game). Just in case, I was always posing.

Five years later, I ended the relationship when we were no longer the “ideal” couple. M. wasn’t studying or working; he was still playing the charming slacker. And even though I loved and understood him, I felt enormous internal and external pressure to leave him. I couldn’t tolerate “his” failure. Only seven years later did I cry for the pain that breakup had caused—pain I hadn’t even been aware of at the time.

Río Abierto

At twenty-eight, I joined Río Abierto, a school for inner development through bodywork. I felt fluid, able to dance. In the beginning, I still imagined approving glances following me, but a new world was also opening up. I met different kinds of people, with different values. I felt disoriented, unsure of which role would be accepted. That marked the beginning of a more conscious phase than the one before.

At that point, I was already feeling like a failure, even if I didn’t want to admit it. I had studied Fine Arts with the dream of becoming a great artist, and that clearly wasn’t happening. Most of my childhood friends were married with children, and I wasn’t. I could no longer convincingly pretend that “everything was going fine.”

One of the most relieving aspects of joining Río Abierto was discovering that being married and supported by a man didn’t seem nearly as ideal as it had in my previous world.

I immediately began to gain weight, eating uncontrollably, as if I were swallowing everything I had denied myself for the sake of a good figure. My body changed; ten kilos more. I looked at myself and didn’t recognize who I was. I hated myself. A severe acne breakout started as well. One day, at the height of my despair, I counted the boils on my face: thirty-two.

I began losing my teaching jobs at various schools. I could barely afford rent and the training course at Río Abierto, which would become the central axis of my life for the next few years. I barely had enough to eat. New friends helped me.

As I cried everything I had never allowed myself to cry, I began to realize the fear, the insecurity, the dependency, and the pain I was carrying inside. For long stretches of time, I felt like I was dying.

The people from “before” no longer recognized me. “Where is my Claudia?” my mother asked, and I was filled with despair. Everything collapsed, everything fell apart. I was hit with a powerful realization: “I’m losing everything.” When María Adela (the director of Río Abierto) told me I was going through “the dark night of the soul,” it rang true. Everything slipped through my fingers. There was nothing to hold onto. I couldn’t do anything.

One day, when that inner experience had reached its peak, I heard these words during meditation: “Man helps man.” At first, I thought it was the radio because I was alone in the room. But again, the phrase “man helps man” echoed inside my head. My heart told me it was true, that someone was helping me grow and get through this incredibly hard time. That was the beginning of a new trust.

Thus started a period where I began to perceive energy, to feel an inner guide, and to have experiences (whether in dreams or while awake) that opened me to a vast, subtle new world: the transpersonal. I discussed each experience with María Adela, and her guidance helped contain the inner explosion that I don’t think I could have managed alone.

I remember those four years as ones of both loss and discovery. I lost, with tremendous pain, what I had most cherished up until then—what had held me together inside: beauty, money, approval, and most of all, the idea that “I’m strong, I can do it, the world is in my hands. I don’t suffer.”

At the same time, I received and encountered new planes of consciousness, joy, and light I had never imagined. I called it “the new world.”

I started reading psycho-spiritual books, changed my diet, and began meditating. I also did a lot of movement work and group therapy. It was like an inner revolution that swept through everything.

I wanted it with all my heart. Something in me could no longer bear the level of falseness I was living in, and I gave myself over to the process.

One day, during meditation, I discovered “that which I am,” for lack of a better term. And what I am, what we are, exists outside the dimensions of time and space. That is my reality.

That was the pivot point in my life. From that moment on, even though everything on the outside stayed the same, nothing was ever the same again. It was like me declaring, “Now I know who I am,” and though I still despaired at the existential level, there was another level always present, alongside my everyday experience. On that essential level, I am something that can’t be seen—only *Be*.

Life then took a new direction: how to integrate these two levels, which seemed so far apart.

And then another illusion took hold of me: “I’ve made it, or almost! The worst is over. From now on, it will all be easy.”

After a period of “grace” that lasted over a year following that realization of “being,” the experience of exclusion, loneliness, and existential anguish from feeling separated became nearly constant.

Over the next two years, I lived through the hell of personality. Along with the suffering of losing the mask that had once “saved” me, I now experienced this deep sense of separation. In various forms and experiences, the same pain kept resurfacing: the severing of the umbilical cord, the loss of contact with the soul and with all that is true, the inner isolation, the separation from everything essential. It seemed to me that this separation was the root of all the madness that followed—the mask, the self-deception. That the pain of separation had been so unbearable, I had to disconnect from it in order to survive, covering it up with something else, no matter how false it was.

Scenes from childhood flashed before my eyes: my desperate crying when someone read *Nobody’s Boy* to me, my night coughs filled with images of evil entities pushing me out of the house,

and my conclusion: “It must be because I’m bad.” I remember my letter to Santa at Christmas: to become good. I wanted to be good but couldn’t. I remember the moment I decided that being good was impossible for me, but that what I *could* do was fight so that the punishment I deserved never came.

Here’s a snippet from my diary from those early years at Río Abierto; my revelations:

I can’t find a way to “be.” One self grabs me, then another, and neither of them is really me. That goes on all day. I can’t find a stable place to be. I feel like I’m being controlled by beings inside me. And I thought I was the one in control! [...]

I’m praised. I realized, for the first time, that being praised or criticized doesn’t change anything in me. Other people’s opinions can make me happy or sad, but they don’t make me better or worse! [...]

I look for myself in others. The other person is essential, not for who they are, but because in their eyes I see my reflection. Seeing myself there, I see me. If I don’t have two eyes to look into, I feel like I’ll die. [...]

I feel a compulsion to share the things I used to always hide. The most humiliating things, what I never would’ve wanted anyone to know. But now, sharing them feels like liberation. If people stay and love me, let it be for who I am, not because I cut myself into little pieces and only show the acceptable parts. [...]

I can’t stop myself from doing what others want. It’s maddening. Today, talking with R., I noticed how she manipulated the conversation so that I’d admire her, flatter her. She went quiet, I felt her unspoken request, and I heard myself say: “You were amazing.” [...]

I relive a moment when I see my mother’s lack of love. I beg her, “What do I have to do for you to love me?” I feel like I’m willing to do anything for it, to be and do whatever she wants. No limits. [...]

My struggle is with prestige. Maybe when no one loves me and everyone despises me, I’ll find my center. [...]

What’s most important to me is the connection with the body and with movement. You can’t lie with the body. In fact, it helps me unmask myself. It’s so undeniable... finally!

All that old pain surfaced with such intensity at first, and then gradually quieted down, as if it had worn itself out. I began to take interest in the outside world again; a first cycle of inner work had come to an end.

In Buenos Aires I met the man who would become my husband. Enzo and I moved to Italy, his home country. There we opened a Río Abierto center together, in Naples.

Another self-deception began to take shape and took hold in the years that followed. It was once again tied to omnipotence; this time not grounded in beauty or emotional detachment, but in the belief: “I will save the world, I have a mission, I’m someone important, special.” This time, vanity and personal significance were more inward.

Other traits of the personality now came to the forefront: hyperactivity, efficiency, speed, the ability to sell and to market myself, the fear of failure, and the iron will to succeed. Also anxiety and the need for control.

The Enneagram

By the time I came to the Enneagram, I had been living in Italy for seven years. The Río Abierto Institute we had founded had expanded greatly, our work was being well received, and I had more clients and commitments than I could manage.

Becoming a mother plunged me into the deepest conflict I had ever known. On one side was the love I felt for my daughter, the physical bond with her, intense moments of transcendence of the self, and of meeting her in something total. On the other side, the internal demand to work, to be responsible for what I had created professionally, to keep succeeding. I wrote, at the time:

Río Abierto is my first child, and Carolina is the second. I hear the cries, the need of R.A., and I'm afraid it will die if I don't feed it—and that it will stop feeding me.

