

Freud: Memory and the Metapsychological Witch

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I, Manuel Batsch confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

In this study, I explore the connections between Freud's metapsychology and the practice of psychoanalysis. Until his very last papers, Freud continued to assert that the specificity of the genuine psychoanalytic cure was the research of infantile memory. In 1937 he wrote: "What we are in search of is a picture of the patient's forgotten years that shall be alike trustworthy and in all essential respects complete" (Freud, 1937b, p.258).

In order to perceive how this picture of a patient's forgotten years is to be found *not* in the discovery of an archive-memory but through the construction of an infantile mode of thinking, it is necessary to go back to a theory of memory that Freud elaborated during the first twenty years of his metapsychological work.

Reminiscences are not faithful representations of the past but the outcome of a conflict between conscious and unconscious ideas. In the same way, memory is not an apparatus that registers the past but a system that inscribes contingent scenes of existence within a psychological destiny. Freud researched this psychological destiny through the description of an unconscious mode of thinking and through the invention of a new form of writing: a metapsychological writing.

I propose to read the construction of a metapsychology as a grid on which one can write unconscious ideas. My focus throughout this work is to understand the functioning of the metapsychological grid and to answer the question of what it reveals in the clinical encounter.

I discovered that the answer to this question could be located in Freud's clinical paper *A Child is Being Beaten* (1919) and it involved the construction of a masochistic phantasy. *A Child is Being Beaten* stands, therefore, outside the timescale of this thesis, as an icon that captures the discursive argument of the whole.

Chapter 1

Construction of the Question

The Seed and the Soil

In an appendix to *Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, James Strachey listed no less than sixteen of Freud's papers that aim at giving a definition of psychoanalysis.¹ As a starting point, I will use the longest definition that Freud proposed for psychoanalysis, which is to be found in *Two Encyclopaedia Articles*:

Psycho-analysis is the name (1) of a procedure for the investigation of mental processes which are almost inaccessible in any other way, (2) of a method (based upon that investigation) for the treatment of neurotic disorders and (3) of a collection of psychological information obtained along those lines, which is gradually being accumulated into a new scientific discipline. (Freud, 1923[1922], p.235)

The assertions of this definition can be transformed and developed into three interrogations:

1. A hermeneutical interrogation: In the first point of the definition, Freud challenges the dogma of psychological knowledge, according to which what is mental is identical with what is conscious. Conversely, Freud proposes that what is in the mind does not coincide with what one is conscious of and, as a consequence, some mental processes are only accessible through interpretations. Hence the hermeneutical interrogation is: *how to justify the validity of those interpretations?*
2. A clinical interrogation: In the second point of the definition, Freud challenges the dogma of psychiatric practice according to which mental life can be clearly divided between the normal and the pathological. The psychoanalytic investigation establishes continuity between normality and pathology. The mental mechanisms behind a symptom are equivalent to those behind a dream, and can

¹ In Freud, 1910a, p.56.

be explored in the same way. Moreover, because Freud proposes a model in which mental life operates beyond the principle of homeostasis, recovery from psychic disorders does not consist in a return to a state of balance. Hence the clinical interrogation is: *is there an a-symptomatic mental life?*

3. An epistemological interrogation: In the third point of the definition, Freud challenges the dogmas of positivism around the wide question of what constitutes a scientific method. Positivism used mathematical-physics as the model of all scientific discourses. The Freudian epistemological bet is that a science can exist whose object of study is human subjectivity. Given that one accepts this premise, such a science would develop its own model, which would differ from those of other sciences. At the heart of the psychoanalytic model there is the hypothesis that a form of scientific knowledge can emerge from the analytical encounter, the encounter between two subjectivities. The “collection of psychological information” (*Ibid.*, p.235) that constitutes the empirical material of psychoanalysis comes from such an encounter. Hence the epistemological interrogation is: *what would be the model of a science whose object of study is human subjectivity?*

Interestingly enough, these three interrogations correspond to the main criticisms through which psychoanalysis is attacked:

1. The hermeneutic criticism challenges the validity of psychoanalytic interpretations. In particular, the moral attack that reproaches the pansexual dimension of psychoanalytic interpretations is to be found in this category.
2. The clinical criticism challenges the effectiveness of the psychoanalytical cure.
3. The epistemological criticism argues that psychoanalysis is not a science.

A definition is a kind of birth certificate for an idea. Thus, the birth certificate of psychoanalysis questions hermeneutics, psychiatry and positivism. But this birth certificate also contains an idea that is the starting point of all that follows: the idea of the Freudian unconscious. Indeed, in this definition, Freud mentions the unconscious

through a sort of circumlocution: ‘inaccessible mental processes’ (*Ibid.*, p.235). It is from the premises of these ‘inaccessible mental processes’ that psychoanalysis is defined as a) what investigates them, b) a cure that makes use of these investigations and c) a form of knowledge about these processes.

If the definition given in *Two Encyclopaedia Articles* is the most used by Freud’s commentators it is not only because it is the most exhaustive. I believe that it is also because this definition establishes the link between the idea of the unconscious and psychoanalysis as a cultural reality. Although the unconscious is not mentioned directly, this definition shows clearly that the discovery of the Freudian unconscious is the starting point of psychoanalysis as a new cultural form: a new medical practice with its rules and its ethic (the analytical cure); new institutions and the power created by these institutions (the various psychoanalytic societies as well as the psychoanalytic journals and publishing houses); a new vocabulary and, in a more general way, a new form of knowledge.

It is in its consideration as a new cultural form that psychoanalysis is engaged with the pre-existent disciplines: hermeneutics, psychiatry and positivism, behind which we find Freud’s dialogue with the most canonical cultural forms of the Western world: philosophy, medicine and science. My suggestion is that Freud’s idea of the unconscious is both what founds this triple dialogue and what constitutes its limits. Indeed, I propose to think of Freud’s idea of the unconscious not as a hermeneutic concept, nor as a positivist hypothesis, nor as a clinical fact but as a metapsychological speculation. The idea I would like to explore in this study is that metapsychology is at the basis of an epistemological model particular to psychoanalysis.

Metapsychology is Freud’s original gesture by which clinical material is read beyond empirical observation in order to extract knowledge from it. I would suspect that it is precisely what Wittgenstein had in mind when he expressed this intuition about Freud:

I believe that my originality (if that is the right word) is an originality belonging to the soil rather than the seed. (Perhaps I have no seed of my own.) Sow a seed in my soil and it will grow differently than it would in any other soil. Freud's originality too was like this, I think. I have always believed -

without knowing why - that the real seed of psychoanalysis came from Breuer, not from Freud. Of course Breuer's seed-grain can only have been quite tiny. Courage is always original (Wittgenstein, 1998[1977], p.36).²

Mauro Mancica described Wittgenstein's assessment as "a gross historical error, for psychoanalysis was actually born when Freud separated from Breuer and forged a bond with Fliess" (Mancica, 2002, p.170). However, I believe that Wittgenstein's intuition contains an element of truth. Freud's breaking away from Breuer and joining Fliess corresponded to the attempt to make sense of clinical material through a general speculative framework. As Paul-Laurent Assoun has proposed, in the genealogy of the Freudian discovery, Breuer personifies the therapeutic act and Fliess the theoretical decision (Assoun, 2007). Thus, the truth in Wittgenstein's remark is not so much a historical truth - I am certainly not proposing that Freud would have stolen the real germ of his discovery from Breuer - but rather a narrative truth. It describes how a key moment in the emergence of psychoanalysis came from the encounter between the clinical material collected by Breuer in his cure of Anna O. and Freud's reflections about mental life. Breuer and Freud consider the same clinical material, but while the former retains an empirical position toward it, the latter gradually made sense of it within a larger speculative framework. In other words, what is at stake is the encounter between the seed-germ of Anna O's "talking cure" (Breuer, 1893, p.30) and the soil of Freud's metapsychology.

Cranefield rightly wrote that, "If by psycho-analysis is understood a discipline relying on the therapeutic technique of free association, psycho-analysis was solely Freud's discovery" (Cranefield, 1958, p.322). The idea I would like to propose is that the speculative research that Freud named metapsychology led him to evolve from the cathartic model of the talking cure toward the model of free association in the psychoanalytic encounter. Freud's 'originality' would be the invention of a speculative theory that reorganised the hermeneutic of the symptom around the patient's psychic reality. The empirical doctor would put aside the noise of psychic reality, seeing it as a contamination of the 'objective' and recordable clinical material. On the contrary, Freud installs psychic reality at the centre of his encounter with the patient.

² Wittgenstein wrote this note in 1939.

This seems to me to be a revolution of the medical encounter. I think that it is Freud's invention of metapsychology that makes this revolution possible. With metapsychology, the doctor acquires a speculative tool with which to observe the emergence of psychic reality in the encounter with a patient. I translate Wittgenstein's remark into the following hypothesis: metapsychology is a way for Freud to extract a new knowledge from material that is already available. Thus, the invention of metapsychology would be the founding moment – the soil – of a psychoanalytic epistemology: a new system to create knowledge about the psyche.

It is striking that Freud invents these two neologisms simultaneously: psychoanalysis and metapsychology. In a paper originally written in French, *Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses*, Freud uses the term psychoanalysis for the first time:

I owe my results to a new method of psycho-analysis, Josef Breuer's exploratory procedure; it is a little intricate, but it is irreplaceable, so fertile has it shown itself to be in throwing light upon the obscure paths of unconscious ideation. (Freud, 1896a, p.151)

This paper was published on 30th March 1896 but sent off to the *Revue Neurologique* on 5th February 1896.³ Eight days later, in a letter to Wilhelm Fliess, Freud creates the word metapsychology:

I am continually occupied with psychology – really metapsychology (Letter to Fliess of 13th February 1896, see Masson, 1985, p.172).

Psychoanalysis: intended for a scientific publication, metapsychology: used in the secrecy of a private correspondence. So could it be that metapsychology is the other name, the esoteric name of psychoanalysis? Rather than following this avenue of research, I would like to stress the interdependence of a method: the practice of psychoanalysis – and a concept: metapsychology, as if one could not exist without the other or, more precisely, as if the existence of one was necessary for the existence of the other.

³ Letter of 6th February 1896 from Freud to Fliess (in Masson, 1985, p.170).

If the link between the psychoanalytic cure and metapsychology existed in Freud's thought since their birth, then what is the exact nature of this link? Epicurus created an immanent philosophy of existence from the physical supposition of the atom. Deleuze explains that Spinoza's novelty in the history of ideas was that Spinoza conceived of his ethics as a consequence of his ontology: a system of values that stems from a theory of being (Deleuze, 1981). I propose to think of the pair: *metapsychology/analytical cure* in the same way as the pair: *atom/Epicureanism* or of: *Spinoza's ontology/ Spinoza's ethics*. In other words, I want to research whether Freud's new clinical practice could have stemmed from a form of knowledge that he called metapsychology.

The broad question I am trying to answer is: what is the function of metapsychology in Freud's psychoanalytical practice? It has almost become a dogma that Freud's metapsychological writings distance the reader from the clinical experience and yet the intuition which has led to the current investigation is that a metapsychological way of thinking makes operative a form of clinical practice specific to psychoanalysis. The demolition of Freud's metapsychology would aim at the demolition of this specificity of the analytical cure. Hence the question would be: what is this specificity made operative by metapsychology?

If the psychoanalytical clinic generates positivist discoveries and hermeneutic interpretations, it also generates metapsychological creations. Through metapsychology the psychoanalytic dialogue generates a creative linguistic mode of thought because metapsychology puts the emergence of the analysand's psychic reality at the centre of the analytical encounter. In the analyst-analysand dialogue an unexpected part of the analysand's subjectivity appears in the creation of a way of thinking through language. It is by this aspect of the cure that – using Foucauldian terminology – psychoanalysis re-establishes the dialogue with unreason. It is also this aspect that makes psychoanalysis a form of knowledge about the creation of language. Hence metapsychology would be necessary in order for the analysand to create a way of thinking through language about unthinkable parts of his psychic reality. Such are the initial intuitions that have led me to formulate the main question from which this study on Freud originates: what is the function of metapsychology in Freud's psychoanalytic practice? What kind of psychoanalytical clinic was made possible by Freud's metapsychological corpus?

In a first moment that moves from the emergence of metapsychology to the first attempt to systematize its concepts in the 1915 papers, metapsychology appeared in Freud's work as a new form of knowledge, which enabled him to put unconscious processes into writing. In this study, I will try to describe the epistemological nature of this metapsychological knowledge in order to understand the relationship between Freud's speculative theory of the unconscious and its medical practice. I think that the understanding of this relationship is composed of a double movement: to understand, on the one hand, how Freud's metapsychology operates as a conceptual framework – a sort of container – for Freud's clinical discoveries, and on the other hand, to understand how metapsychology, as an ontological discourse on the unconscious, casts a new light on the signs generated by Freud's clinical empiricism.

I will conduct my reading of the emergence of Freud's metapsychology through three types of inquiry:

1. What is the epistemological nature of Freud's metapsychological speculations on the unconscious?
2. What are the formal means by which Freud wrote his metapsychological speculations?
3. How did Freud's metapsychological speculations appear in his clinic?

“Remaining a Prisoner in Order to Escape!”

In his introduction to *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, Jean Laplanche appeals to “a latent and partially unconscious history” of psychoanalysis in order to define the problem of the objects of psychoanalysis. In opposition to a manifest history, there would be a latent history of Freud's thought, “entailing an evolution through reversals and crises, mediated by contradictions whose status will not be immediately apparent in any attempt to situate them” (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.1). For such a history to appear, Laplanche proposed a free-floating reading of Freud's texts, whereby one is “perpetually prepared to treat at the same level sequences of varying length: of words (even if they make no sense), of sentences, and of texts” (*Ibid.*, p.4).

