

Machine, Metaphor, and the Writer: A Jungian View

Bettina Knapp



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The brilliant and far-reaching comparative and interdisciplinary work explores the impact of the machine on the literary mind and its ramifications. Knapp displays an unusual command of world literatures in dealing with a topic that is of outstanding importance to a broad field of scholars and generalists, including those concerned with contemporary literature, comparative literature, and Jungian theory. It is very much in line with the current trend toward interdisciplinary studies.

Knapp offers powerful and original analyses of texts by French, Irish, Japanese, Israeli, German, Polish, and American authors: Alfred Jarry, James Joyce, Stanislaw I. Witkiewicz, Luigi Pirandello, Antoine de Saint-Exupery, Juan Jose Arreola, S. Yizhar, Jiro Osaragi, N. K. Narayan, Peter Handke, and Sam Shepard. The authors explored here were deeply affected by the changes occurring in their lives and times and reacted to these ideationally and feelingly. In some of their writings, images, characters, and plots were used to create monstrous and robotlike individuals unable to accept the world around them and hence seeking to destroy it. Others of these writers attempted to understand and integrate the environmental, human, and mechanical alterations taking place about them, and to transform these into positive attributes. The realization of the increasing domination of the machine, we see, catalyzed and mobilized each author into action. Each in his own way spoke his mind, revealing the corrosive and beneficial factors in his world as he saw them.

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