At the same time, Carolina wants my presence, my milk, my company. Some days I go back and forth three or four times between home and the institute. I nurse her, get her to sleep, run to the institute, teach a class, come back, nurse her again, go back to the institute, give a massage, return home. And so on, every day, for almost a year.

I feel exhausted and desperate, but I won't give up. I tried to keep both alive, even at the expense of my other needs, such as peace, rest, friendships, or pleasure.

Without a doubt, I prioritized work over my relationship. When Enzo asked for more of my presence, I felt it was unfair: “Can’t you see I’m already stretched to the limit and trying to do it all well?”

And so I arrived at the Enneagram.

When Claudio Naranjo began to describe E3, I felt fear rising in me. I shrank inward and looked around discreetly, but scared. People seemed calm, sometimes laughing along with him at the description of the traits. I wasn’t laughing.

I became more and more distressed; it felt like he was speaking directly to me and about me, making fun of me. I felt like crying, drowned in intense shame. “It’s true. I am exactly as he’s describing.” It seemed obvious to me that everyone in the group knew that this was me, and I wanted to hide. Reason told me that hardly anyone there even knew me, but the desire to disappear was overwhelming. My frustration turned into anger at Claudio: “How can he talk like that? This is a secret; no one was supposed to know! My motivations, my deepest desires, must not be exposed.” I realized how much I had hidden them, even from myself, how I had dressed them up as noble causes and important missions.

Before he had even finished speaking, I felt a pain as deep as few I’ve known: the pain of recognizing the loss of the Self, and seeing the entire structure I had built to cover up its reality.

For me, the Self was what I had discovered years before. But what I had never seen was what I had replaced it with in my awareness: an entirely different “self,” lowercase, which I had substituted for my true Self without even realizing it. I had glimpsed fragments of this before, but they hadn’t come together, hadn’t formed this living structure. Living or dead—if by dead we mean stuck in motionless inertia.

When my turn came to speak, I proudly announced: “I’m a Three!” And I was sure I wasn’t wrong. That certainty lifted me above the others, who seemed unsure, and consoled me in the face of so much desolation.

When we had the chance to talk among ourselves as Threes, I was even more surprised. Countless little details of our everyday lives coincided, especially the inner experience behind them. It was like meeting beings of the same species and temperament, with whom it wasn’t humiliating to acknowledge our identical miseries.

Back home, I was enthusiastic about what I had discovered. But little by little, I began to feel unexpected effects. Once I saw the ignoble motivation behind my actions—seeking the

spotlight—everything lost meaning. If all the work organizing workshops, trips, and conferences was just to shine, to have an audience praising me, and not out of a “will to serve,” then what was good in that? I felt drained, listless, apathetic.

I caught myself sometimes sitting on the bed, unable to find any valid reason to do what had once made me happy. And not because everything was going wrong—I was fat, ugly, and poor like when I was younger—but because I couldn’t find anything of value that moved me. For a while, I felt dull, tired, and disillusioned, especially with myself.

That was when Enzo and I grew closer. In our relationship, I felt I had found something more real. I also felt closer to people and their needs, no longer as a savior but as a companion in misfortune.

A kind of compassion began to awaken in me, a sense of being in the same boat, something I hadn’t experienced before except in moments of grace. I felt I was drawing closer to people.

After a while, energy began to return, as if I had digested some of what I’d discovered. I kept observing my behavior through that lens. From that time, I wrote:

Claudio spoke about the compulsive desire for success and the fear of failure in the E3. I see that in my case, this fear is extremely strong. Above all, it's the terror that someone else might realize I'm failing. Today I was about to start a movement class. Only a few students showed up. I panicked, looked out the studio window, and felt my sense of worth plummet inside me. But my attention didn't stay there; it focused anxiously on hoping that no other instructor would notice I had an empty class, that no student from another class would walk by and see it.

Deep down, I don't care so much about failing, but I dread people knowing I've failed. What's unbearable is the image of failure!

I become very critical of my need to be seen and recognized. I see it as an addiction, a drug without which I feel dim and small. When I'm showered with praise, I'm embarrassed to receive it. I never fully take it in. I feel guilty for having manipulated people to get it, and I feel I don't quite deserve it.

I seduce and then regret it. I ask, receive, and then reject. I feel caught in a trap I can't escape. I think that maybe fully accepting appreciation and recognition, without inventing false modesty at the last moment, might be a possible way out.

One day, at the end of a workshop (I remember the topic was the masculine and the feminine) they started applauding, and the men got the idea to lift me up and carry me. That had never happened to me before. Something inside told me to accept it, that this was what I had been seeking all my life, and it was time to receive it. It felt like an inner apotheosis, and I felt explosions of joy in my heart. Something was released, and when they put me down and my feet touched the ground, I had a powerful sensation of rebirth, like something in me had reset. For the first time, on some level, I felt satisfied. There was no more emptiness. And this time, without disdain, weariness, or lies, I said: “It’s enough; I don’t want anything more.”

That experience, as the culmination of a process, marked a deep shift.

A whole year passed between the first and second levels of the Enneagram. I think it was during that second meeting when we worked on subtypes, and I emerged as a social E3.

Prestige

Claudio gave us an exercise to do in pairs: to go backward in consciousness, allowing familiar scenes to arise. In my case, it was moments when prestige had been a burden to uphold. Then we would “clean” the scenes using a special technique.

The first scene had happened that very day: we were in the dining hall, Claudio walked in, and I felt happy to see him and had the impulse to go say hello. I repressed it, walked past him pretending not to see him, and sat at a distant table. I chatted with people, but I wasn’t really there; my attention was on Claudio. During the exercise, I realized how badly I had wanted to cry in that moment.

As I moved further back in time, the scenes (though they varied in setting and characters) were all similar. What they had in common was hiding what I was truly feeling, especially when it meant falling from some imaginary pedestal into a simple joy, or into fear or pain; common, ordinary emotions.

I remembered, going back through the years, a moment when I renounced sharing my pain and made a vow about it. I must have been seven or eight. I was overwhelmed by a fear that the world would end. I couldn’t sleep at night and couldn’t stop crying. I *knew* everything would end, that we would all disappear. I think it was some kind of awareness of impermanence or something like that. At first, my parents tried to comfort me by saying it wasn’t true. But I *knew* it was. Then they got angry and pushed me outside: “Go ahead, cry if you want!” I was terrified, banging on the door and screaming for them to let me in until they finally did. They brought me inside with a “What will the neighbors think?”

That night, in bed, I decided that never, never again would anyone know my fears, that the consequences were too awful, that no one could bear my pain, and that it would only bring rejection. I also concluded (and I remember the terror of this realization) that they had only let me back in because of what the neighbors might think. If not for that, they might have left me out all night.

The next step regarding pain was that if I couldn’t express it, I shouldn’t even feel it. As a child, I was worried that everything “showed” on me. On one hand, my mother didn’t see me, but on the other, I felt she reacted strongly to my feelings and actions: she’d get angry, depressed, shut down. I had the fantasy that she could read my thoughts, that she could “guess” what was going on with me. I worked hard to hide and show only what wouldn’t cause problems: success and enthusiasm, joy, even anger, since it was associated with strength and was acceptable. I think it was the only negative emotion I was allowed to feel.

Back to the exercise about prestige and its scenes. The last one, symbolic or not, was from another time: I was a woman being stoned to death. And I was full of hate, not asking for forgiveness or mercy, but screaming vengeance. Hidden beneath was helplessness, physical pain, the desire to beg for mercy. When I cleared the scene of its charge, I felt deep peace, freeing me from the duty to hide my feelings behind a mask. I experienced a beatitude that came from forgiveness. A few minutes later, I felt my ovaries begin to throb, as if coming back to life. Faint but deep, I felt their rebirth.

The energetic transformation in my ovaries opened the door to a slow process of reconnecting with my sexuality; not as a form of self-assertion, or rebellion, or because “it’s good to be passionate,” like before, but in a more intimate, deeper way.