Laplanche's new reading of Freud's theory of seduction was guided by such a method. Against the manifest history of psychoanalysis that describes Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory as the true beginning of psychoanalysis, Laplanche pointed out that fundamental aspects of psychoanalysis are articulated by this very theory: namely the encounter between the infant in need of care and the sexual unconscious of the adult. This canonical example illustrates how, rather than studying the history of Freud's theory as a dialectic reasoning that tends towards a final aim, a latent history would try to reveal the hidden themes that shape the specificity of Freud's thought.

My hypothesis is that Freud's metapsychology would be the archive of this latent history of psychoanalysis. More than an attempt to theorize psychical processes beyond consciousness, it would be a way to register the unconscious dimension of psychoanalytic concepts. In other words, metapsychology would be the unconscious of Freud's theory, a sort of 'negative psychology' that is reminiscent of the mystical traditions of 'negative theology' in which "saying is never an affirmative definitory naming, as what is named is always Other (...) the breakdown of speech before the unknowable" (Emery, 2000, p.814). In a paper discussing the psychoanalytic notion of truth from within a non-positivistic framework, Gunnar Karlsson compares the problem raised by a science of the unconscious with negative theology: "What other science investigates something which is defined by the prefix un-?! The only resembling discipline, in this sense, may be the so-called 'negative theology', which claims that an understanding of God can only be reached by stating what God is not" (Karlsson, 2000, p.4).

The point of this comparison between metapsychology and negative theology is not to represent the unconscious as a mystical unknowable entity, rather, it is to indicate that unconscious processes generate ideas of a type that exceed the framework of any systematic psychological knowledge. Freud's discovery of the unconscious through the practice of analysis has generated new forms of knowledge and parts of this knowledge resist being structured around the usual categories of science, philosophy or logic. Metapsychology would be a way to formalise this type of knowledge that resists the usual categories of the logos, a sort of archive of the vanishing points that are found in the systemic aspects of the theory.

From this angle, there are resonances between metapsychology at the theoretical level and dream at the individual level. Just as in the genesis of psychoanalytic knowledge metapsychology operates as an archive of what resists being theorised, in the genesis of the individual's subjectivity dreams function as an archive of the signs that have not been symbolized. Freud forges a system in which "dreaming is another kind of remembering" (Freud, 1918[1914], p.51). A dream can contain memories that have never been experienced subjectively by the dreamer because they are made of ideas that exceed his capacity to symbolise. Dreaming shows that infantile ideas are irreducible to consciousness, the most striking example being dreams of 'primal scenes'.

In *The Wolf Man*, Freud explains that primal scenes "are not reproduced during the treatment as recollections, they are the products of construction" (*Ibid.*, p.50-51). In his investigation into the origins of subjective life, Freud presents a view in which memories from primal scenes are archived through a code that goes beyond any experience lived by the subject, belonging instead to a hypothetical primacy of the species. Dreams or neurotic symptoms are the expression of such a non-verbal system of primal ideas, primal ideas for which the work of construction in analysis will aim to create a verbal form. Dreaming would be a way of remembering that represents ideas with no subjective origins: a way of remembering that shows the impossibility of a primal memory. In a similar way, metapsychology would be the dream of psychoanalytic theory: a system that shows the impossibility of systematizing the unconscious.

In Louis Althusser's moving autobiography *The Future Lasts a Long Time*, which is also an account of his analysis, he explains an escape plan he had conceived, while a prisoner of war in Germany during the Second World War:

Having noticed that the Germans alerted all the police and troops within a very wide radius once they realised one of us had escaped, which usually resulted in the capture of the daring individual concerned, I decided the surest way of escaping would be to *let them believe someone had escaped*, wait until the general alert was over which never lasted more than three or four weeks, and then escape *after that*. What I therefore had to do was *disappear* from the camp (...) and let them think I had gone, before actually going once the alert was

past. To do this, I did not actually have to escape, but simply disappear, in other words hide within the camp itself (which was not impossible) and only then vanish into thin air, when all the measures adopted for the alert had been dropped (...) In essence I had found a way of escaping from the camp *without actually leaving* and of remaining a prisoner in order to escape! (Althusser, 1993[1992], p.108).

Althusser never carried out his plan but he describes how the principle of remaining within an ideology in order to escape it will become a significant metaphor for his intellectual path. My research hypothesis in this thesis is that Freud's metapsychology constitutes an endeavour similar to the one described by Althusser in his escape plan. In his metapsychological texts, Freud would describe a mode of thinking that resists being systematised through a categorisation of signs: it escapes the jail of semiotics from within a semiotics of the psychical apparatus.

With the psychoanalytic framework, Freud invented a new practice of psychic investigation utilising a dialogue formed from the resistance to free associations and transference. This new practice studies an unconscious mode of thinking that generates signs whose description goes beyond the conceptual and formal resources Freud had at his disposal. Freud's metapsychological texts are recordings of the attempt to describe the signs beyond those resources in the very language of those resources. Through such notions as 'proton pseudos', 'unconscious wishes', 'memory-traces' or 'thing-presentations' Freud describes the products of unconscious processes, which cannot be reduced to the categories of consciousness and of introspection. He presents us with an unconscious mode of thinking that produces signs, which manifest themselves in the subjectivity, for instance through dreams or neurotic symptoms, under the form of an irreducible otherness.

The objects of my research will be Freud's metapsychological texts from the genesis of a metapsychological perspective in the correspondence with Fliess to the first attempt to found a metapsychological system in the *Papers on Metapsychology* that Freud wrote around 1915. Twenty years of research around intentional ideas that appear to consciousness only under a distorted form and that have given birth to very peculiar texts amongst Freud's work. From scientific articles to clinical cases, from papers on psychoanalytic

technique addressed to his colleagues to more didactical papers intended for a larger audience in order to explain the main analytical concepts or from semi-autobiographical papers in which Freud presents his version of his intellectual path to papers of applied psychoanalysis: there is a great diversity of textual categories in Freud's work. Amongst this wide range of 'Freudian genres', the metapsychological texts seem very different from the rest. As a reader of Freud's work, one feels almost nervously that the metapsychological texts display a form of knowledge that operates in a very peculiar way. Jean-Claude Rolland describes with great accuracy this impression when he writes:

whoever reads with sustained attention any one of these papers [the metapsychological texts] soon discovers to what extent this speculation distances him from the clinical sphere, to the point of making him lose sight of it; but he also discovers how, behind the impeccable figuration Freud gives to this or that concept (...) thought comes to life in extravagance and luxury, a thought that I would say engages with its object more than just explaining it (...) The writing in these papers is choppy, in turn advancing and retreating, sometimes abrupt as if it were not possible, for example, to elucidate the drive it speaks of except by submitting to its fits and starts and its violence (...)

Unique writing, invocative more than evocative, calling for, demanding an equally unique reading founded on empathy, on the reader's unconscious participation in the author's unconscious. We do not read the metapsychological texts in the way we read Freud's clinical cases or 'The Interpretation of Dreams', not because they are more difficult because more abstract, would resist comprehension or committing to memory more vigorously, but because they compel the reader to confront the strangeness of what they bear witness to more than actually formulating it: strangeness of the melancholy colouring any identificatory movement of the ego, strangeness of the unconscious movements which shy away just as they show themselves, strangeness of the affect that, arising makes the ego oscillate between pain and pleasure. The particular status conferred on metapsychology at the heart of the Freudian *oeuvre* is mainly owed to that fact that this production of the *esprit* is saturated with strangeness, a strangeness we must guard against assimilating if we want it to remain operative, a strangeness, finally, that prizes the dizzying

proximity it entertains with what Freud liked to call the ‘psychology of the depths’ (Rolland, 2005, pp.96-97).

As suggested by Rolland, I believe that the ‘strangeness’ experienced by the reader of Freud’s metapsychological texts comes from the novelty of the objects they describe. For a period of twenty years Freud’s metapsychological research was an attempt to write the nature of intentional forms generated by an unconscious mode of thinking. It seems to me that the portrait of the unconscious system drawn by Freud at this time constitutes the most subversive representation of the unconscious that is to be found in his work. Freud’s metapsychological notion of the unconscious is subversive because it puts forward a model that cannot be fully transcribed in pre-existing forms of intelligible discourses. It is an epistemological kind of subversion.

From his clinical material, Freud discovers psychical processes that cannot be explained through observation and induction and that cannot be understood through interpretation of meanings. In Freud’s metapsychology, the dynamic unconscious is neither a positivist object of science nor an idealist metaphysical substance and neither methods based on causality nor methods based on meaning can give an account of metapsychological unconscious processes. There is a rupture of the usual forms of rational intelligible discourse, in other words a breakthrough from the logos. I will try to read Freud’s first metapsychology beyond the logos in order to both understand and describe this breakthrough.

However, my aim will not be to understand how Freud perceived his work in dialogue with the main form of knowledge of his time. There are many instances of Freud’s complex positioning towards discourses of knowledge. For instance, his claim in the *New Introductory Lectures* that the only acceptable *Weltanschauung* for psychoanalysis is a scientific one (Freud, 1933[1932]a, p. 158) and the same year in his letter to Einstein the declaration rhetorically presented as a question that “every science comes in the end to a kind of mythology” (Freud, 1933[1932]b, p.211). My methodology will not consist in analysing how the complexity of this apparent paradox is linked with a metapsychology of the unconscious. My attempt will rather be to read in the first sequence of Freud’s metapsychology the discovery that it was impossible to systematize unconscious processes in a positivist or a hermeneutic framework.

Paraphrasing Derrida, who writes in *Dissemination* of a non-formalizable programme “for reasons that can be formalized” (Derrida, 1981[1972]a, p. 52), I will try to systematize the metapsychological processes that resist being described in a systematic way. The purpose of my reading of Freud’s metapsychology will therefore be twofold: to provide an analysis of the functioning of unconscious processes whose meanings cannot be interpreted through a ready-made code and whose determinism cannot be put in an equation; at the same time, to examine the formal means invented by Freud to write about those processes.

It was Jacques Derrida who first attempted to understand how Freud’s formalisation of the unconscious challenged the main intelligible discourses of his time. In March 1966, André Green invited Derrida to give a paper at his seminar in the Parisian Psychoanalytic Institute. François Dosse in his book on structuralism has described 1966 as the peak year of the structuralist movement (Dosse, 1991). According to Derrida’s biographer Benoît Peeters, Green had invited Derrida in order to introduce structuralism to the Parisian Institute from where Lacan had been expelled in 1953. The lecture given by Derrida – whose transcript would be published the next year as a chapter of *Writing and Difference* under the title *Freud and the Scene of Writing* – was in fact a rather curious introduction to a structuralist reading of Freud.

One of Derrida’s purposes in this paper is precisely to point out the limitations of a structuralist reading of Freud and, more generally, to use Freud to undermine the structuralist notion of the sign. In the note preceding his paper, Derrida explains that his intention in giving this lecture was to explore whether the notions of *presence* and *archi-trace* could “have a place within the field of psychoanalytic questioning” (Derrida, (1978[1967]), p.246). In *Of Grammatology* (Derrida, 1976[1967]), Derrida had developed the concepts of *presence* and *archi-trace* as a critique of Saussure’s logocentric notion of the sign and *Freud and the Scene of Writing* shows how this critique finds a crucial point of articulation with Freud’s metapsychology.

It seems that from the beginning, Derrida had entertained an ambivalent relationship with the ‘structuralist adventure’. In an interview that he gave for the newspaper *Le Monde* some years later, he defined his method of deconstruction as both “a structuralist

and an anti-structuralist gesture: one dismantles an edifice, an artefact in order to reveal its structures, its veins or its skeleton but at the same time one shows the precariousness of a formal structure that does not explain anything since it is not a centre, not a principle, not a force, not even a law of events in the more general sense”.⁴ I believe that this clarifies Derrida’s position in regards to structuralism: deconstruction is an operation by which the code that structures an experience is revealed, but more fundamentally, Derrida’s deconstruction points out what it is in an experience that escapes the code.

Derrida subscribes only partially to the structuralist application of Saussure’s linguistic model to the study of social phenomena. On the one hand, Derrida seems to accept that a social phenomenon can be studied as a system – a set of elements that are defined by their relations to each other – but on the other hand, his main philosophical endeavour at the end of the sixties was to show how there is always an aspect of the phenomenon that escapes the determinism of this system. Derrida embraced structuralism as a way to think beyond the humanist philosophies of Sartre’s existentialism or of phenomenological analysis. However, from his first publications he also attempted to think beyond structuralism and chapter two of *Of Grammatology* is often recognised as the text that made the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism possible: from “a philosophy of structures” to “a philosophy of differences” (Maniglier, 2011, p.371).

As I understand it, Derrida’s attempt to think beyond structuralism rests on his intuition that there is always an aspect of man’s spiritual, intellectual and practical experience that escapes the interplay of structures. The philosophical form that this intuition takes is to be found in the critique developed by Derrida in *Of Grammatology* against a logocentric notion of the sign from Plato and Rousseau through to Saussure and Lévi-Strauss. Derrida wanted to reveal how throughout the history of western thought, logos associates the faculty of speech with the ideal of reason and intelligibility. Writing, in contrast, has been assigned a secondary status as a supplement to the truth of the spoken word. Scriptural language is seen as a distorted form of logos, a sort of monstrous offspring.

⁴ “Déconstruire, c’est un geste à la fois structuraliste et antistrukturaliste: on démonte une édification, un artefact, pour en faire apparaître les structures, les nervures ou le squelette, mais aussi, simultanément, la précarité ruineuse d’une structure formelle qui n’expliquait rien, n’étant ni un centre, ni un principe, ni une force, ni même la loi des événements, au sens le plus général de ce mot.” (Jacques Derrida interviewed by Christian Descamps, published in *Le Monde*, 31st January 1982, my translation in the text).