Fear of life. Control

My parents were dignified and respectable, refined and fairly cultured. The house was bright, with a garden; the pool full of friends in summer. We, the daughters, were pretty and full of life. Behind this image, which I considered “ideal” for many years, were shadows and pain that took me a long time in therapy to recognize. Even though I had suffered them intensely, it was as if I hadn’t realized I was suffering:

I'm playing; it's dusk. I hear the key turn in the front door. It's Dad, coming home from work. I run to greet him, happy. I had waited for him all day because, always and for a long time, he was the only one I felt really loved me. He's been drinking. Mom looks at him with contempt. Ice sets in. I love him, but now I'm also afraid to go near him; plus, if I do, Mom will hate me even more. I don't know what to do. Everything falls apart. The support I was waiting for doesn't show up. In fact, it turns into its opposite. I feel like the ground has disappeared beneath my feet.

After living through that experience repeatedly, I remember deciding that nothing was worse than being *disappointed*—expecting something good and not getting it. That being open, calm, and defenseless, and then getting hit with a shock in that vulnerable state, was something to be avoided at all costs.

Later, I too started looking at him with contempt and freezing up when I heard the key in the door. If he hadn't been drinking, it was all joy; we'd joke around at dinner, Mom would be happy, and I'd hear them talking late into the night in the kitchen. I think they loved each other. But if he had been drinking, everything became painful and incomprehensible. My father, usually tender and affectionate, would accuse us of a thousand things we didn't understand. A struggle would ensue where we, the daughters, would act as intermediaries between his desire to keep drinking and my mother's attempts to stop him. I learned to be on guard as soon as dusk fell, bracing for the worst. And the worst was Dad coming home drunk. There was nothing I could do to stop it. I was completely powerless and at its mercy. The only thing I could do was be "ready" for the blow; that way, it wouldn't hurt so much. The next day, I knew my father would apologize, and that also hurt. It seemed unfair that he had to humiliate himself before us.

On the other hand, my mother lived under constant pressure, whether from the women in my father's family (for a time we lived with my grandmother and great-grandmother) or from herself. She would have respiratory collapses where she fell to the ground, her skin purple, her arms and hands paralyzed. I would run, terrified, to the nearby hospital to fetch a doctor, praying she wouldn't die. They would give her a sedative injection, and she'd calm down. What made it worst was how unpredictable the whole experience was. It always seemed to me that just moments before, my mother had been watering her plants, peaceful, everything in harmony. The impression was that everything could change in an instant, not only without me having done anything to cause it, but also that I had to be ready to fix it. My mother always thanked me for "saving" her. And I felt good thinking it was true, proud to have helped her.

I associate this kind of experience with a fear of life, and especially of what happens without my knowledge. I need to know, to follow what's happening, so I can at least handle "the catastrophe that will surely come" as best I can.

In all this, the one who seemed to be spared and always calm was my great-grandmother. Elderly and with a wise air, always surrounded by her books and translations, she would say to me: "Nothing in excess, Claudia. That's the key to life." It seemed to me she was right, that the reason for my parents' madness lay in their lack of self-control. I didn't yet realize that my father's drinking binges and my mother's attacks were actually safety valves, unavoidable overflows.

I was surprised when Claudio told me during the third Enneagram workshop: "You're less controlled now." It was the issue I had looked at the least, the one I wasn't ready to face before. Control was "flesh of my flesh," and the fear of truly letting myself be free was enormous, etched as it was in me that anything spontaneous, instinctual, or natural was a monster to be locked away. That's why bodywork—free, expressive movement—felt like a panacea, and still does: a joyful healing.

How has control shown up in my life? One way is the need to always know what I want (or at least to believe I do) and to try to achieve it, to invent strategies so everything stays under my “command.”

I think the helplessness I experienced as a child was so overwhelming that I had to tell myself, and believe, that I could hold the reins of everything, that things happen because I planned them and wanted them to. Of course, that view has gradually shown itself to be false, but only now am I beginning to fully realize how little depends on me. And to discern more clearly where there really is power to act and transform, and where it’s more illusion or compensation... if such power even exists.

Fifteen years later

It's been fifteen years since I wrote those words, and I'd like to briefly describe what has happened inside me in that time; what has changed, what hasn't, the path I've walked.

Without a doubt, my basic character is the same; this foundation I described is what stirs when I'm afraid. And it's precisely fear that has been calming down.

To sum it up, I'd say this life has been about working on “trust.” That I was born with a natural trust, and I lost it. That loss gave rise to the desire to find it again and the aspiration to grow it through life itself. And that this trust has constantly been put to the test. The test was exactly that: to trust life, to reach the point where, no matter what happens—pleasant or unpleasant, easy or hard—I wouldn't doubt that life is “good,” that God is good, that I am good.

I feel this “essential goodness” that I now perceive, and can lean on, has been a kind of compass for me, a direction my search took even without consciously knowing it. That compass is what draws me forward and always stays just a little out of reach, the magnetic point that keeps me walking. In my case, it has to do with the trust that comes from discovering divine goodness made manifest.

And it was the setbacks (of which there have been many in these years) that helped me discover this goodness. They helped me realize that despite everything, Life holds a harmonizing force, a wisdom that organizes, creates, dissolves, and pushes us toward fulfillment. In my favor, not against me, as I believed for so long.

What happened in these fifteen years:

At the age of forty-six, I began attending week-long silent retreats with Claudio. I did four in a row, one each year. These retreats gave me an internal push toward spiritual growth that once again, and in a very deep way, changed my life. On one hand, I experienced unknown, essential inner states during the retreats; a new kind of transpersonal experience. And afterward, there was a lasting effect that deepened over the year, thanks to daily meditation and the effort to stay present in the moment, which has stayed with me ever since.

Meditation, prayer, and silence became increasingly important spiritual practices in my life. At first, they felt like effort and duty; I thought they were “good” and so I tried to do them. I was often grateful for the discipline of sitting down to meditate, experimenting and sometimes reaching moments of happiness, peace, silence, or connection with myself. There, my enneatype's tenacity, self-control, capacity for effort, and obedience served me well.

Then it stopped being something self-imposed and became something I needed: a way to stop. They were the only moments when I stepped out of constant activity, when stillness started to feel like nourishment instead of a waste of time or a threat.

And even later on, it became not just a formal practice, i.e., “sitting to meditate,” but began to integrate with life itself, a sense of Presence where there had previously been a sense of emptiness or anxious absence.

My work with others also changed. It began to focus on creating spaces for encountering meditation and our own silent inner presence. That became the most interesting thing. Being alone and in silence during the day also became not just a desperate need to reconnect with myself, but a genuine pleasure of savoring a different inner dimension, right in the midst of life.

It was after those retreats (where Claudio accompanied me with deep wisdom and generosity) that I felt, for the first time in my life, the desire to walk alone, to turn inward, guided by the very trust I've spoken of, which was slowly awakening inside me.

Over the years I've faced more difficulties, again, with my body and my work, the two areas where I tend to flow best but also where all the obstacles seem to arise, more so than in personal relationships, for example. Because they're charged with expectations, those are the places where I push myself, where I demand and am demanding, and where I end up exhausted or unwell.

A few years ago, I decided that the only way not to be devoured by work was to impose a limit on how much I do. It was hard for me, as it felt like I was rejecting something precious, and having free time made me afraid. As if those open spaces were the prelude to abandonment, emptiness, oblivion, and failure.

Along with that reduction in activity, my husband and I moved to the countryside. A small house we had bought for vacations turned out to be the right space for this change. We spend the weekdays here, and on weekends I go out to work. Not every weekend!

Nature became, and still is, my teacher, my healer, my refuge, my essential nourishment. Everything in it is so natural, so simple, just as it is; unmasked, honest, direct. And there, in nature, I came to see that human beings are also "nature," also essentially pure, capable of flowing again like trees, or plants, or the small animals of the forest.

The feeling of unity, which I thought would be easier to find with other people, in intense or loving situations, has been easier to find in nature, which didn't used to attract me all that much.

I realized that being alienated from nature meant being alienated from myself and from my body. As if the Earth, Air, Fire, and Water elements of my body could find their kin more in the forest than in groups. Until just a few years ago, a person was far more significant to me than a tree. They still are... but not by as much. And now the tree, the lizard, the little flower are beginning to feel understandable and close.

In recent years, friendship has taken on greater importance. Even inner work often happens through conversations with friends—philosophical reflections or mutual support in the difficulties life presents.

So, in these past few years, I feel that something inside me has quieted. I don't know if it's my nervous system, but there's a kind of slowing down, something that's become more gentle. And life is pleasant. It "treats me well," is kind to me, and maybe I've learned to listen to it and be a little more kind in return.

Living alone out here, the relationship with my partner is where love has had space to emerge and flow more freely.

In general, I'm starting to accept differences in temperament in relationships, and to see them as a kind of richness. But that's still hard.

What else can I say? In the midst of all this "good," I still feel that what throws me off comes from deep inside. And what throws me off is fear. Always fear. And now it's more focused on "the fear of being wrong." As if this work with trust were still incomplete, as if there hadn't yet been the surrender I imagine could one day come. And that remains my compass.

The difference now is that alongside the fear, I also perceive an open inner space where that fear can dissolve. Like a cloud that dissolves into the sky. Sometimes it takes more effort, sometimes less. But no doubt, it has changed in texture, and it's no longer so frightening.

APPENDIX

E3 ACADEMIC EQUIVALENCES: SELF-PRESERVATION, SEXUAL AND SOCIAL SUBTYPES

In general, Enneatype III, Vanity, stands out as a notable absentee in academia. After researching the works of various psychoanalytic and psychological authors in order to draw connections between the definition of E3 in the *Psychology of the Enneatypes* and other academic definitions pertaining to psychological or psychopathological types, the overarching conclusion is that this enneatype lacks any reference to pathology or neurosis. As a result, it consistently appears “normal,” to the point where its social conformity might be perceived as desirable.

Hence, it could be inferred that its potential “pathology” or “neurosis” lies precisely in this: an excessive pursuit of conformity and adaptation to the environment and others. This includes avoiding conflict, and seeking acceptance and approval, to the extent of falsifying oneself and succumbing to self-deception.

Narcissistic personality disorder

Vanity doesn’t appear as a diagnostic category in the DSM-IV.⁴⁷ While it’s an indication of an underlying narcissism, in American literature, *Narcissistic personality disorder* is more closely associated with Enneatype VII. As Claudio Naranjo explains in *Character and Neurosis*, the fact that Enneatype III is not to be found in DSM

suggests that the recognized pathologies constitute a more external or visible layer of psychopathology [...] [E3s] may live very ordinary and perhaps successful lives without clearly recognizable interpersonal defects, harboring mainly a spiritual psychopathology—loss of interiority and of true spiritual experience.⁴⁸

Narcissism is a fundamental aspect of the Vain character. Let’s begin by exploring certain diagnostic features outlined in narcissistic personality disorder, which, although referring to more severe psychiatric conditions, contain specific traits of the E3 structure.

The key element in narcissistic personality is the inadequate regulation of self-esteem, which becomes dependent on external evaluation, making the individual highly susceptible to criticism. In response, the narcissist needs to construct an inflated self-image, placing themselves on a polarized scale of virtues or flaws, superiority or inferiority, with respect to an idealized standard. This defensive strategy keeps them detached from their true self, and shields them from contacting potential feelings of failure.

In essence, this character displays an exaggerated self-importance in a grandiose manner. They overestimate their capabilities, embellish their talents, implicitly devalue the merits of others, strive to feel superior or unique, and expect to be recognized as such, demanding excessive admiration.

In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-IV*, this description of narcissistic personality disorder corresponds to Enneatype III: “*They may be concerned about whether*

⁴⁷ APA, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-IV-TR*, Masson, Barcelona, 2002

⁴⁸ C. Naranjo, *Character and Neurosis*, La llave, Barcelona, 2012, 12^a ed.

*they are doing things well enough and how they are perceived by others. This is often manifested by a consistent need for admiration.*⁴⁹

There's a clear tendency to occupy a prominent social position and propensity to engage with important or influential people, in socially esteemed gatherings (a trait mostly present in the E3 social subtype). With a constant need for attention and admiration, which may come across as pretentious, this character employs various social charms to receive special treatment. Characterized by a lack of empathy and sensitivity to others' desires and needs, this often results in exploiting others for personal gain. There is a tendency to overemphasize their concerns by providing unnecessary details, impatience, and an envious attitude towards others' achievements and possessions. Occasionally exhibiting arrogant behavior, they may convey a condescending or disdainful attitude towards others, offering apparent availability but lacking genuine interest, appearing emotionally distant or cold. Their fragile self-esteem finds compensation through friendships that serve the purpose of making them feel special.

Associated manifestations and disorders

The fragility of their self-esteem makes individuals with narcissistic personality disorder highly sensitive to the “wounds” inflicted by criticism or frustration. While they might conceal it externally, criticism can torment them, leaving them humiliated, dejected, frustrated, and empty. In response, they may react with disdain or rage, boldly counterattacking, even causing harm to others. Such experiences often lead to social withdrawal or a facade of humility, serving to disguise and protect their underlying grandiosity. Interpersonal relationships frequently suffer due to issues arising from their air of pretension, constant need for confirmation, demand for admiration, and relative disregard for the sensibilities of others.

Although arrogant ambition and/or self-assurance may lead E3 individuals to achieve lofty goals, these accomplishments may be undermined due to their intolerance of criticism or fear of defeat. In other cases, professional performance may be very low, reflecting their aversion to taking risks in competitive situations or where they foresee the possibility of defeat. Persistent feelings of shame or humiliation, along with accompanying self-criticism, can be associated with social withdrawal, a depressed mood, or dysthymia/major depression. Conversely, prolonged periods of grandiosity may be linked to a hypomanic mood.

Narcissistic personality disorder can co-occur with anorexia nervosa and substance abuse, particularly cocaine. Additional comorbidities include histrionic, borderline, antisocial, and paranoid personality disorders.

Differential diagnosis

Narcissistic personality disorder can be differentiated from *borderline personality disorder* by a more stable self-image, lower presence of self-destructive tendencies, impulsivity, and abandonment issues.

Excessive pride in one's achievements, a relative lack of emotional displays, and disregard for the sensitivity of others distinguish narcissistic personality disorder from *histrionic personality disorder*.

While individuals with borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders all demand attention, narcissists seek it in the form of admiration.

⁴⁹ APA, op. cit., 301.81.

Individuals with *antisocial personality disorders* and those with narcissistic personality disorder share a tendency to be stubborn, brash, superficial, exploitative, and lacking empathy. However, narcissistic personality disorder does not necessarily encompass the antisocial characteristics of impulsivity, aggressiveness, and dishonesty.

In both narcissistic personality disorder and *obsessive-compulsive personality disorder*, individuals may exhibit perfectionism and the belief that others are incapable of performing as well as they do.

Suspicion and social withdrawal often distinguish individuals with *schizotypal* or *paranoid personality disorders* from narcissists. When such suspicion and withdrawal occur in individuals with narcissistic personality disorder, they usually stem from the fear of appearing imperfect or flawed.

Grandiosity may emerge as part of *manic* or *hypomanic episodes*, but the association of these with mood disturbance and functional impairment helps distinguish these episodes from narcissistic personality disorder.

Narcissism in psychological literature

Claudio Naranjo has already explained in *Character and Neurosis* how E3 lives for their self-image, which speaks of narcissism. However, it's a term that has been used in various contexts to classify different characterologies.