Against this logocentric paradigm, Derrida challenges the ‘secondariness’ of the sign: there was never an original time of the natural *phoné*-consciousness that would have been corrupted by the confusions of the signs, but there were “*always already*” transcriptions of signs. Hence, what is at stake in Derrida’s endeavour is not so much the rehabilitation of writing, but to undermine the idea of an origin in which the subject could enjoy his or her full presence to him or herself. As explained by Geoffrey Bennington, Derrida “*asserts, from the beginning, that the sign is at the beginning*. Which will imply very rapidly that there is no beginning, thing, or sign” (Bennington, 1993[1991], p.24).

Derrida’s objective is not to reverse the hierarchy of logos by questioning the hierarchy between the sign and the thing it represents or between writing and speech. Instead, Derrida attempts to challenge the very possibility of a hierarchy because there would never be a primal form of presence – and in reading Freud he finds a precious ally in this deconstruction of an absolute origin:

That the present in general is not primal but, rather, reconstituted, that it is not the absolute, wholly living form which constitutes experience, that there is no purity of the living present—such is the theme, formidable for metaphysics, which Freud, in a conceptual scheme unequal to the thing itself, would have us pursue. This pursuit is doubtless the only one which is exhausted neither within metaphysics nor within science (Derrida, (1978[1967]), p.266).

Derrida perceived in Freud’s metapsychology the description of a kind of idea that cannot be subsumed to the usual frames of metaphysics or science; a structuralist reading would threaten this momentous epistemological breakthrough. Hence, Derrida’s attempt to read Freud beyond the frames of metaphysics and science is in a conflictual dialogue with a structuralist reading of Freud, which means of course, a conflictual dialogue with Lacan. However, this conflict is not a relation of sheer opposition and again, one can sense a dialectical movement in Derrida’s position towards structuralism. Derrida agrees with Lacan in considering that the unconscious does not have the status of a transcendental, an empirical or a historical subjectivity but that it operates like a language. However, Derrida thinks that the language of the unconscious is irreducible to a structuralist linguistic model.

Put otherwise, Derrida accepts the idea of the unconscious as a text, but unlike structuralism that conceives the unconscious text as a system coding conscious thoughts, Derrida tries to describe this text as a form of psychical writing that makes enigmatic the very idea of a code:

It is here that the Freudian break occurs (...) he makes of psychical writing so originary a production that the writing we believe to be designated by the proper sense of the word—a script which is coded and visible “in the world” would only be the metaphor of psychical writing. This writing, for example the kind we find in dreams which “follow old facilitations,” a simple moment in a regression toward a “primary” writing, cannot be read in terms of any code (*Ibid.*, p.262).

Bennington warned his reader against a misreading according to which deconstruction would be a psychoanalysis of philosophy: “Derrida’s relationship with psychoanalysis (...) has never taken the form of an alliance” (Bennington, 1993[1991], pp.134-135). Derrida himself had stated in the note preceding *Freud and the Scene of Writing*: “Despite appearances, the deconstruction of logocentrism is not a psychoanalysis of philosophy” (Derrida, (1978[1967]) p.246). Despite this, I would like to justify my temptation to think of the articulation between Derrida and Freud as a form of alliance. Of course, Derrida’s critical engagement with ‘symptoms’ of logocentrism is not a textual psychoanalysis, and reciprocally one would not find in Freud’s work the premises of a systematic critique of logocentrism.

Thus, my point is certainly not to hunt for the ambiguities in Freud’s adherence to the logocentric tradition in order to present him as the prophet of post-structuralism. On the contrary, I would like to show how Freud’s metapsychological texts are built on this tension between a form of unconscious idea irreducible to the sign and Freud’s theoretical and descriptive apparatus that remain in the sign. Therefore the alliance formed with Freud’s texts would aim to organise the escape of the metapsychological unconscious from the prison of the sign.

Derrida showed that unconscious processes described by Freud in his metapsychology could not be thought through pre-existing ontological frames and he tried to accentuate

this breakthrough through his “ontology of writing”.⁵ What is at stake is therefore the alliance between Freud’s discoveries of unconscious forms of intentionality and Derrida’s proposal of a new ontological framework. Derrida perceives in Freud’s description of unconscious processes an alternative to structuralist models and the primacy of the signifier. Psychological writing found in memories, dreams or neurotic symptoms “produces its own signifiers; does not create them in their materiality, of course, but produces their status-as-meaningful (significance). Henceforth, they are no longer, properly speaking, signifiers” (*Ibid.*, p.263).

The question of Derrida reading Lacan and of their more or less hidden dialogue⁶ is not the object of my study and it is certainly a more complex research than this brief attempt to situate Derrida in relation to structuralism. My aim is to contextualise my commentary of Freud’s metapsychological texts, to provide the ontological key that I will use in order to understand Freud’s metapsychological model of the unconscious. This key is Derrida’s concept of the trace. Derrida’s trace seems to me crucial to understanding the nature of those signs, which exist at the beginning of psychic life and yet which manifest themselves under forms irreducibly extraneous to consciousness. Derrida’s trace would offer a conceptual framework through which to conceive of unconscious processes that cannot be subsumed to an origin:

The trace is not only the disappearance of origin—within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin. From then on, to wrench the concept of the trace from the classical scheme, which would derive it from a presence or from an originary nontrace and which would make of it an empirical mark, one must indeed speak of an originary trace or archi-trace. Yet we know that that concept destroys its name and that, if all begins with the trace, there is above all no originary trace (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.62).

⁵ The term “ontology of writing” was proposed by Christopher Johnson in his book *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida* (1993) to describe Derrida’s general theory of writing.

⁶ René Major has pointed out how in *Lituraterrre*, Lacan had answered some of Derrida’s objections without ever mentioning his name (Major, 2002, p.170).

Freud's first metapsychology would have been an escape from the jail of the sign through the trace. Put somewhat differently, the escape is from a type of representation, which has its origins in reflective consciousness and is the technical carrier of memory, towards a type of representation irremediably alien to consciousness, whose origins cannot be fixed and which undermines the notion of memory as an archive. Hence, Derrida's concept of trace not only provides intelligibility for the nature of this new type of unconscious representation, but it also casts a new light on the nature of Freud's metapsychological endeavour as an escape from logos from within logos itself. If Freud has managed to break through, beyond, and beneath the Platonic closure of the logos, it is through "the question which disorganizes and disturbs" the literalness of his "metapsychological fable": through what "was spoken without being said, thought without being thought: was written and simultaneously erased, metaphorized" (Derrida, 1978[1967], pp.287-288).

The Vanishing Points

More than a model of unconscious psychical processes, Freud's first metapsychology – from the *Project* to the 1915 *Papers on Metapsychology* – was an attempt to describe psychical processes operating beyond the conceptual and formal resources in which they were expressed. Hence, the structural impossibility of completing such an attempt: if Freud rejected the *Project* and destroyed the seven drafts that, added to the five existing papers of 1915, would have formed a book on metapsychology, it is for essential reasons that are linked with the very nature of the object he was studying: the sign produced by an unconscious mode of thinking.

The purpose of my work will be to investigate this incompleteness in Freud's first metapsychology, to question this excess by which the text inscribes the nature of the object it tries to define. I will attempt to decipher in Freud's writing the function of unconscious traces beyond the cover of the logos. In order to do that, I will propose a reading of Freud's first metapsychology in which I will not assess the empirical truth of its hypothesis nor will I judge the coherence of its narrative. Instead, I will read it through Derridean lenses – I will search for modes of thought, and the type of ideas they produce in those passages in which the text escapes itself. In other words, I will look for

the dispersal of the subject in the vanishing points of Freud's text. I will follow this escape of the sign into the trace by inquiring at a conceptual level into the impossible aspects of the texts and at a formal level into Freud's non-verbal writing, a type of writing that escapes into the margins.

To conduct such an inquiry today manifests a kind of assumed anachronism, as mainstream contemporary psychoanalytic research seems to have denied Freud's metapsychological escape. As reported by Sidney Hook (1959) in the 1958 New York University conference on 'Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method, and Philosophy', psychoanalysts were directly challenged by epistemologists on the scientific status of the method they had received from Freud. However, the assault on Freud's metapsychology from within the psychoanalytic movement started properly in North America in the early seventies. In the name of empirical or clinical evidence, some analysts have tried to reintroduce an *informative* subjectivity that could be reduced to a set of data introduced into the heart of psychoanalytic theory. In chapter two of my thesis, I will study the controversy triggered by those attacks. I will try to show how, as a result, this new figure of the subject is not only transparent to itself, but also transparent to two main forms of discourse: the hermeneutic discourse on the one hand and the positivist discourse on the other.

The rest of my thesis will aim to reopen the closure of hermeneutic meanings and positivist evidence in order to research how Freud's metapsychology is a theory that resists systematisation and completeness. I will attempt to read Freud's metapsychology as a speculation that draws a portrait of a mode of thinking that operates beyond the logos:

- A theory of the psyche in which memory operates beyond an archive memory.
- A form of writing beyond the sign.
- A clinical practice beyond interpretation.

In chapters three, four and five of my thesis, I will study the mode of thinking that generates the unconscious traces. My purpose will be to extract the concept of a *hallucinatory mode of thinking* from a reading of Freud's metapsychological texts from 1895 to 1915. Through the hallucinatory mode of thinking, I wish to emphasize how Freud's

notion of the unconscious led to a tragic understanding of memory that does not function like an archival system, but rather like the prescriptive apparatus of a destiny. I would like to show that it is the hallucinatory dimension of unconscious processes that made of memory an apparatus that constructs the representation of a forgotten past, rather than an apparatus that would accurately register an archived past.

In my sixth chapter, I will study the formal stratagems invented by Freud to describe unconscious traces. My purpose will be to show that Freud's metapsychology is not only a theoretical endeavour but also an aesthetic one. Freud developed a form of *metapsychological writing* to solve the problem raised by the formalisation of unconscious ideas. In his book on the rediscovery of hysteria by Charcot, Georges Didi-Huberman (2012[1982]) stressed the importance of the role played by photography. The iconography of hysteria, as it was recorded through photographic images, would have been the outcome of a certain connivance between the doctor's glance and the hysteric's body. Charcot's discoveries on hysteria would have been filtered through the production of those images. My hypothesis in the sixth chapter will be that Freud's metapsychological writing played a similar role for psychoanalytic knowledge as photography did for Charcot's medical knowledge. By penetrating the backstage of the hysterical scene, Freud would have replaced the production of images by the production of a text, thus Freud's metapsychological writing would also be an aesthetic tool to describe the specificity of the psychoanalytic encounter.

In chapter seven, I will investigate the consequences of Freud's first metapsychology for his clinical practice. In order to do this, I will study Freud's clinical paper *A Child is Being Beaten*, which he wrote in 1919. I consider this the first text in which Freud articulates the conjuncture of his metapsychology and his clinical practice in an accurate way: a text in which Freud's practice operates as a correlate of his metapsychology. It suggests, in as much as Freud's first metapsychology theorises the psyche not as an essence but as modes of thinking, that the aim of the clinic is not to discover a secret memory but to construct a memory. In this paper, the idea of an experience with no origins in self-presence appears as a construction of the analysis. In this way, the analytic cure does not reveal a secret memory from a forgotten past but aims to give verbal form to memories that belong to an archaic pre-verbal past. As stressed by Jacqueline Rose: "In his case studies Freud had increasingly demonstrated that the history of the patient did not

consist of some truth to be deciphered behind the chain of associations which emerged in the analytic setting; it resided within that chain and in the process of emergence which the analysis brought into effect” (Rose, 1986, p.228).

The theory of an unconscious mode of thinking whose code echoes with an absolute past of the species, is linked to the construction of a phantasy phase that “is never remembered”, that “has never succeeded in becoming conscious” and that is nevertheless a “necessity” of the psychoanalytic account (Freud, 1919, p. 185). To a subjectivity made of traces, there corresponds an analytic practice that can be reduced neither to observation nor to meaning because it also asymptotically tends towards the construction of an encounter with an irreducible otherness in the self. Jacques Press ends his paper on the question of construction in analysis, by an address to his colleagues: “To go towards the unknown, the unknown in ourselves as the unknown in our patients, this unforgettable that we could not transform. To approach it not without a form of terror, as that would be too much to expect but nevertheless to approach it and to emerge changed from this encounter: such is my understanding of what is at stake in our enterprise” (Press, 2011, p.192, my translation).⁷

⁷ “Aller vers l’inconnu, inconnu de nous-mêmes comme de nos patients, de cet inoubliable que nous n’avons pas pu – pas su – transformer, savoir s’y tenir, non sans effroi, ce serait trop demander, mais s’y tenir néanmoins, et ressortir changés d’avoir pu le faire: c’est ainsi que je comprends l’enjeu de notre entreprise.”

Chapter 2

Study of a Controversy

At the beginning of his *Introductory Lectures*, Freud wrote: “I can assure you that the hypothesis of there being unconscious mental processes paves the way to a decisive new orientation in the world and in science” (Freud, 1916-17[1915-17], p.22). One of the main purposes of my study is to understand how the writing of metapsychological texts played a strategic role in this new orientation of knowledge. To this effect, I would suggest seeing metapsychology as the new epistemological framework that Freud was forced to build in order to contain his discoveries of unconscious processes. In my commentary of Freud’s first metapsychological texts I will try to understand how this new form of knowledge of the unconscious operates (chapters three, four and five), how it is formalised (chapter six) and its effects on Freud’s practice (chapter seven). My commentary is therefore centred on the epistemological dimension of Freud’s metapsychology.

Understanding the nature of Freud’s metapsychological knowledge had been at the heart of a controversy triggered by a new generation of American psychoanalysts in the 1970’s. In this chapter, I will review the main epistemological readings of Freud’s metapsychology that have been generated by that controversy. This literary review will, therefore, mainly present a sort of reverse image of the views I expound in the rest of my thesis, since most of the hypotheses that I will examine in this chapter try to identify the particularity of Freud’s metapsychology in order to exclude it from the field of psychoanalytic knowledge.