Otto Kernberg⁵⁰ outlined a type of narcissism that is envious, ambitious, greedy, demanding attention and praise, and that's the one described in the DSM-IV. For Kernberg, a narcissist combines excessive self-centeredness, effective yet superficial adaptation, inordinate ambition, and fantasies of grandeur masking an underlying sense of inferiority and excessive dependence on external admiration. When narcissistic satisfactions are not met, this leads to feelings of emptiness. Narcissists can be charming as long as the other party fulfills their neurotic needs, but they end up revealing their harshness and cruelty if unsuccessful. Faced with the anguish of separation, they struggle to establish a genuine connection and derive no pleasure from the contact because others are, above all, bestowers of admiration, allowing them to move from one person to the next without regret.

Claudio Naranjo has explained how vanity is the passion of living for the eyes of others, an exaggerated need for external confirmation. To this end, the person falsifies themselves, adapting to what each situation requires. E3 individuals forget themselves very early on, ceasing to live their own experiences, suppressing emotions and needs, and disconnecting from them to "be" what others (initially, the father or mother) want them to be. Then, they come to believe that that facade they present is who they truly are.

Therefore, they construct a personality *as if*,⁵¹ which Kernberg⁵² describes in the following terms: "They have chameleon-like, ever-shifting, pseudohyperemotional, and pseudoadaptive qualities. These patients are reminiscent of Marcel Marceau miming the man who takes off one mask after another and finally discovers in despair that he cannot tear the last one off. These patients shift from act to act without knowing who the actor is, other than that he is a sum of impersonations."

The narcissist thus becomes trapped in their image, unable to distinguish between the images of who they imagine they are and who they truly are. They identify with the idealized image of themselves, leading to a loss of the true self. This creates a divide between the self and its image, with the fundamental disturbance in the narcissistic personality being the denial of feeling.

⁵⁰ O. Kernberg, *Severe Personality Disorders*, Modern Manual, Mexico, 1987

⁵¹ First described in 1934 by Helen Deutsch

⁵² O. Kernberg, op. cit., p. 175

To complete the understanding of narcissism, Winnicott's⁵³ definition of the *false self* is important, shedding light on the nuclear process of Enneatype III's character rather than merely the fabrication of a false self-image. According to Winnicott, when the mother fails to affirm the child's need for value, the child is hindered from expressing their innate omnipotence, which is suitable for the early developmental stage. Consequently, the child feels restricted in utilizing their adaptive abilities or expressing spontaneity and feelings of anger. This maternal dynamic creates a barrier to the establishment of self-esteem, leading to feelings of frustration and humiliation in the child. In response, the child constructs a *false self*, devoid of vitality, hyper-adapted and compliant; a *self* that aligns with the demands of the external world but remains disconnected from their authentic *self*.

As we can see, narcissism is by no means exclusive to E3, and encompasses various character typologies, ultimately being a disorder that resonates more with our times. This is elaborated in this recent journalistic article:⁵⁴

Narcissism is no longer considered a mental disorder in the United States. It's impossible not to admire someone [referring to Juan, a 53-year-old Mexican immigrant in the U.S., a dedicated gardener, married with three children] who moves away from his loved ones to secure a better future for them—someone who spends six months a year in solitary self-reflection, alone with himself, which is the worst thing that can happen to someone who hasn't yet found themselves in the clutches of narcissism. Narcissism might be tempted to call itself "the evil of our time," but I just read that in the United States, it stopped being classified as a mental disorder. It's so common it's no longer a rarity. [...]

Self-discovery has become a challenge for the wealthy who, for a while, dress as hippies, surround themselves with the poor, visit a shaman, and taste the most succulent morsel—the simplicity of a humble life, only to return home strengthened and relieved to reconnect with their possessions.

Indeed, as Elvira Lindo aptly notes, the shallow and empty lifestyle arising from the insatiable pursuit of success in order to feel like somebody, so common in the American and, by extension, modern Western society, has led to it no longer being considered a disorder in any way; on the contrary, this way of life has implicitly become the most valued by the prevailing culture.

To the point that, as mentioned at the beginning, it's difficult to find comparable examples to E3 in the academic world's psychopathological literary production. A notable exception is Alexander Lowen, who masterfully translated Wilhelm Reich's visionary principles into clinical practice.

Hysterical psychopathic character

Each stage of child development comes with specific characteristics and essential needs to fulfill. During the separation-individuation phase described by Mahler in the rapprochement phase,⁵⁵ occurring around the age of two, the child is caught between dependence and independence from the mother. This stage is often referred to as the narcissistic phase. Here, the child is at the center of attention, but seeking affirmation, may sometimes encounter rejection from the parents regarding their needs and feelings, resulting in wounds to their budding narcissism. When, in this phase, the child

⁵³ D. W. Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment. Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*, Paidós, Barcelona, 1994

⁵⁴ E. Lindo, «Vida de Juan», *El País*, Andalusian edition, 12th December 2010

⁵⁵ Specifically, from fifteen months to two years of age. See M. Mahler, Volume I, *Infantile Psychosis and Early Contributions*, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1984.

doesn't feel sufficiently affirmed and recognized for who they are, they may internalize that they are not enough and that it's not valuable to be themselves. Consequently, they negate their true self and strive to be what the father or mother wants them to be. They construct an approved and admirable self.

In Erikson's view, this stage plays a pivotal role in the development of identity. According to bodily and Bioenergetic schools, during it, the child has the right to be who they are, and when faced with a frustrating response from the environment, the psychopathic character is formed.

The theme of the *psychopathic* character revolves around wounded narcissism, where the false self prevails over the true self, and it's more important for the individual to look good than to feel good. The child adopts the mindset, "I will be who you want me to be so that you love me." This involves denying emotional expression and suppressing their needs. Some of the exhibited traits include the need for control, manipulation, and voluntarism.

This occurs when the relationship with the father begins during the onset of the Oedipal stage. The child becomes triangulated in this relationship with the father or mother, longing to be loved and recognized, and to reclaim the care not received in the initial stage with the mother.

Juan José Albert's work⁵⁶ draws from studies conducted by Reich⁵⁷ and, especially, Lowen,⁵⁸ who incorporates his own clinical experience as a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, as well as from the insights of the Enneagram as a descriptive map with psychological, characterological, and spiritual utility. Within this integrative perspective, Enneatype III corresponds to the *hysterical psychopathic personality*.

Etiology of the psychopathic character

The *psychopathic personality* is rooted in the phallic phase of development, which begins around two and a half years. This phase marks a turning point as the child shifts their point of view away from the mother towards the father and the broader world, expecting to obtain support and satisfaction. This transition begins by establishing their position within the family hierarchy, one of power, vying for attention from the parents, and striving for supremacy in the competition among siblings.

At a time when their emotional, affective, and cognitive needs are beginning full development, the future psychopathic child sees the genuine projection of themselves into the external environment frustrated, which their curiosity and exploratory interest would exploit. They have to give up what they want, desire, and find satisfaction in and replace it with the narcissistic desire of the father or mother in exchange for their support and affection.

The "psychopath," corresponding to both Enneatypes III and VI, is thus anchored in the center of the Oedipus complex, specifically, in the seduction by the parent of the opposite sex.

The attitude that the hysterical psychopath (E3) maintains all their life is a constant need to secure their position of power, whether it's the power of control, the power of beauty, sexual attraction, or efficiency. They are desperate to secure their place of power and always doubt their ability to maintain it. This leads them to be self-controlling and controlling of the environment because, structured in terms of the "other," their desires and achievements are not their own but the

⁵⁶ Psychiatrist, neurologist, bioenergetic analyst and pioneer in Spain of integrative psychotherapy, Juan José Albert is clinical coordinator of the I.P.E.T.G. (Institute of Emotional Psychotherapy and Group Techniques).