“The Maidservant of Psychiatry”

Freud was highly suspicious of the future of psychoanalysis in the United States. Amongst all the, more or less, sensible testimonies of Freud’s anti-Americanism, one caught my attention. It is to be found in one of his last letters to Theodor Reik. About the issue of lay analysis, Freud wrote that for American analysts: “analysis is nothing else but one of the maidservants of psychiatry” (in Gay, 2006, p.633). This quote contains Freud’s feeling that in the United States psychoanalysis cannot be considered as a

singular field of knowledge but has to be absorbed into another mainstream practice. I think that it was such a motivation - finding a theoretical womb for psychoanalysis - that pushed a series of American analysts to attack Freud's metapsychology in the 1970's. These analysts were trying to "understand, clarify, and put at work the psychoanalytic theory of thinking" (Holt, 2009). In other words, they were attempting to find new epistemological foundations for psychoanalysis. Even if the results of these attempts have given birth to many models, they all started their endeavours with a complete rejection of Freud's metapsychology.

Throughout the world of psychoanalysis these attacks have generated a series of reflexions that seem to me to constitute the most acute and up-to-date body of literature on the joint question of the definition and the function of Freud's metapsychology. Of course, attacks on Freud's metapsychology started long before the 1970's: the first 'dissidents' Alfred Adler and Carl Gustav Jung had already attempted to replace Freud's metapsychology with a general psychology or with a psycho-mythology. However, it seems to me that the American critics I will review were the first to conjointly raise the clinical assessment of metapsychology against the question of defining an epistemological status for psychoanalysis.

Moreover, I believe that an examination of these controversies will help us to understand why the theory of drives and, more generally, of metapsychology is often considered rather unfashionable these days (Steiner, 1993, p.45). In his detailed study of the North American psychoanalytic movement, Steven Ellman (2010) has showed how these more contemporary critics of metapsychology would lead to Jay Greenberg and Stephen Mitchell's rallying slogan of the relational critique, that one had to choose between a relational and a drive model (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).⁸ But before examining the content of these radical criticisms, it is necessary to understand where they come from.

This challenge to Freud's metapsychology by the 1970's critical movement in the United States was in fact part of a more general movement against classical ego psychology. When the American critics questioned Freud's metapsychology, they were studying it in the form that they have received it: through the theorists of ego psychology, which means mainly through Heinz Hartmann. From 1940 to 1960, Heinz Hartmann and Anna

⁸ In his more recent papers, Jay Greenberg has somewhat altered the radicalism of his position.

Freud were indeed the two most influential Freudian theorists in the United States (Ellman, 2010, p.169). Through the US publication of the English translation of Anna Freud's *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* in 1946 and the publication of Hartmann's *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation* in 1958, a certain reading of Freud's structural model was spread that emphasised a way to gain knowledge of the unconscious through the mediation of the preconscious and conscious aspects of the ego. A striking example of the fact that what was evaluated was an ego psychological model of metapsychology, is that these critics retained nothing of the death drive but aggression. Hence, it is important to understand the definition of metapsychology given by classical ego psychology.

Hartman thinks of psychoanalysis as a natural science that is, "moving in the direction of becoming a general theory of human behavior" (Hartmann, 1964b, p.12). He did not raise the question of the role played by metapsychology in the evolution of Freud's thought but treated it as a set of given concepts that he tried to make as easily digestible as possible for the science and social science of his time. As he wrote, his aim was to balance the "rationalism of enlightenment and the irrationalism of the romantics" (Hartmann, 1964a, p.9). Within the psychoanalytic scientific edifice, he viewed metapsychology not as meta-theory but as "theory on the highest level of abstraction" (*Ibid.*, p.328). Hartmann's approach partakes of a desire to establish a hierarchical classification of psychoanalytic propositions, which would constitute one of the epistemological obsessions of ego psychology and a first foundational point for the critics of metapsychology.

In their ground-breaking paper, 'The Points of View and Assumptions of Metapsychology' published in 1959, Merton Gill and his mentor David Rapaport proposed such a classification with an ascending order of generalization: empirical proposition, general psychoanalytic proposition and metapsychological propositions. Freud had defined a metapsychological presentation as a description of a psychical process "in its dynamic, topographical and economic aspects" (Freud, 1915c, p.181). For Rapaport and Gill, the metapsychological propositions include the dynamic point of view, the economic point of view, the structural point of view, the genetic point of view and the adaptive point of view.

With this paper, Rapaport and Gill signed a form of manifesto of an ego psychological understanding of metapsychology and this manifesto had two main consequences. Firstly, they replaced the topographical point of view with the structural point of view, which indicates their decision to reject Freud's topographical model of the mind and to think only within Freud's structural model of the mind. Secondly, they added the genetic and the adaptive point of views in order to redefine metapsychology within the framework of psychoanalysis understood as a natural science. It is precisely the idea that such an attempt would lead to a dead end and that, "Freudian natural-science metapsychology is a serious obstacle to the development of psychoanalysis" (Gill, 1988, p.46) that will push Gill to change his view and to redefine Freud's metapsychology within "a self-contained hermeneutic" model of psychoanalysis.

Another attempt to classify psychoanalytic propositions was made by Robert Waelder in his 1962 paper, 'Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method, and Philosophy'. Waelder distinguished six degrees of relevance in Freud's doctrine, from the most important to the less important: the level of observation, the level of clinical interpretation, the level of clinical generalizations, the level of clinical theory, the level of metapsychology and finally the level of Freud's philosophy. It is worth noting that unconscious mental processes are classified by Waelder not at the level of metapsychology but at the level of clinical observation.

The way these analysts from the ego psychology school established a hierarchy of Freud's corpus in fact prepared the ground for the general attack on metapsychology, because with such classifications they passed down two types of prejudices. The first consists in approaching Freud in a non-historical way: as if Freud's concepts had appeared at once in a ready-made organised system. An aspect of my work will be to show how more than a system, Freud's theory seems a constant work-in-progress and, moreover, that in this work-in-progress, metapsychology occupies a very particular role. Metapsychology operates on the side, irreducible to any possible classification as a sort of toolbox, or as a 'scaffolding' that would provide new structures when the clinic, the theory or the expression encounters its impasses.

The second prejudice was to force on Freud's theory a type of hierarchy borrowed from natural science. In this hierarchy, the main authors from ego psychology placed

metapsychology as the most speculative part of Freud's theory. Many analysts would cling to this definition in their criticisms. Thus, Frank (1979) understood metapsychology as the metatheory of psychoanalysis and Arlow defined it as "a priori assumptions beyond hypotheses derivable within the clinical setting" (Arlow, 1975, p.517). In my commentary, I will attempt to show that Freud never presented such a hierarchical edifice of knowledge, but rather, how throughout his research he developed a very peculiar epistemological framework. I will be following Vannina Micheli-Rechtman who pointed out that, even "more than the unconscious in itself, the radical novelty was in Freud's eyes the whole intellectual endeavour that led to this discovery" (Micheli-Rechtman, 2010, p.29, my translation).⁹

In *The Resistances to Psycho-Analysis* (Freud, 1925[1924]a), a paper published in 1925 in which after *A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis* (1917b), Freud returned to the motives behind the hostility triggered towards psychoanalysis, he stressed the peculiarity of the psychoanalytic epistemological framework, which does not succumb completely to the mechanistic approach of the natural scientist, but also not completely to the speculative one of the philosopher. It maintains a difficult middle position between perception and speculation, between the clinical fact and the philosophical concept. Freud already predicted how psychoanalysis would derive "nothing but disadvantages from its middle position between medicine and philosophy. Doctors regard it as a speculative system and refuse to believe that, like every other natural science, it is based on a patient and tireless elaboration of facts from the world of perception; philosophers, measuring it by the standard of their own artificially constructed systems, find that it starts from impossible premises and reproach it because its most general concepts (which are only now in process of evolution) lack clarity and precision" (Freud, 1925[1924]a, p.217).

One other important foundational point for metapsychology's critics can be traced to Lawrence Kubie's article: 'The Fallacious Use of Quantitative Concepts in Dynamic Psychology'. In this paper published in 1947, Kubie argued that Freud's economic principle holds a special fascination due to its pseudo-scientific aspect. Now, because the quantitative changes of individual energy components are impossible to measure in a

⁹ "Mais plus que l'inconscient lui-même, c'est toute la démarche permettant d'y accéder qui justifie aux yeux de son inventeur le statut de radicale nouveauté."

clinical observation, the use of economic quantitative terms is, according to Kubie, “the weakest element in all current theories of psychological causation”(Kubie, 1947, p.518).

In Kubie’s article the word *metapsychology* never appears. However, two elements in it will have a strong influence on the two main currents of the American critique of Freud’s metapsychology: the positivist and the hermeneutic one. The first will be developed through the positivist criticism of metapsychology: it is Kubie’s criticism of the psychic energy model. Indeed, most of the criticism will be addressed to the economic point of view and to the idea that Freud’s concern with psychic energy is a scientific anachronism. Kubie argues that Freud’s economic metaphor is used as a convenient way to cover the difficulties of psychodynamic causation and to evade the task of finding methods to quantify these psychodynamic mechanisms.

Kubie’s reading of the economical point of view refuses to attribute to Freud’s texts any metaphorical possibilities and so can appear somewhat naïve. Yet, this demand for measurable parameters will be at the centre of the positivist critic against Freud’s metapsychology. In his introduction to a new translation of Freud’s metapsychological papers, Mark Cousins rightly linked this demand with the development of quantitative data in psychological research: “Within psychoanalysis it is more the idea of the economic dimensions and its relation to the drive that has come in for criticism or simply neglect. Faced with the inexorable progress of measurement within psychology there has been an increasing reluctance to refer to a quantitative dimension within psychical life without being able to assign numbers or measured relations to it” (Cousins, 2005, pp. xiv-xv).

The second element will be at the core of the hermeneutic critique: it is the way Kubie questions psychoanalytic epistemology from the perspective of a distinction between description and explanation in science. Kubie’s thesis is that the use of non-measurable quantitative concepts to explain psychological phenomena is fallacious because it rests on the delusion that “we have explained a phenomenon which we have merely described in metaphors” (Kubie, 1947, p.508).

This distinction between explanatory and descriptive scientific methods finds its roots in the ‘dispute on method’ [*Methodenstreit*] that took place at the end of the nineteenth

century in German-speaking universities¹⁰. This debate, which started amongst economists, erupted in the whole field of academic knowledge with the publication in 1883 of Wilhelm Dilthey's book, *Introduction to the Human Sciences*. Dilthey's aim was to give human sciences an epistemological status that would be both independent and as scientific as that of the natural sciences. This endeavour led to an epistemic split which, as noticed by De Robertis, is still unresolved more than one hundred and fifty years later (De Robertis, 2001, p. 134).

On the one side, a form of knowledge developed by natural sciences [*Naturwissenschaften*] with a nomothetic approach searches to explain [*erklären*] its objects from the outside by establishing universal laws out of experimental facts using 'causal' categories. On the other side, a form of knowledge developed by human sciences [*Geisteswissenschaften*] with an idiographic approach constitutes an attempt to understand [*verstehen*] its objects from the inside by describing their singularities using the categories of 'aim' and 'meaning'. I will show in this literary review how the hermeneutic critics – particularly under the terms: "how-question" and "why-question" (Klein, 1973; Schaefer 1975) – will reopen the 'dispute on method' at the heart of Freud's metapsychology by identifying it as a relic of Freud's scientism and by proposing to replace this explanatory discourse by a descriptive one. Noticeably, Heinz Kohut in *The Restoration of the Self* (1977) develops a similar view: he accepts any innovations when it comes to descriptive theory but believes that a crisis of the explanatory theory has come.

To summarize, the two premises that support the common understanding of Freud's metapsychology by classical ego psychologists are:

1. Psychoanalysis is a natural science.
2. It is necessary to 'synchronize' Freud's work in order to remove speculation from theory.

As a result of this 'idealistic' scientific view, Freud's metapsychological corpus is perceived as an uncanny speculative artefact that resists a natural science framework and metapsychology becomes a part of psychoanalytic theory that remains in opposition to

¹⁰ This question was mainly initiated by the work of three economists: Gustav Von Schmoller, Karl Knies and Carl Menger.

the clinical theory. The idea, put forward notably by Hartmann, that psychoanalysis is composed of two theories – a clinical and a speculative one – will be a rock for the criticism against metapsychology. Thus, some critics of metapsychology, such as Gill or Schafer, will consider that their endeavour to develop “a further rational reconstruction and extension of metapsychology” (Holt, 1996, p.9) continues this aspect of Hartmann’s work. Moreover, the critique of classical ego psychology consolidates a perception of metapsychology as an anachronism of Freud’s scientism. Therefore, their general aim will be to replace Freud’s metapsychology by another discourse that could be “a sounder base from which to engage the ambiguities, uncertainties, simultaneities, and pluralities of the therapeutic encounter” (Leffert, 2010, p.2).

The attempts to find a new theory to make sense of clinical observations will give birth to many proposals. Gill distinguishes “four major and two minor positions on the epistemological status of psychoanalysis. The major ones are psychoanalysis as natural science, hermeneutic discipline, bridge between mind and body, and information theory. The minor ones (...) are *sui generis* and metapsychology as metaphor” (Gill, 1988, p. 37). Gill had mentioned the possibility that psychoanalysis could have an epistemological model of its own kind, however he does not explore this idea further in the course of his paper.

As a theoretical foundation of psychoanalysis, Mark Leffert has proposed “an interreferential schema which balances the influences of postmodernism, complexity theory and neuroscience as its key factors” (Leffert, 2010, p.2). Leffert, who trained in the 1970s under the influence of the radical critics of the ego psychology school, resumes the epistemological examination of Freud’s metapsychology from a new angle. He argues that metapsychology rests on implicit “assumptions of knowability and predictability that are not ontologically sustainable” (*Ibid.*, p.xi). Leffert tries to find in the combination of postmodernism, complexity and neuroscience a discourse on the limit of knowledge that would provide a better ground for psychoanalysis than metapsychology.

Luyten, Blatt and Corveleyn (2006) have advocated a methodological pluralism that would “bridge the gap” between the two main psychoanalytic cultures: positivist and hermeneutic. In this attempt to pacify the ‘dispute on methods’ that the 1970’s critical movement had transposed from nineteenth-century German epistemology to

psychoanalysis, they propose to establish psychoanalysis in a theoretical landscape that would combine intelligible discourses based on meaning and interpretation with an intelligibility based on causality and empiricism. However, they never consider the possibility that the metapsychological discourse could be a form of intelligibility specific to psychoanalysis.

In their great diversity, all these proposals to found the epistemological status of psychoanalysis converge on one point: that it is not possible to have an epistemology which is proper to psychoanalysis only. Each of these epistemological proposals are founded on models external to psychoanalysis. Hence, the necessity to attack Freud's metapsychology, because in Freud's mind the function of the metapsychological concepts was to offer a foundation for psychoanalytic theory. In a footnote to *A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams*, Freud justifies his project to write his so-called metapsychological paper as a way to "clarify and carry deeper the theoretical assumptions on which a psycho-analytic system could be founded" (Freud, 1917[1915]a, p. 222, fn.1).

In the course of this chapter, I will try to show how behind the 1970's challenge to metapsychology lay an attack on a *sui generis* epistemological status of psychoanalysis, because such a status could only be built around an understanding of metapsychology as a model of theoretical assumptions specific to psychoanalysis. In the next chapters, my purpose will be to comment on some of Freud's metapsychological texts in order to draw the strange map of this epistemic scaffolding. My main hypothesis will be that one of Freud's greatest subversions was epistemological: to establish a dialogue between a practice and a form of discourse that makes unifying labels or systemic classification intensely problematic but that cultivates plurality and hidden determinism. To invent paradigms from a practice through the description of a mode of thinking that is irreducible to any metaphysic of the subject.

To classify the criticisms against Freud's metapsychology, I will use the theoretical models proposed by these critics to replace metapsychology as the foundational discourse of psychoanalytic knowledge. Two main tendencies appear: the followers of hermeneutics, who see psychoanalysis as a theory of interpretation - and the followers of positivism, who view psychoanalysis as a natural empirical science. They both share a

reading of metapsychology as a model that offers mechanistic explanations. The difference between these two approaches will be that for the upholders of hermeneutics the purpose will be to refute metapsychology as non-analytic and to replace it by another fundamental theory. On the other hand, for the supporters of positivism, the aim will be to translate the metapsychological hypothesis into a hypothesis that is empirically testable.

This distinction matches the one made by Modell who in his 1981 article 'Does Metapsychology Still Exist?' distinguished the attacks against metapsychology that attempt to modify it because it is no longer congruent with observation (the positivist view) and those that understand it as a completely irrelevant discourse (the hermeneutic view). These two lines of thought somehow confirm Freud's fear about the future of psychoanalysis in the United States, as psychoanalysis finds itself threatened with being assimilated into psychology on the one side and into biology on the other.

The Hermeneutic Point of View: A Return to Phenomenology?

I will consider the views of three of the most representative analysts who critiqued Freud's metapsychology from a hermeneutic angle: George S. Klein, Roy Schafer and Merton M. Gill.

George Klein:

In the story of this controversy, the first unambiguous call for the rejection of metapsychology was made by George Klein in 1973 with the publication of his article: 'Is Psychoanalysis Relevant?'. Klein distinguished two theories in Freud: two lines of development that "express different conceptions of what psychoanalysis is and ought to be" and whose "more profound point of distinction is that they derive from two different philosophy of inquiry and explanation" (Klein, 1973, pp.9-10). One theory rests on clinical explanation and its aim is the reading of intentionality. For that purpose it tries to decipher the meaning of "behavior, experience, testimony (...) as jointly exemplifying directive 'tensions', avowed, disavowed, repressed, defended" (*Ibid.*, p.10).

The second side of psychoanalytic theory is metapsychology, which Klein perceived as an approach by which “the terms of explanation have nothing to do with the subject’s own vantage point; it is the person *observed as a physical process* that is the main objective” (*Ibid.*, p.12). Klein argued that these two lines are incompatible because the former describes the intentionality of the subject, whereas the latter rejects the very notion of a psychological subject. The coexistence of these two paradigms leads, therefore, to a form of confusion that blurs the distinction between mechanistic drive and subjective motivation.

According to Klein, it is the clinical orientation to explanation that is the most characteristic of psychoanalysis because it informs an exchange in which the analyst searches for a depth intentionality in the patient’s experience and tries to communicate this intentionality to the patient through meaningful interpretations. Therefore, Klein proposed that “to get to the core assumptions of clinical psychoanalysis (...) surgery is necessary – a theorectomy, so to speak – that separates” clinical from metapsychological notions “so as to free the irreplaceable core concepts of clinical psychoanalytic theory” (*Ibid.*, p.9).

Stripped of its mechanistic line of explanation, Klein described psychoanalytic theory more as a humanistic discipline than a natural science and he compared the role of the analyst to “the historian’s obligation of narrative construction” or “the playwright’s responsibility for depicting a logic of motivation” (*Ibid.*, p.13). In his 1976 paper, ‘Freud’s Two Theories of Sexuality, Psychology versus Metapsychology’, Klein further developed this logic of motivation to replace metapsychology. He proposed that motivations are the results of experiences perceived by the self in its development and its goal to be protected. This theory of motivation is in fact articulated around the developmental psychological concepts of experience and behaviour in order to integrate psychoanalysis as a part of psychology. In Klein’s epistemological utopia, psychoanalysis would be a part of psychology that provides an adequate language for the description of the subject’s depth intentionality.

Throughout his work, George Klein is looking for a conception of intentionality that can always be transcribed within a conscious mode of thinking. From this angle, a neurotic symptom is perceived as a meaningful solution found by the subject to face the demand

raised by several conflictual intentional ideas. These conflictual ideas belong to the same category of presentations produced by the same mode of thinking. Klein never considered intentional contents that would not be subjugated to consciousness. He put forward a vision of the psychological subject as a self-present subject: a subject that could ideally think itself in its entirety.

More than a cure, the setting for the classical psychoanalytic treatment becomes a means for human observation, a sort of psychological laboratory. Consequently, one understands George Klein's rejection of Freud's metapsychology, since metapsychology puts forward a form of intentionality that resists being transcribed in the language of consciousness and which deconstructs the notion of a psychological subject. Moreover, as I will try to explain in the last chapter of this thesis, far from revealing to the analyst the depth of its intentionality or the most intimate secrets of its being, Freud's metapsychology makes possible a cure that constructs a form of radical otherness in the self. A clinical act that creates a form of intimacy that remains irreducible to consciousness or to the ego.

Instead of the dynamic unconscious that produces ideas irreducible to consciousness as conceptualized by Freud's metapsychology, Klein proposed a sort of phenomenological unconscious made of non-accepted or even non-socialized experiences. One of the most striking aspects of this shift is the replacement of sexuality by sensuality, thus he speaks of "the theory of infantile sensuality" (*Ibid.*, p.4). The sexual energy of the drive is replaced by sensuality as an experience. The source of sensuality is not a drive with its enigmatic demand but a quest for an adaptive goal with a clear meaning. Klein has replaced Freud's metapsychology, built around the concepts of drive and energy, with a phenomenology built around the concepts of meaning and goals.

Roy Schafer:

In 1976, Roy Schafer presented himself as being in the forefront of "a new critical movement concerned with the logic, language, implications and applications of Freudian psychoanalysis" (Schafer, 1976, p.x). Indeed, the work of Schafer appears to be one of the most original amongst the American critics of metapsychology. This is probably due to the fact that his views are strongly influenced by analytical philosophy, a philosophical

movement that for the most part has not directly engaged with psychoanalysis, although there are of course some important exceptions such as Richard Wollheim or Jim Hopkins. A main characteristic of analytical philosophy is to investigate reality from its formulation (Laugier and Plaud, 2011, p.13). Schafer's critique of metapsychology will therefore be addressed at the level of its language, which fails to deal with meanings and the singularity of subjective experience. Schafer's verdict is therefore irrevocable: "It is time to stop using the mixed physicochemical and biological language of Freudian metapsychology" (Schafer, 1975, p.41).

Following Wittgenstein, Schafer understands the notion of language as "a set of rules for saying things of the sort that constitute or communicate a version of reality or a world" (*Ibid.*, p.42). Schafer wants to replace metapsychology by another language, firstly, because in his view it is not conceptually rigorous and systematic enough and secondly, because its language borrowed from natural science eliminates the subject. Schafer thinks that the subject excluded by the scientific aspect of metapsychology comes back through the anthropomorphic aspect of its language. Moreover, this anthropomorphic language takes an infantile form and the language of metapsychology seems to reproduce the archaic body of infancy: "notions of internal, external, boundaries, thresholds, damming up and discharging: all these and many others may be viewed as psychosexual body language inappropriately elevated to the status of theoretical terms" (*Ibid.*, p.42).

This last criticism had been already developed by Home who accused Freud's metapsychology of having applied metaphors to meaning and of understanding those metaphors literally: metapsychology "reifies the concept of mind and elaborates a scientific type theory in terms of causes. To reify is to deify, for reification creates the ideal immortal object by the simple process of definition, just as personification in the era of humanism created the immortal gods" (Home, 1966, p.47).

This suppression of the subject puts metapsychology in contradiction with what Schafer understands as the essence of psychoanalysis: to make of the subject the agent of its actions. Gilbert Diatkine (1985, p.1219) has pointed out the influence of Sartre on the way Schafer defines the aim of the analytical cure. In order for psychoanalysis to rediscover what Schafer understands as its true nature, an alternative language is necessary. From 1972 onwards, with his paper 'Internalization: Process or Fantasy' and

through his book published in 1976, *A New Language for Psychoanalysis*, Roy Schafer would literally devise this new language that he named “action language”.

To create this alternative language, Schafer used ideas from the main philosophical currents of the twentieth century. His main influence is to be found in the part of analytic philosophy called philosophy of mind inaugurated by Wittgenstein’s later writings, but he also takes concepts from existentialism – notably his use of Sartre’s concept of “bad faith” (Schafer, 1976, p.235) – and phenomenology. This return to classical western metaphysics in order to describe the psyche as it appears in the psychoanalytic encounter is, I believe, in complete opposition with Freud’s metapsychology. An important part of this thesis will aim to show that metapsychology was Freud’s declaration of war against a metaphysic of the subject and that through it Freud invented a non-systemic language that operates beyond the logos.

Action language is defined as an attempt to stress the transformative significance of psychoanalytic interpretation through “its bringing home to the analysand the extent to which, and the terms in which, he has been the author of its own life, unconsciously and preconsciously as well as consciously, and the extent to which and the terms in which he has been disclaiming this activity” (Schafer, 1975, p.44). Hence, the action language is built as a feature of psychoanalysis understood as a practice of interpretation: a hermeneutic language to replace Freud’s metapsychological language. The fundamental rule of the action language is to regard all psychological processes, events, phenomena or behaviour as actions. The only human phenomena that are not classified as actions by Schaffer are bodily changes because according to him, “they are devoid of symbolic content” (Schafer, 1973, p.178).

Because, in his view, the psychoanalytic cure deals only with actions, to speak of mental processes one should replace the use of nouns and adjectives by active verbs and adverbs. Schafer banishes from his action language the use of the passive form. Moreover, in the use of this language Schafer recommends to no longer refer to location, movement or direction and to never mention quantity. The topographical, dynamic and energetic metapsychological points of view are therefore eliminated. In the same way, “we shall not speak of internalization except in the sense of a person’s imagining his incorporating something” (Schafer, 1975, p.45).

The main psychodynamic concepts such as drive, impulse or psychic energy are excluded from this action language and the concept of the 'id' limited to an adverbial usage is emptied of all content (*Ibid.*, p.47). Similarly, the systems conscious, preconscious and unconscious are replaced by three descriptive "modes of actions". In this framework the ideal interpretation has to be formulated in a strictly coherent and rational language. Schafer redefines psychoanalysis not around the unconscious - that becomes a simple matter of point of view - but around the notion of action. What qualifies a psychological process is to be regarded as an action and its classification within the rules of 'action language'. Whether this psychological process is conscious or unconscious becomes a secondary matter.

Many articles have been written to refute Schafer's proposals (Wurmser 1977; Barratt 1978; Meissner 1979; Anscombe 1981; Oppenheimer 1984; Diatkine 1985). I have extracted from these criticisms four points that I find the most relevant for my study:

1. Action language suppresses the difference between doing and saying.
2. In Schafer's view the aim of psychoanalysis is reduced to making the subject responsible for his actions.
3. His idea of creating a sort of Orwellian Newspeak devoid of any unconscious phantasy that would avoid any misunderstanding seems an illusion. Moreover, such a language could be experienced as persecutory by the analysand.
4. The unconscious becomes a secondary point of view to qualify mental processes. From this angle, Schafer's action language appears as a pre-psychoanalytic formulation.

What is at stake behind the effort to replace the language of Freud's metapsychology by 'action language' is the effort to reintroduce a subjectivity in which meanings are transparent and immediately available to consciousness. Schafer posits a phenomenological subjectivity made of actions. As with George Klein, who replaced the drive theory by a phenomenology of motivations I understand Schafer's work to be an attempt to replace a psychology of the unconscious by a phenomenology of action.

Merton Gill:

The importance of Gill's criticism comes from his theoretical shift: he moved from being Hartmann's close colleague and redefining an ego psychology reading of metapsychological points of view with Rapaport (Rapaport and Gill, 1959) to supporting George Klein's view that "metapsychology is irrelevant to psychoanalysis" (Gill, 1975). He actually carried Klein's argument one step further by stating that metapsychology is not psychology at all but provides, "explanations which are only pseudoscientific apings of natural science" and that psychoanalysis on the other hand, "needs to develop in its own terms as a self-contained hermeneutic science" to which the usual canons of empirical research could be applied (Gill, 1988, p. 46).