⁵⁷ Wilhelm Reich, a physician and disciple of Freud, was born in Austrian Galicia in 1897 and died in the United States in 1957. He was removed from official psychoanalysis in 1934 because of his advanced ideas. He is the author of *Character Analysis*, *The Sexual Revolution*, and *The Function of Orgasm*.

⁵⁸ Alexander Lowen was a disciple of Reich between 1940 and 1952. In 195 he founded the International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis in New York.

“other’s,” on whose approval they depend, resulting in a profound sense of insecurity and dissatisfaction.

The basic defense mechanisms are projection (mainly in the obsessive structure, corresponding to E6) and identification (more pronounced in the hysterical structure, which would be that of E3). In addition, the psychopath employs, as a mechanism of emotional control, rationalization, the tendency to process emotions with their head. They are the type of person who thinks they feel. This defense serves, on one hand, to inhibit action, as a control against the immediate acting out of impulses. On the other hand, it contains the anxiety about judgment and/or punishment.

Body structure

The psychopath has a disturbing gaze that they use to control; they use it as a scanner to anticipate where danger may come from and keep it at a distance, or for seduction. The eyes have a tendency to look only through a slit in the eyelids, making them appear smaller. They gaze to determine who is interested, ensuring success in seduction, where they become the “hunter-hunted.”

There is significant tension in the neck due to the need to always maintain a vigilant, controlling posture of the head: the engine that moves the periscope of the eyes.

With the chest shaped like a V, the upper body is overdeveloped, with less body development from the diaphragm downward. As befitting someone who holds back tender impulses, the chest and ribs are hard; it is difficult to depress the chest with the hand.

The diaphragm experiences a significant blockage, especially during forced inspiration (paradoxical breathing).⁵⁹ This diaphragmatic cut makes it difficult for them to connect with feelings, emotions, and needs.

The abdomen is tense and firm, reflecting the containment of some tender needs.

The pelvis is slightly retroverted and disconnected from the rest of the body; there is no free and active sensory perception of the lower body. The buttocks are tight.

One of the most significant tensions in the legs is behind the knees, in the hamstrings, indicating a fear of failure, surrender, and letting go.

The foot tends to be wide, with a more pronounced instep than normal, a morphology that better suits jumping and movement.

The conservation subtype

The distinctive quality of the E3 conservation is to go unnoticed, to avoid drawing attention by hiding aspects of themselves.

According to Claudio Naranjo, “In today’s psychotherapeutic practice, Enneatype III is usually diagnosed in Bioenergetic terms as Lowen’s *rigid*.⁶⁰” In this type, we can recognize the conservation subtype, possibly with masochistic and narcissistic components.

⁵⁹ The spontaneous breathing of people with psychopathic character does not follow the dynamics of natural movements, but performs a paradoxical movement. When they breathe in, the work falls almost exclusively on the intercostal and shoulder girdle muscles, as an aid, at the same time as they raise the diaphragm and contract the abdomen. In other words, they inhale by inflating the chest and raising the shoulders while raising the diaphragm and contracting the abdomen, so that the increase in capacity achieved by raising the ribs is lost by raising the diaphragm. With this movement, in which there is a functional contraposition between the costal muscles and the diaphragm, the expansion of the lungs is very limited and ventilation is scarce; it is inefficient breathing from the point of view of oxygenation.

Alexander Lowen describes several clinical cases that could well be considered E3 conservation. One such case is David:

It was obvious to me that David was fighting against himself. On a feeling level—inside—he was scared to death. Yet on an ego level—in terms of outward appearance—he was strong and powerful. That was the image he projected with his muscular body and his successful career as a surgeon. David operated on cases that might frighten others. He denied any fears and exuded self-confidence.

David had developed this image in his youth. He explained that he had tried to be the kind of kid a parent would love, a model son—smart, athletic, good-looking, well-behaved.

But why did David seek therapy? Lowen clarifies:

David began by describing his reaction of rage when his son had persisted in an action he had been told to stop. [...] David didn't think he was wrong in ordering the boy to stop. What bothered him was the recognition that his reaction of rage was excessive. As he explained it, "I realized the enormity of my rage when I saw the look of fear in my son's face. I thought that he was afraid I could kill him, and I sensed that there was a murderous quality in my tone of voice and in my look."

David was aware that his rage reaction was triggered by his son's disobedience which left him feeling frustrated.

And why did he act in such a disproportionate way? Lowen provides an answer by presenting David's own comments on the matter:

He [David] said, "I saw that I was doing to my son what my father had done to me. I was a frightened kid, but until recently I denied I was afraid. I had moments of fear."

Lowen illustrates with this clinical case how someone who presents themselves to the world as successful, confident, and, of course, trustworthy, only shows (even to themselves) a mere facade that has nothing to do with something deeper within, potentially becoming a real threat to their own child.

Another such case is that of Ann. Lowen says of this woman that

she had a constant smile on her face to show the world how happy and content she was. Yet this expression was belied by a tight, square jaw and a flat forehead, which gave her face a grim look. Ann was unaware of this contradiction. She was identified with the smiling, happy image, and she saw herself as a person who was responsible, considerate, and helpful. She had always been a "good" girl, doing what was expected of her and taking care of her younger siblings. After she grew up, she continued this pattern of behavior—it had become second nature to her. Yet on some deep level, it left her dissatisfied and unfulfilled.

Ann's smile was a façade erected to hide her unhappiness from the world and from herself. The image of the happy young woman bore little relationship to the reality of her being or her feelings. How did that image arise? Ann mentioned that her father used to tell her to put on a happy face regardless of how she felt. No one would love a sad-looking person. So Ann denied her feelings and adopted an image that would be acceptable to her father. In the process, she had to sacrifice her true self.

These cases presented by Lowen clearly show how the construction of an idealized image of a capable and valid person, expressed through objective and demonstrable achievements, which characterizes E3 conservation, is nothing more than a way to disguise, to themselves and others, a dramatic lack of self-love, a consequence of having been forced to reject their own feelings for another more acceptable. Even more dramatic is the fact that our culture precisely celebrates this as a non-psychopathological way of life.

Federico Navarro, an Italian neuropsychiatrist and follower of Wilhelm Reich, comments on the rigid character, and some insights may well be applied to the E3 conservation character. Navarro starts with the idea that anxiety is a manifestation of negative aggression directed towards oneself, dependent on a respiratory dysfunction caused by diaphragmatic blockage. All bodily and hence character rigidity is linked to deeper tension and blockage of contact through deficient breathing. Not breathing to avoid feeling. The E3 is one of the most anxious of the Enneagram personalities, always on alert, and attempts to solve their anxiety in the wrong way, through action. Therefore, they don't address the basic issue of the lack of internal contact.

The conservation subtype is more linked to survival issues. According to vegetotherapy, sleep, hunger and sex are expressions of the conservation instinct. It's an instinct related to the cervical ring, located in the neck. Navarro argues:

The limitation of neck movements reduces perceptual amplitude, and this makes the person lose sight of the whole, privileging the personal. Their worldview is narrowed and conditioned by their sociocultural environment and the ego ideal proposed that the person must achieve in order not to despise themselves. [...] As our society favors what is victorious, competitive, performance-oriented, and superior, the Atlas complex is reinforced, meaning the personality that carries the world on its shoulders, assuming many responsibilities and showcasing its efficiency.

Navarro completes his description of the rigid type as follows:

Due to the split between the head and the body (caused by neck stiffness), there is non-rational support, with a preference for social roles over social function, the idea of living for others and not with others [...] ends up blocking their emotions [...] favoring technology against science and art.

Beyond these fragmented references in specialized literature, it can be stated that there is no equivalent in the academic world for E3 conservation, due to its optimal social adaptation and the fact that the conventional criterion of personality pathology cannot register it.