Gill stands up against the idea that renouncing metapsychology would be an "abandonment of the fact that a human being is a biological organism as well as a person" because according to him "psychoanalysis deals with biology as it is psychologically experienced, not in somatic terms" (*Ibid.*, p. 46). Gill set out with great clarity the premises and the reasoning at work in the hermeneutic assault on metapsychology. This rests on the argument that the object of psychoanalysis would not be the biological reality of the mind but the way this biological reality is subjectively experienced. The psychoanalytic theory would then be a descriptive and interpretative discourse of these subjective experiences.

Metapsychology is considered only as an unnecessary explanatory discourse and the supporters of the hermeneutic view never consider a reading of metapsychology as a more abstract way to describe the psyche in the context of the analytical encounter. If they never consider that metapsychology could be a description of unconscious modes of thinking it is because they reduce the unconscious to intentional contents expelled from consciousness. In other words, they refuse Freud's dynamic unconscious and so ignore the problem raised by the description of *intentional presentations* that cannot be apprehended by consciousness. In this hermeneutic model of psychoanalysis every subjective experience can be transcribed into empirical variables. Subjective experiences manifest themselves in the purity of self-presence to consciousness and the cure aims to describe this phenomenology of intentionality so that the subject would regain a form of control over it.

The Positivist Point of View: Lost in Translation?

The positivist criticism of metapsychology originates from a different line of reasoning. Indeed, unlike the supporters of a hermeneutic epistemological status for psychoanalysis, the positivist point of view retains the idea of metapsychology as a set of “theoretical assumptions on which a psychoanalytic system could be founded”. The positivist attacks against Freud’s metapsychology will be directed against its speculative aspect and the project will be to link metapsychology with a method whose scientific nature would be guaranteed by empiricism and the Popperian principle of falsifiability. Hence, the main endeavour of a positivist reading of Freud’s metapsychology will be to find correlations between metapsychological concepts and hypotheses that can be tested: in other words, an exercise of translation. This translation follows two steps. The first is to identify what the observable phenomena in psychoanalysis are. The second consists in generalizing this data into a scientific theory.

I distinguish two broad trends amongst positivist critics. The first proposes a new scientific theory to generalize the observable data. To describe this view, I will use Emanuel Peterfreund. The second conserves metapsychology as a generalizing theory with the condition that metapsychology follows the rules of empiricism: a metapsychology that has given up speculation and introspection. I will examine this second view through the work of Charles Brenner.

Emanuel Peterfreund:

Emanuel Peterfreund thinks that the aim of psychoanalytic research is to find generalizations about the phenomena of observation. Unconscious phenomena are not observable but “patients have experiences - sensations, feelings, images, fantasies, thoughts, and so on - which can be thought of as the raw data of psycho-analysis, the phenomena of observation” (Peterfreund, 1975, p.534). Peterfreund proposes that in “all sciences there are high-level theories which use terms that are quite abstract and remote from observable phenomena” (*Ibid.*, p.535) and he defines metapsychology as the language in which the high-level, abstract psychoanalytic theory is expressed.

Peterfreund argues that Freud's metapsychology is based on a pre-Freudian view of man that is no longer tenable. According to him there are two fundamental untenable assumptions in Freud's metapsychology: firstly, the idea that the mind is separate from the body and secondly, that the mind is unique to man. This Cartesian pre-Darwinian view of man would make of Freud's metapsychology an unacceptable paradigm. Hence, Peterfreund argues for a change of paradigm in order to "use the most advanced creations of the human mind to attempt to explain the mind itself" and as a new paradigm, he proposed: "information processing and a systems model which is consistent with neurophysiology" (*Ibid.*, p.547).

Instead of being perceived through an abstract theory of the unconscious, Peterfreund expressed the clinical encounter by using information-processing approaches. He understands psychological experience as the input and feedback of information and psychological conflicts are conceptualized using "a complex hierarchically arranged, branching tree of contingent situations" (*Ibid.*, p.539). It is as if a neurotic destiny is not linked with a part of ourselves that escapes us but rather with a mistake in the programming of the mind. In Peterfreund's information model, the dynamic unconscious has literally disappeared and has been replaced by a descriptive unconscious that is pre-metapsychology. Peterfreund's description of the unconscious would be a sort of program that reprograms information; he is representative of the attempt to replace Freud's tragic unconscious and its metapsychological knowledge with a computer-like unconscious and its theory of information.

Charles Brenner:

Brenner offers a trenchant criticism of the hermeneutic reading of metapsychology. He explains that the separation between a concrete level of psychoanalytic theory that is supported by clinical data of an abstract, unproved and unprovable level, rests on a misconception of knowledge formation, since there is no such thing as a neutral observation: in "every branch of science even the simplest observations involve ideas of the highest order of abstraction" (Brenner, 1980, p.200). Brenner is opposed to the view that psychoanalysis is a science of meaning and argues that it is a branch of natural science since "mental phenomena are an aspect of brain functioning, it follows that psychology and psychoanalysis are necessarily a branch of biology" (*Ibid.*, p.206).

Brenner explains that the data of every branch of science is unique, but that they all share a common endeavour to find cause and effect relationships with respect to their data: “Science is, in any case, adjectival, not nominal. It is not what one observes that defines science: it is the attitude one brings to one’s observations and how one deals with them” (*Ibid.*, p.206). Thus, if indeed psychoanalysis deals with meanings as data, it would nevertheless be fallacious to conclude that it is a science of meanings. Brenner’s epistemological subtlety is to point out that the types of meanings gathered by the psychoanalytic encounter constitute a new category of data that was unknown before Freud. Freud’s discovery of free association as “the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis” (Freud, 1911-1915[1914], p.107) would be the discovery of a technique that generates a new category of objects: wishes, fears, fantasies, dreams, neurotic symptoms, and associative material expressed in language and gestures. In Brenner’s view, the clinic becomes a technique, a sort of laboratory to discover the human psyche.

According to Brenner, these new objects of knowledge should be studied through the method that is shared by all natural sciences: observation, formulation of generalizations and the testing of these hypothetical generalizations as rigorously as possible. In this epistemological model, Brenner understands Freud’s metapsychology as synonymous with “psychoanalytic psychology”: a psychology of unconscious mental processes. As long as this “psychoanalytic psychology” has available data of observation, Brenner thinks that metapsychology can be used as a generalizing theory. I have proposed that the positivist criticism was always a form of translation. In Brenner’s case it would be a kind of tautological translation: *metapsychology* is translated by *metapsychology*.

However, from Freud to Brenner’s metapsychology there is an obvious loss in translation since Brenner completely disregards the idea that introspection or any form of speculation could be a research method in psychoanalysis. Brenner acknowledges the novelty of free association as a method of observation of the psyche but never considers that metapsychology could be the manifestation of this method of free association in the construction of a theory: he refuses to see any links between free association and metapsychology. If introspection is not relevant for psychoanalytic research one may wonder what is the epistemological value of clinical cases? Moreover the consequence of

Brenner's claim - introspection is not a psychoanalytic method – would make it necessary to test psychoanalytic hypotheses through extra-clinical experiments.

This refusal of introspection, shared by most of the positivists, is a denial of Freud's step beyond empiricism. At the beginning of *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, Freud writes a kind of epistemological manifesto that I find especially relevant here, since, on the one hand, it anticipates Brenner's critique of a neutral observation of meanings, but on the other hand, it also points toward a theory of knowledge that would exceed the realm of positivist empiricism:

Even at the stage of description it is not possible to avoid applying certain abstract ideas to the material in hand, ideas derived from somewhere or other but certainly not from observations alone. Such ideas – which will later become the basic concepts of the science – are still more indispensable as the material is further worked over. They must at first necessarily possess some degree of indefiniteness; there can be no question of any clear delimitation of their content. So long as they remain in this condition, we come to an understanding about their meaning by making repeated references to the material of observation from which they appear to have been derived, but upon which, in fact, they have been imposed. (Freud, 1915a, p.117)

Freud writes that metapsychological ideas are not derived from “observations alone” but from “somewhere or other”. What could this “somewhere or other” be? Freud would give an answer to this in one of the last psychoanalytic texts to be published in his lifetime: *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* (1937a). In this text, that denotes a certain pessimism, Freud questions the therapeutic efficacy of the analytical cure. In the third section, Freud explains that when it comes to the treatment of severe cases of illness, the decisive factor in achieving any success is a taming of the drives. “If we are asked by what methods and means this result is achieved” writes Freud, “it is not easy to find an answer. We can only say: “So muss denn doch die Hexe dran!—the Witch Metapsychology. Without metapsychological speculation and theorizing—I had almost said ‘phantasying’—we shall not get another step forward” (Freud, 1937a, p.225).

When clinical work reaches its limits, the only way to progress is through metapsychology, even if this progression is fraught with pitfalls for “what our Witch reveals is neither very clear nor very detailed” (*Ibid.*, p.225). Hence, the “somewhere or other” from which metapsychological ideas are derived is speculation, theorizing and even phantasying. The hypotheses provided by metapsychology form a kind of mythology borne from Freud’s theoretical speculations, from Freud’s phantasies.

Freud had already articulated this idea in an exchange of letters with Albert Einstein published under the title *Why War?*: “It may perhaps seem to you as though our theories are a kind of mythology and, in the present case, not even an agreeable one. But does not every science come in the end to a kind of mythology like this? Cannot the same be said to-day of your own Physics?” (Freud, 1933[1932]b, p.211) Paul-Laurent Assoun noticed how in Freud’s metapsychological texts, the shifts from Oedipus to Narcissus and then to Thanatos involve a growing use of “phantasying” (Assoun, 2009a, p.81). One of the main purposes of this thesis will be to understand the epistemological value of such an act of ‘phantasying’ at the core of a theory of the human psyche.

The reflections of analysts about metapsychology and more generally about the epistemological status of psychoanalysis have influenced and, in their turn, have been influenced by the work of philosophers on the same question. Because of the exclusive intellectual perspective of this philosophical approach and its lack of any clinical elements, I have chosen to focus on a body of literature generated by analysts. Indeed, my question is to understand the link between metapsychology and psychoanalytic practice. Hence, my concern is a questioning of Freud’s metapsychology that rests on clinical arguments and not only on conceptual ones. I have centred my reading on this 1970’s American assault against Freud’s metapsychology because it seems to me that this controversy constitutes the roots of a certain abandonment of metapsychology in psychoanalytic research. In this work, I wish to reopen the debate: to reinstall Freud’s metapsychology into the centre of a questioning of psychoanalytical epistemology. I would like, nevertheless, to briefly note how the main philosophical criticisms of Freud’s metapsychology also come from a hermeneutic and a positivist point of view.

Paul Ricœur and Jürgen Habermas both considered that psychoanalysis was not a natural science and proposed a hermeneutic ‘reconstruction’ of psychoanalysis. In *Knowledge and*

Human Interests, Habermas defended the view that with metapsychology, Freud succumbed to a "self-misunderstanding of psychoanalysis as a natural science" (Habermas, 1971, p.247), a scientist's misunderstanding of his own theory. He argued that the models proposed by metapsychology were antecedent to clinical experience and were superimposed onto them. In *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (1970[1965]), Ricœur distinguished two levels of discourse in Freud's theory. On the one side, a metapsychological explanatory level that rests on conflictual forces and a circulation of energy and on the other, an interpretative level that rests on the deciphering of latent meanings.

Unlike many analysts defending a hermeneutic perspective, Ricœur justifies the duality in Freud's theory and argues that this correlation between forces and meaning is a consequence of the singularity of the objects studied by psychoanalysis (Ricœur, 1970[1965], p.75). To qualify the singularity of these objects, Ricœur speaks of a "semantics of desire" and through this notion he attempts to show how in dreams or in symptoms meaning is trapped. The task of psychoanalysis would be a re-appropriation of meaning: an exegesis of the meanings of the subject's desire at the service of a better knowledge of the self. For that reason, Ricœur has compared psychoanalysis to an ethical system. In his understanding of interpretation, Ricœur has transformed the modes of functioning of the unconscious processes into interpretative techniques external to the psyche. As if the subject's desire was a form of text waiting to be interpreted rather than an unconscious mode of thinking.

On the positivist side, Karl Popper (1972) and then Adolf Grünbaum (1984), through two different modes of argument, both challenged the empirical status of Freud's theory. According to Popper, psychoanalytic hypotheses are not scientific because they cannot be falsified. Popper takes the instance of Freud's hypothesis about dreams: *a dream is a fulfilment of a wish*. Popper examines Freud's answers to dreams, like nightmares that contradict this hypothesis, and he concludes that Freud's argument does not leave any space for falsification. Hence, Freud departs from scientific methods.

To the contrary, Grünbaum argues that Freud's theory can be falsified and that psychoanalysis should be confronted with scientific criteria. But Grünbaum points out the various epistemological faults in Freud's clinical method of justification. He argues

that psychoanalytic hypotheses cannot be tested in an intra-clinical way. According to Grünbaum, the associations of the patient on the couch are contaminated by the verbal or non-verbal suggestions of the analyst. Thus, the clinical case would be no more than a self-validation and only extra-clinical tests could validate Freud's hypotheses.

To conclude on the criticisms of Freud's metapsychology, I propose a chart that would summarize and confront the hermeneutic and positivist view:

Hermeneutic point of view	Positivist point of view
G Klein; M Gill; R Holt; R Schafer; H Home; D Spence	E Peterfreund; C Brenner; J Arlow; A Frank; B Rubinstein
Refute metapsychology as non-analytic	Translate the metapsychological hypotheses into empirically testable hypothesis
Psychoanalysis is a human science	Psychoanalysis is a natural science
Propose a monism of psychoanalytic theory	Propose a dualism of psychoanalytic theory
The aim of the theory is: <i>understanding</i> - it answers the general question: How?	The aim of the theory is: <i>explaining</i> - it answers the general question: Why?
Teleological theory (understand meanings and intentions)	Causal theory (understand the causes)
Idiographic	Nomothetic
Psychologist's reductionism: psychoanalysis is a branch of psychology	Biologist's reductionism: psychoanalysis is a branch of biology

The Supporters of Metapsychology: “Psycho-analysis *farà da se.*”¹¹

In a letter to Jung dated the 30th of November 1911, Freud protests against the idea that psychoanalysis should be subordinate to another discipline: “What troubles me most is that Fräulein Spielrein wants to subordinate the psychological material to *biological* considerations; this dependency is no more acceptable than a dependency on philosophy, physiology, or brain anatomy. *ΨΑ farà da se*” (in McGuire, 1974, p.469). Responses to the American criticisms are quite diverse, however it seems to me that they all support the right of psychoanalysis to have its own epistemological structure and not to become subordinate either to a general psychology or to biology.

Thus, Arnold Modell refuses to abandon a metapsychological approach because “psychoanalysis cannot be fitted into ready made epistemology”(Modell, 1981, p.400). Elisabeth Roudinesco justifies Freud’s metapsychology as a way to separate psychoanalysis from a descriptive psychology of consciousness and to avoid the assimilation of psychoanalysis into philosophy: Freud, “invented metapsychology, a speculative model, in order to inscribe psycho-analysis at the junction between natural science and speculative reflexion. Hence the idea to translate metaphysic into metapsychology: to renounce knowledge of being for knowledge of unconscious processes” (in Roudinesco & Derrida, 2001, p.279, my translation).¹²

Agnès Oppenheimer, in a paper called ‘Qu’est ce que la Métapsychologie?’ [What is Metapsychology?] that she wrote in reaction to the American controversy, argues that it is precisely because the discovery of unconscious processes undermines any philosophy of consciousness, which had constituted the epistemological horizon until Freud, that psychoanalytic questions should be formulated in a new framework and, according to her, metapsychology *is* this new epistemological framework (Oppenheimer, 1985, p.1212). Oppenheimer defends the idea that metapsychology makes it possible to study psychological phenomena beyond the mind-body problem.

¹¹ To remain coherent with the first part of my literary review, I have tried to gather in this section the views of practicing psychoanalysts who wrote in response to the American challenge to Freud’s metapsychology.

¹² “Il inventa la métapsychologie, c’est à dire un modèle spéculatif, afin de l’inscrire au croisement des sciences de la nature et de la réflexion spéculative. D’où l’idée de traduire la métaphysique en une métapsychologie, c’est à dire de renoncer à la connaissance de l’être pour celle des processus inconscients.”

If the project of an exhaustive description of metapsychological concepts cannot be conceived it is, on the one hand, because metapsychology has constantly to take into account new clinical material and on the other, because when clinical material stops being informative, metapsychology is the only way to carry the theoretical reflection further. Metapsychology would be the laboratory of psychoanalytic research: a constant work in progress that invents the specificities of the analytical discourse. Gilbert Diatkine stresses this view of metapsychology as a place for exploration in a very enlightening way. He speaks of the “metapsychological attitude” that he defines as the ability to “let hypotheses flow unhindered while maintaining one’s critical judgement” (Diatkine, 1985, p.1231). Moreover, Diatkine notices how metapsychological speculations always implicate the question of origins both at the level of the individual (ontogenesis) and at the level of the species (phylogenesis).

It is this metapsychological attitude that Freud adopted when he wrote: “What follows is speculation, often far-fetched speculation, which the reader will consider or dismiss according to his individual predilection. It is further an attempt to follow out an idea consistently, out of curiosity to see where it will lead” (Freud, 1920, p.24). Diatkine points out the analogy between this attitude and free association. There is a parallel between the technique that produces the clinical material: free association – and the attitude that provides the “scaffolding” of the psychoanalytical edifice: metapsychology.

Diatkine proposes a symptomatic reading of the American assault on metapsychology: in a similar way to some patients who experience a great difficulty in free associating, some analysts would have a sort of inaptitude to adopt a metapsychological attitude. They replace the fruitful tension between theory and speculation with a methodical hierarchy between a descriptive and an explanatory level of the theory. Diatkine attributes this rigidity to an idealization of an empirical model of science. It is worth noticing that the enthusiastic adherence to such an ideal model of science seems to have renounced the question that Freud had addressed to Einstein: “It may perhaps seem to you as though our theories are a kind of mythology (...) But does not every science come in the end to a kind of mythology like this?” (Freud, 1933[1932], p.211).

From a different angle, Jean-Claude Rolland also defends the idea that metapsychology as a place for exploration was crucial for Freud's work. He defines metapsychology through an analogy with the role played by the drives in psychical activity: "Certainly metapsychology has no more decisive definition than to be, as drive is for psychical activity, the call to work imposed on the theoretician by the concern to make clinical experience more coherent" (Rolland, 2005, p.97). In this attempt to find coherence in the clinical encounter, Rolland identifies metapsychology as a specific type of writing in Freud's corpus and he compares metapsychological writing to poetical writing: "writing that would be like the concrete trace of the psychical transformation the author inflicted on himself to bring to conscious awareness and impose on his ego this reality of the psychical depths that even the most penetrating clinical experience does not spontaneously bestow on the observer" (Rolland, 2005, p.96).

In his epistemological model, Rolland makes a distinction between a "beforeness" metapsychology: metapsychological hypothesis elaborated before the clinical observation that "anticipates and authorizes the rigorous observations of clinical facts" (*Ibid.*, p.93) and an 'afterwardsness' metapsychology that arises from and is informed by the clinical experience. Moreover, Rolland distinguishes three levels of psychoanalytic terms: "a clinical fact, a theoretical concept and (...) a metapsychological 'tool'" (*Ibid.*, p.102). Unlike the hierarchy established by the metapsychological critics, who ascribed to the ascending levels of abstraction a decreasing importance, Rolland puts the metapsychological proposals at the very basis of the psychoanalytic theory: "Metapsychological concepts belong, undoubtedly always belong, to this category of what is paradigmatic" (*Ibid.*, p.101).

This idea of metapsychology as a 'tool' is also often found in thinkers who understand metapsychology as metaphor. Such is the model put forward by Leon Wurmser who conceives psychoanalysis as an autonomous field of knowledge of symbolic forms that cannot be reduced to the natural sciences or to the humanities: "Psychoanalysis is a symbolic form of theoretical knowledge *sui generis* and *sui iuris*: of independent origins, nature, lawfulness, criteria of validity, and structure of theory" (Wurmser, 1977, p.495). Many articles have stressed the central place of metaphor in clinical work: Arlow (1969), Caruth and Ekstein (1966), Lewin (1970), Sharpe (1940), Voth (1970). Wurmser's originality was to study the place of metaphor from an epistemological viewpoint: the

role it plays in the formation and formulation of psychoanalytic theory. From this angle his work is a direct answer to Schafer who through his action language has argued for “an ametaphorical theory” (Schafer, 1975, p.49).

Wurmser shows how Schafer’s theoretical construct is not free of metaphors: “They may be paler, but they remain metaphors” (Wurmser, 1977, p.477). Wurmser adopts a Kantian perspective to argue that metaphors are indispensable for scientific generativity. A specificity of psychoanalytic metaphor would be their anthropomorphic dimension since the “lawfulness of mental phenomena is by definition of ‘human form’” (*Ibid.*, 494). Hence, Freud’s energetic point of view that, “has become the bugaboo of critics of metapsychology” is, in Wurmser’s opinion, made of “perfectly acceptable metaphorical concepts, not only because they resemble so closely similar laws of relations in physics” but also “because the very physical notions of ‘energy’ and ‘quantity’ are themselves of anthropomorphic origin” (*Ibid.*, p.487). In Wurmser’s epistemological model of psychoanalysis, a metapsychology made of metaphors operates like mathematics for modern physics: its role would be to formalise and to integrate knowledge about our inner life.

Joseph Sandler’s article, ‘Reflections on Some Relations Between Psychoanalytic Concepts and Psychoanalytic Practice’ is partly an answer to George Klein’s attack on metapsychology. In this paper, Sandler stood up for the specificity of psychoanalytic practice based on metapsychology, but he nevertheless points to three concepts where “distance between theory on the one hand and clinical practice and experience on the other is particularly wide” (Sandler, 1983, p.42):

1. Drives and motives: According to Sandler not “*all unconscious wishes derive from the instinctual drives.*” (*Ibid.*, p.42)
2. Conflict: Sandler takes over the criticism about the anthropomorphic aspect of metapsychology.
3. Object relationship and transference.

Later on, Sandler developed an idea that seems crucial, according to which, each analyst has their own unconscious metapsychology: even “those who disdain explicit and formal theorizing develop, of necessity, their own personal (and to some extent idiosyncratic)

inner sets of theories. They may be unaware of the existence of such theories or frame of reference, or be unable to verbalize them. (...) Even the “purest” clinician has *her* theories about her patients” (Sandler, Holder, Dare, and Dreher, 1997, p.5 fn.2).

Amongst the supporters of metapsychology, I think it is crucial to mention the view of André Green. As Riccardo Steiner writes, Green sometimes evokes “a solitary, worried biblical prophet, warrior, and defender of Freud’s work as he understands it, not so much to stick dogmatically to it, but to remind everybody, particularly at this moment in history, of the danger of forgetting the richness and still unsurpassed complexity of Freud’s inspirational model” (Steiner, 2000, p.5). Green is one of those analysts who reacted in the most radical way against the reduction of psychoanalytic theory. In addition, through Green’s figure, one can perceive how the metapsychological controversy has triggered a series of debates in psychoanalytic research and, notably for the argument here, on the relevance of infant observation.

According to Green, the central debate in psychoanalytic research is metapsychology versus empirical research. Green attacks the idea that a theory of the unconscious could rest on empirical foundations: “Observation cannot tell us anything about intrapsychic processes that truly characterize the subject’s experience. Objectivism cannot be changed into subjectivism without denying what it wants to replace” (Green, 2000, p.60).

Green argues that many critics of Freud’s metapsychology fail to perceive the fundamental change between Freud’s *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) and the breakthrough of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900-1901). The dream book inaugurated Freud’s metapsychological approach to thinking through psychic problems because the dream became a paradigm for psychoanalytic investigation (Green, 1979). The so-called scientific method seems to Green “very unscientific because of its irrelevance to the object of psychoanalysis” (Green, 2000, p.66). For that reason: “One must admit that a Shakespearean quotation can be more enlightening for a psychoanalyst than a ton of scientific literature!” (Green, 2001, p.19).

Green argues that the interesting question is not so much to prove or disprove Freud’s metapsychological speculations but that we should rather ask ourselves “what the connection is between his speculations (...) and the central object of the discipline he

created. What are the underlying epistemological problems that even he did not always spell out?” (Green, 2000, p.69). These epistemological problems stem from the specificity of the object of psychoanalytic research, which Green defines as the study of “the way the human mind functions in regard to its specific forms of disorganization” (*Ibid.*, p.68). Through a set of polysemic metaphors that refer to the analytical setting, the role of metapsychology would be to map and to make sense of those epistemological problems.

By studying texts produced by analysts that have undermined Freud’s metapsychology in its very principle, I have tried to set up the contemporary ideological landscape in which I propose my own reading of Freud’s metapsychology. Reductions of metapsychology to hermeneutics or its translation into empirical positivism bring subjectivity back into the prison of the logos: into an epistemological framework sustained by a hidden metaphysics of presence and truth. Moreover, one can suspect that to replace a metapsychological notion of subjectivity made up of modes of thinking and of traces, with an informative notion of subjectivity made up of data and meanings, has consequences for the psychoanalytic clinic.

As Jean Laplanche wrote: “One perceives to what extent only metapsychological considerations in their abstract forms are capable of appropriately centring what constitutes the essence of the psychoanalytic *practice*, Freud’s inaugural and primordial invention” (Laplanche, 2007[2000]b, p.50, my translation).¹³ The return of logos through a discourse of meaning or causality could perhaps fit in with a more normative clinic, be it the prescriptive morality of psychology or the technical standards of medicine. My hope in this commentary will be to look for a subject in Freud’s first metapsychology that cannot be reduced to a set of informative data or to a set of brain scans. I believe that such an endeavour has political implications whose stakes seem to me accurately summarized by Jacqueline Rose when she writes:

To understand subjectivity, sexual difference and fantasy in a way which neither entrenches the terms nor denies them still seems to me to be a crucial task for today. Not a luxury, but rather the key processes through which – as

¹³ “On voit à quel point des considérations métapsychologiques d’allure abstraite sont seules capables de centrer convenablement ce qui fait l’essence de la *pratique* psychanalytique, invention primordiale et inaugurale de Freud.”

women and as men – we experience, and then question, our fully political fates
(Rose, 1986, p.23).

In the next three chapters, I will come back to Freud and propose a commentary of the main metapsychological texts written between 1895 and 1915. My third chapter will be a reading of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. My fourth chapter will be centred on Chapter VII of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. My fifth chapter will focus on the 1915 *Papers on Metapsychology*. Through this first part of his metapsychology, Freud drew a tragic portrait of subjectivity in which the representations that are found at our very core are also the representations most alien to us. In this metapsychological view, the most intimate memories take the form of oracles that a Pythia would have delivered in an enigmatic psychical writing inaccessible to consciousness.