The sexual subtype

In the sexual E3, the passion is primarily focused on being loved. These individuals use seduction to attract and please, especially the opposite sex. The falseness consists of making the other believe that they will always be loved and cared for. They also believe this themselves and sacrifice instinct and desire to be what the other desires, with the fantasy that this will make them loved and accepted. Or they transform desire into seduction in order to be desired and loved.

As Claudio Naranjo pointed out, E3 coincides with what Fromm called *the marketing orientation*. A basic feature in this orientation is that of concern with self-presentation in a "personality market." Sexual E3s seek success with their partners by selling themselves with sex

appeal or attractiveness, offering intimacy, tenderness, care, and an “I will always love you” message; the strategy is complacency. They cultivate sexual attractiveness and manipulate their image to achieve that goal. Although they may appear cheerful, and their attitude may seem optimistic, brimming with self-confidence and happiness, the sexual E3 character is rather insecure and timid compared to the social and conservation subtypes.

Karen Horney describes ten patterns of needs: the need for recognition, the need for social prestige, the need for control... which, when exaggerated or distorted, become neurotic. As such, they can be divided into three groups of adaptation strategies: submission, which is the movement of *going toward*; aggression, which is *going against*; and withdrawal, which is *moving away*.

The sexual E3 presents an exaggerated need for affection and approval, and their movement is *going toward*, which is manifested in their behavior as compulsive seduction and indulgence, in order to fill their insatiable hunger to be loved, due to their lack of intrinsic love for their inner child. As a child, they learned that rebellion is dangerous and that pleasing is the best strategy as protection for their heart: “If I can make you love me, you won’t hurt me, and I feel valued.”

Sexual E3s are willing to pay any price, endure the greatest cruelty to feel loved. Self-expression can no longer be spontaneous because it goes through an unconscious filter that is scanning the situation and people in case there is a possibility of rejection. The strategy of guessing (an unconscious and automatic process) what is expected of them to be accepted is also generated.

All of this expresses the loss of healthy self-esteem, where one takes oneself as a reference. On the one hand, there is pride, which is oriented in their idealized being as a man or woman without shadows and needs to avoid anything that threatens their self-generated and idealized image. On the other hand, this loss is experienced as the existential need to have a partner. Everyone has this need, but in sexual E3, it becomes the neurotic obsession of having someone confirm that they are loved and supporting them in walking through life. This includes the idea that erotic love will solve all problems.

When the need to be loved is not satisfied, they plunge into anxiety, feel lost, and life loses its charm, due to the resignation and melancholy that arise when the lack of a partner or an unhappy relationship becomes confirmation of low self-esteem. It can lead to such an existential crisis that suicide is not uncommon in a sexual E3 when they lose hope of finding the ideal partner.

Karen Horney speaks of *morbid dependency* to describe people who depend on their partner in a neurotic way, for whom erotic love is equivalent to “the keys to paradise.” The German psychoanalyst dedicates an entire chapter in her book *Neurosis and Human Growth* to this personality. There, she describes its dependency, which awaits the fulfillment of expectations of love and affection in relationships, and the annulment of its essence as an adaptive strategy, which is so profound that it implies enormous suffering.

This personality has a very controlling superego that constantly dictates how one should be: kind, without feeling personally hurt, even more loving and generous, etc. But the most important thing is to ensure that the relationship is harmonious at all times and to be loved by the partner through one’s beauty in image and behavior.

If the relationship is based on unhealthy patterns, the person experiences it as a failure, which motivates them even more to strive for it, preventing them from separating from unsatisfactory relationships. And here comes a double strategy of the sexual E3: They cannot separate, and this seems to be an “ability to give and love” (of course, neurotic), which, on the one hand, favors manipulation through the victimhood and weakness they feel, and on the other, helps strengthen the idealized self, with the idea that they simply deserve to be loved for so much kindness (repressing all uncomfortable and censored feelings in the unconscious, especially those that may conflict with the partner or lead to rebellion against others’ expectations and manipulations) and a vulnerability that manifests as a secret pride.

According to Horney, this personality represses its expansive instincts, which generates weakness. This weakness is compensated by the attempt to please and be liked and is also reflected in the choice of a partner who promises the instinctive strength they lack and thus protects them. For Horney, the problem often starts with the partners they choose. In their relationships, the projected and admired strength is often expressed in the idealized person as violence and aggressive arrogance. Here, the sexual E3 enters into conflict because the aggression of the arrogant person is so humiliating that it generates enormous repressed rejection within them. This type, Horney asserts, idealizes the ability to handle life with arrogance and aggression. As a neurotic adaptation, they try to resolve internal conflict and the loss of their instinctive strength by seeking ideal love outside themselves with a partner who compensates for the strength they have nullified.

As the sexual E3 is a melancholic character with a chronic yet subtle sadness, it can be confused with the social E4. They easily perceive themselves as a victim and manipulate through identification with shyness, weakness, and delicacy.

For this reason, we believe that the sexual E3 also falls into this dependent character, much like the social E4, as mentioned by Claudio in his book *Character and Neurosis* for Enneatype IV in general. Unlike E4, the sexual E3 avoids falling into an internal state that could be described as living in a “sea of tears” or a mentally addicted state to sadness, victimhood, and lack. Instead, sexual E3s compensate for the internal lack and dependence on a partner with projected images of an immaculate life and family, portraying a controlled fullness.

This would be the manifestation of the “AntiEros” of our time, which robs Eros of its strength precisely because life and death embrace in the surrender of essence, experiencing the fullness of life through death itself. A vital impoverishment expressed in the idealization of the *perfect woman*, with the aseptic and sterile beauty of Hollywood’s female stars, representing the sexual E3 in the collective imagination. Thus, the life of the sexual E3 revolves around the addiction to having an erotic partner who confirms what they most desire: to feel alive and complete again “when they finally achieve self-love,” believing they will find it in the loving attitude of the other.

We believe that the sexual E3 is a mixed character, being a *hysteric rigid* with oral and psychopathic traits, as well as narcissistic components.

This character is formed from a wound in the oral phase, not having had sufficiently good mothering. This lack of a mother is attempted to be compensated for, at the beginning of the Oedipal stage, through the desire for the father, wishing for what they didn’t have with the mother, and aspects of narcissism and psychopathy are fixed there.

In our literature research, we found descriptions that align with the sexual E3 pattern. The characters described that most coincide with it are the phallic-narcissistic and hysteric characters described by Lowen as narcissistic subtypes (a rigid system with significant psychopathic components) and the hysteric personality described by Kernberg.

Claudio Naranjo recognizes the Enneatype III pattern in Kernberg’s description of the *hysterical personality*; we also find it fitting and recognize it as characteristic of the E3 sexual subtype. This is Kernberg’s description, as quoted by Naranjo:

A predominant feature in women with a hysterical personality is their emotional instability. They relate easily to others and are capable of maintaining warm emotional commitments (with the significant exception of a response to sexual sensitivity). They are often theatrical and even histrionic, but their way of showing affection is controlled and has aspects of social adaptation. The way they dramatize their emotional experiences may give the impression that their emotions are superficial, but exploration will reveal the opposite: their emotional experiences are authentic. These women are emotionally unstable but not inconsistent or unpredictable in their emotional reactions. They lose emotional control only selectively, in

front of some close individuals with whom they have intense conflicts, especially of a sexual and competitive nature. [...]

Although hysterical women are prone to emotional crises, they can distance themselves from these crises and evaluate them afterward with realism. [...] They can cry easily and tend toward sentimentality and romanticism, but their cognitive abilities are intact.

As mentioned above, the sexual E3 comprises components of the aforementioned hysterical personality or Lowen's hysterical rigid character, equivalent in men to the phallic-narcissistic character. For Johnson, this character is a rigid system with significant psychopathic (narcissistic) components.

In the transition from DSM-II to DSM-III, *hysterical personality disorder* disappeared from the official nomenclature of American psychiatry. In its place appeared the *histrionic personality disorder*, which in our opinion more clearly describes E2. Therefore, the sexual E3 subtype is not represented in the DSM-IV.

Glen O. Gabbard distinguishes the hysteric disorder from the histrionic, stating that the latter exhibits florid and generalized emotionality, impulsivity, and crude and inappropriate seduction, all accompanied by a lax superego. In the hysterical character, on the contrary, emotionality is restricted and confined; there's sexualized exhibitionism, the need to be loved, good impulse control, and a subtly attractive seduction. It presents ambition and competitiveness with a strict superego and some obsessive defenses. This last description is the one that most aligns with the sexual E3 subtype.

There is also a contrast between the hysterical and narcissistic characters. Hysterics are described as hypersensitive individuals who exaggerate feelings, while narcissists downplay them. Hysterics feel guilt and anxiety, whereas narcissists tend toward depression and emptiness. However, as Lowen points out, these distinctions are theoretical since often individuals exhibit both hysterical and narcissistic elements, as well as anxiety and depression at the same time.

In the hysterical-narcissistic character described by Lowen, a close relationship between narcissism and sexuality is observed. Similar to the phallic-narcissistic man, the hysterical woman described by Lowen is preoccupied with her sexual image. Her narcissism comes out in a tendency to be seductive and to measure her value by her sexual appeal. Being a woman, softness is her essential quality and receptivity is evident. She, too, is self-confident, often arrogant, vigorous, and impressive, seducing with her "feminine" charms.

In his book *The Language of the Body*, Lowen revisits the relationship established by psychoanalytic writers between the hysterical character and the genital conflict which arises out of the unresolved Oedipal situation. Every hysterical character approaches sexuality with an unconscious attitude derived from this situation, which expresses itself in an ambivalence towards the sexual object corresponding to the girl's attitude towards her father. For Lowen, the basis of the hysterical character structure is an ambivalent attitude towards the male. On the one hand, desire is blocked by a fear which has its roots in the original rejection of the child's sexuality by the father; on the other hand, there is inhibited anger towards him by the repressed longing. Thus, repressed anger and pride prevent a direct approach to the male. Nevertheless, the woman uses sexual gestures to seduce and attract him, enticing him into a sexually aggressive action. Sometimes, there is a show of resistance, overcome by force. Often, she submits and feels abused and innocent because she is unaware of her provocation. Under the apparent submission is an aggressive attitude which leads to sexual discharge. The pursuit by the male tends to repair the narcissistic injury suffered by the father's rejection of the young girl's sexual love. The pattern of response is: teasing, resistance, and then submission, a cycle well represented in the movie *Lust, Caution*, where a woman seduces a powerful tyrant with the aim of deceiving him and becomes entangled in a story of infatuation and submission to his sadistic rule.

Lowen describes how, despite the rigidity and armoring of this character, the pelvis is more or less soft and sexually alive, with a sway of the hips which gives sex appeal. Although present in a rigid body where the superficial tensions are strong and limit fulness of discharge, the personality is divided between genitality and tender, loving feelings. A characteristic of the rigid character, according to Bioenergetics, is the division between the heart and sexuality:

The hysterical character functions without symptoms so long as the balance between energy production and discharge is maintained. But so long as this balance is maintained at a level other than one close to full capacity, life is relatively unexciting and meaningless.

Feelings of boredom, of being in a rut, of dissatisfaction are common in these individuals, who then pursue deeper feelings by flirting, seeking romance, and engaging in extramarital relations.

Lowen considers himself a phallic-narcissistic character, highlighting the close relationship he had with his mother and how he was the apple of her eye. This maternal or paternal need for control and possession diminishes the child's sense of self. They are seen as a trophy rather than as who they are, leading to the ego becoming bigger than the self and the development of a narcissistic personality, confused between who they are and what they represent for others.

Narcissists experience chronic insecurity and dissatisfaction, which is common in the sexual E3 character. However, the description of narcissism that aligns more closely with the sexual E3 is a type of narcissism described by Alexander Lowen. The creator of Bioenergetics designates narcissism as "the insanity of our time" and describes three types of narcissistic disorder based on the degree of self-alteration or loss:

1. Phallic-Narcissistic character,
2. Narcissistic character, and
3. Borderline personality.

The narcissist of the first type is the man dedicated to conquest. Reich describes him as someone positioned between the compulsion neurosis and hysteria, specifically aligning with the male sexual E3. Reich used the term "hysterical character" to describe a female personality structure equivalent to the phallic-narcissistic man.

Kohut described a narcissistically vulnerable type, prone to *self*-fragmentation. Glen O. Gabbard places these types as two opposite extremes on a continuum, calling the first oblivious narcissism and the second hypervigilant narcissism. The sexual E3 character corresponds more to the narcissism of the second type, highly sensitive to reactions of others, inhibited and shy, directing attention more towards others than toward self, and whose feelings are easily hurt.

The social subtype

What has been reflected on the preceding pages about the core narcissism of E3 has already allowed us to collect specific prevalent traits of the structure of the social E3. However, from an intrapsychic perspective, the social E3 subtype specifically exhibits what Bleichmar terms "secondary pathological narcissism" (Bleichmar, 1997). Faced with the impossibility of coping with certain narcissistic anxieties—ranging in degree from pure disintegration anxiety to feelings of dissatisfaction, envy, dependence, boredom, or emptiness—the individual will develop compensatory attempts to boost their self-esteem. The grandiose sense of self-importance thus becomes a compensatory defense that allows them to escape from these anxieties.

Noteworthy intrapsychic mechanisms include a demanding and perfectionist superego that relentlessly demands a supply of achievements. The person, under this internal pressure, needs to obtain the admiration of this superego. Success makes them feel grand, while failures in love, work crises, or therapy sessions make them feel bad.

On an interpersonal level, there is a tendency to denigrate or downgrade others to feel superior. When unsuccessful, they socially withdraw, exhibiting a narcissistic prideful abandonment, in the form of the message “I don’t need you.”

The most common compensations are not so much fantasies and behaviors of omnipotence or megalomania (which are closer to Enneatype VII) but rather the use of objects, such as narcissistic possessions (a nice house, a car, a brand-name watch), symbolizing the idealized status. Social E3 narcissistic patients need to position themselves as equals to the therapist, seeking an alliance against others. They struggle with dependence, sharing their difficulties, and connecting with their own limitations.

Histrionics, a core aspect of the Vanity character, has a particularly pronounced expression in the social E3 subtype. The *histrionic personality disorder* defined by the DSM-IV allows us to identify specific traits of the social E3. The most notable diagnostic feature is the general pattern of excessive emotionalism and the need to be the center of attention: the social E3 feels uncomfortable or even rejected in situations where they don’t achieve this. Therefore, they will do whatever it takes to impress others and keep the focus on themselves.

They display a seductive behavior, meticulously tending to their physical appearance. Their way of speaking is mainly subjective and lacks nuance, with assertive expressions but vague or diffuse arguments. They tend toward self-dramatization and exaggerated theatricality, often being the life of the party. Their emotional expression is superficial and changeable. They are highly suggestible and influenced by others, trends, or circumstances. In relation to authority figures, they can be trusting, believing they will solve problems extraordinarily. Finally, we are dealing with someone who tends to consider relationships to be more intimate than they actually are.

In terms of the bodily structure of the social subtype, both in men and women, it is lean, with a dry, more austere face; in a way, a “beautiful mask.”

Lastly, in terms of emotional dynamics, the social subtype brings the trait characteristics to rigidity: it is more demanding, more perfectionist, more chameleon-like, more service-oriented, more efficient, more exquisite, more dynamic and entrepreneurial, more competitive, and more fierce (with an aggressive impulse close to the surface). It has more resistance to stopping and a greater need to drain its anxiety through action, and it is the one that fears staying in the void the most. It uses literalness as an aggressive weapon and is more ruthless. Socially, it is more successful and more mercantile. Its image is more diffuse than the other subtypes, producing insecurity and a constant need for image creation.