Chapter 3

Project for a Scientific Psychology: The Impossibility of a Text

“A Kind of Madness”

The focus of this chapter is to research the causes that pushed Freud to abandon the writing of a draft published posthumously in James Strachey's Standard Edition under the title of *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (Freud, 1950[1895]).¹⁴ The *Project* is an epistolary text that appeared in Freud's letters to Fliess.¹⁵ The trace of its genesis and its abandonment can therefore be followed in these letters. On the 27th of April 1895, Freud wrote that he was “caught up in The Psychology for Neurologists” and that he had “never before experienced such a high degree of preoccupation.” (in Masson, 1985, p.127) On the 8th of October 1895, Freud sent the two first parts of a draft that he had written at the speed of the train that had brought him back from Berlin to Vienna, carried away by the enthusiasm of one of his “conferences” with Fliess. Fruit of an intense intellectual research, sustained by the use of cocaine, the *Project* soon became, in Freud's eyes, an impossible text. On the 29th of November 1895, Freud described renouncing the draft to Fliess:

I no longer understand the state of mind in which I hatched the psychology; cannot conceive how I could have inflicted it on you. I believe you are still too polite; to me it appears to have been a kind of madness. (*Ibid.*, 1985, p.152)

When he wrote the history of his own scientific adventure, Freud presented the beginnings of psychoanalysis as a series of renunciations that opened the road for

¹⁴ In as much as it remained at the state of a draft, Freud never entitled this text. He referred to it as the “Psychology for Neurologists” (letter of the 27th of April 1895, p.127), the “psychology” (letter of the 17th of June 1895, p.132), the “φψω” (letter of the 23rd of September 1895, p.139) but also the “tyrant” (letter of the 25th of May 1895, p.128 and of the 8th of November 1895, p.150). Evidently the impossibility of a text is also the impossibility of a title. (For all correspondence, see Masson, 1985)

¹⁵ I think it is worth noticing that the correspondence is characterized by Freud's belief that Fliess had a secret knowledge about sexuality. As if Freud was the child driven by sexual curiosity and Fliess was the adult who knew the answers. This asymmetry is at the basis of Freud's transference onto Fliess. In retrospect, it is assumed, probably rightly, that this transference played a key role in Freud's self-analysis.

discoveries¹⁶. In his practice, Freud's abandonment of hypnosis gradually gave birth to the technique of free association. In his theory, his giving up the hypothesis of seduction in the aetiology of neurosis led Freud to the discovery of psychical reality. Hence, there were essential reasons that justified the abandonment of hypnosis and of the seduction theory. The premise of my research hypothesis is that the reasons that made the *Project* an impossible text for Freud are also essential. More than a study of its actual content, I will focus my attention on the elements of the text that help to understand why seven months after he had started its writing, the *Project* appeared to Freud as "a kind of madness": to locate in the body of the text the clues that explain its impossibility.

It seems that readers of the *Project* can easily share the impression of "madness" that Freud attributed to his own endeavour. Indeed, many commentators have pointed out the strangeness or the almost abnormal difficulty of this text. Jean Laplanche wrote of the "uneasiness of the contemporary reader" who "begins wondering whether he has not been swallowed up by some monstrous pseudo-scientific machine" (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.31). In his introduction, Ernst Kris stressed the difficulty of the *Project* "even for the reader who approaches it with some preparation" (Kris, 1954, p.27). Isabel Knight described the "embarrassment" of "psychoanalytic traditionalists" and the uneasiness of "humanist sympathizers" in front of "a document at once so dense and so cryptic" (Knight, 1984, 340).

The strangeness generated by the reading of this text comes partly from its formalism, which can appear out of date. This anachronism plays at two levels. The commentaries on these two types of anachronisms have established two main justifications for Freud's renunciation of the *Project*. The first is that the neurological machinery imagined by Freud rests on scientific theories of his time. Freud's intention that is expressed at the very beginning of the *Project*: "to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science" (Freud, 1950[1895], p.295), inscribes the text in the physiological perspective of the Helmholtz school. The "oath" of this positivist movement, that developed itself, against vitalism, from the 1860's onwards in German speaking universities, was summarized by Du Bois-Reymond as "to put in power this truth: No other forces than the common physical chemical ones are active within the organism" (Du Bois-Reymond, 1927). Thus, the

¹⁶ See Freud, 1914b; 1925[1924]b.

Project combines an energetic approach with the anatomical discovery of the neurone that had just been introduced by Waldeyer in 1891.

The anachronism of the scientific knowledge on which Freud developed his text is at the basis of the first justification for the failure of the *Project*: “Freud had realized that the current state of neuroscientific knowledge was such in 1895 that his physiological and anatomical speculations were in fact *pseudoscientific* explanations and -ironically- that he was on far more solid ground scientifically if he confined himself to a *psychological* language” (Solms, 1998, p.7). This idea could be named the ‘positivist explanation’. It supposes that if, at the time of Freud, “the serious limitations of the neuropsychology” justified abandoning the *Project*, the progress of neuroscience would make the working of the mind accessible to physical methods.

In other words, there is nothing structural in the impossibility of the *Project*, it is on the contrary just a matter of timing: one day the advance of neuroscience would overcome this impossibility. Moreover the hypothesis put forward by Mark Solms and more generally by the whole neuro-psychoanalytic movement is that such a day has now arrived: the “neuroscience of the mind has developed to such an extent in the decades since Freud’s death in 1939 that the situation that he confronted in 1895 has now reversed itself” (*Ibid.*, 1998, p.9). Thus neuro-psychoanalysis presents itself as the continuation of Freud’s *Project*: psychoanalysis would have suffered from a centennial confinement and the time of its return to natural sciences would have come (Stora, 2006).

The second anachronism within Freud’s work is the feeling that the *Project* is a pre-analytic draft and that at this stage Freud’s models were more physiological and neurological than psychological. It is this impression that Janet Malcom expressed when she described the *Project* as Freud’s “strenuous, doomed effort to give a physiological source to the psychological phenomena he was discovering” (Malcom, 1981, p.26). In his introduction to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, James Strachey expressed a similar opinion, describing the *Project* as “elaborate physiological explanations” and explained how, as time passed, Freud’s “interest was gradually diverted from neurological and theoretical on to psychological and clinical problems” (Strachey, 1953, p.xviii). Isabel Knight has

described this view as the “orthodox opinion” of Freud’s *Project* (Knight, 1984, p.355, fn.2).

Such a reading of the *Project* as a somehow ‘pre-Freudian’ text leads to the second justification for the giving up of the draft, this being the idea that the study of the psyche exceeds the frame of naturalistic science: “the *Project* stands as the greatest effort Freud ever made to force a mass of psychological facts within the framework of a quantitative theory, and as the demonstration by way of the absurd that the content exceeds the frame” (Ricoeur, 1970, p.73). This idea could be named the ‘hermeneutic explanation’. Like the positivist standpoint, this explanation identifies that the objects studied in the text exceed the conceptual framework through which they are described. However, unlike the positivist explanation the hermeneutic view supposes that the excess of psychological phenomena within a naturalistic framework is structural, so that no progress of neuroscience could compensate for it. In other words, and paraphrasing the title of one of Paul Ricoeur’s chapters, the impossibility of the *Project* is the impossibility of “an energetics without hermeneutics” (*Ibid.*, p. 69).

The difficulty for Freud’s positivist commentators arises from the fact that they have to justify Freud’s departure from the language of naturalistic science. Against their view, I think that this departure is not only due to the limitation of nineteenth century neuroscience. Moreover, I would like to defend the idea that already in the *Project*, Freud “both preserves and overthrows the language of naturalistic sciences” (Friedman and Alexander, 1983, p.304). Indeed, under the appearance of the energetic and neuronal model developed in the *Project*, Freud’s metapsychology already appears. To use Paul-Laurent Assoun’s formulation: “the neuronal model that is here developed is already transformed into a metapsychology” (Assoun, 2009 b p.502, my translation).¹⁷

The uneasiness of the hermeneutic commentators towards this text is due to the fact that it forces them to acknowledge the naturalistic roots of Freud’s theory and, therefore, they are tempted to reject it from the Freudian corpus, as if Freud’s giving it up was evidence that the *Project* was a theoretical dead end. Against this view, I propose that the impossibility of the *Project* is a fertile impossibility. In a way, Freud’s main discovery in

¹⁷ “C’est bien en effet un modèle ‘neuronique’ qui est là développé, mais déjà ‘méta-psychologisé’”.

writing this draft was its very impossibility: the discovery that some empirical psychological phenomena resist a verbal formalisation. Freud's metapsychology will be a continual work in progress trying to describe those phenomena and therefore the *Project* in its impossibility can be read as precursory of the whole metapsychological research.

My aim is to locate these phenomena and to understand how they resist formalisation. I hope this reading of Freud will clarify the genesis of a metapsychological model of the unconscious, a model that differs from either the positivist or hermeneutic model of the unconscious. Hence, I would like to develop a third explanation for Freud's abandonment of the *Project* that would follow neither framework. This explanation rests on the premise that to identify the central problem raised by the *Project* as, "*the nature of the relationship between the brain and the mind*" (Solms, 1998, p.1) is a reductionist reading of the text. More than that, the *Project* is a text that describes the experience of hysteria, of obsessions and also the experience of dreams.

Freud was certainly not the only one "to attempt to make use of the quite recent discoveries of anatomical science and the emergent physiology of the nervous system in an ambitious synthesis" (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.55). Thus, for instance, Helmholtz's former assistant, Wilhelm Wundt published in 1874, *Fundamentals of Physiological Psychology* (Wundt, 1874) and in 1894, Sigmund Exner von Ewarten published his *Outline of a Physiological Explanation of Psychical Phenomena* (Exner, 1894). However, the specificity of Freud's approach came from the fact that his intention in the writing of the *Project* was also to give an account of neuropsychotic disorders. As he wrote to Fliess on the 25th of May 1895:

I am tormented by two aims: to examine what shape the theory of mental functioning takes if one introduces quantitative considerations, a sort of economics of nerve forces; and, second, to peel off from psychopathology a gain for normal psychology. Actually, a satisfactory general conception of neuropsychotic disturbances is impossible if one cannot link it with clear assumptions about normal mental processes. (in Masson, 1985, p.129)

Freud identified hallucinatory thoughts from the clinical observation of hysteria. Through a theory of the ego and the so-called theory of the “hysterical proton pseudos” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.352), Freud tried to formalize these hallucinatory thoughts.

What is at stake in Freud’s *Project* is not only an attempt “to create a model of mind that allowed for the psychic causation of illness” (Makari, 2008, p.64) but also to discover a form of writing to describe ideas that cause psychic illness. Hence, the strangeness triggered by the reading of the *Project* could come not only from its anachronism but also more fundamentally from the strangeness of the phenomena it tries to describe – or more precisely from the fact that those phenomena resist formalisation: *an awkwardness of the verbal language that fails to formalize hallucinatory thoughts*.¹⁸

From Breuer to Fliess

André Green has argued that when Freud “decided to contact Fliess in order to work with him (...) he thought of dividing the task to be accomplished: he would take care of the psychological aspects of the mind, expecting that Fliess would provide the neurobiological counterpart. He then became aware of Fliess's misunderstanding of his own hypotheses, and had to write a paper of his own to explain to Fliess what he expected from him. And that was the reason for the *Project*” (Green, 2001, p.16). If Freud started the *Project* in order to clarify his hypotheses to Fliess, it was also a way to liberate himself from his collaboration with Breuer.

Isabel Knight has convincingly shown that the *Project* “was provoked by Freud’s dissatisfaction with the theoretical chapter in *Studies on Hysteria*, a section written by his reluctant collaborator, Josef Breuer” (Knight, 1984, p.340). Already, in the preface to the first edition of *Studies on Hysteria*, the authors mentioned that in the book “at some points divergent and indeed contradictory opinions are expressed”, which “arises from the natural and justifiable differences between the opinion of two observers who are agreed upon the facts and their basic reading of them, but who are not invariably at one in their interpretations and conjectures” (Freud and Breuer, 1893-1895, pp.xxix-xxx). For the

¹⁸ This anxiety of language as it confronts the hallucinatory, could in fact be one of the sources at the origin of the uncanny. Hence, the ‘uncanniness’ attributed by some to psychoanalysis could come from the fact that it puts the investigation of hallucinatory thoughts through verbal language at the core of its research.

sake of my argument, I wish to explore the sources of Freud's and Breuer's collaboration and the nature of their disagreement.

In 1886, Freud had returned from Paris and had become the Viennese representative of Charcot's ideas about hysteria, hypnosis and psychopathology. That same year, Hyppolite Bernheim (Professor of Medicine from the provincial city of Nancy in France) published a book called *On Suggestion and its Therapeutic Application* in which he challenged Charcot's view on hysteria and hypnotism. Charcot attributed hypnosis to neural dysfunctions: a physiological phenomenon. On the contrary, in his book, Bernheim proposed a psychological explanation for hypnosis. According to Bernheim, hypnotism exaggerated a common property of psychological life, the one of suggestion: an idea introduced into the brain of the hypnotized by an external influence is then accepted by the subject as though it had arisen spontaneously. In 1888, Freud translated this book. In his preface, Freud adopts a balanced view of the dispute, and sides with neither Charcot nor Bernheim. He defends the idea that hysteria must be based on something other than mere suggestion but he also takes his distance from '*grand hypnotisme*', the phenomena described by Charcot in the case of hypnotized hysterical patients.

When Freud settled in Vienna as a specialist in nervous disorders the two main therapeutic tools he had at his disposal were electrotherapy and hypnotism. He soon realised the complete uselessness of electric treatment in regards to curing nervous disorders and focused on hypnotism. Freud wrote in *An Autobiographical Study*: "in the first years of my activity as a physician my principal instrument of work, apart from haphazard and unsystematic psychotherapeutic methods, was hypnotic suggestion" (Freud, 1925[1924]b, p.17). However, Freud makes clear that: "from the very first I made use of hypnosis in *another* manner, apart from hypnotic suggestion. I used it for questioning the patient upon the origin of his symptom, which in his waking state he could often describe only very imperfectly or not at all" (*Ibid.*, p.19). Freud had learned this second way to use hypnosis from Breuer. Breuer made use of it within his cathartic method, which consisted in helping the patient under hypnosis to remember and even to relive in a hallucinatory manner certain traumatic events. This allowed the discharge, or abreaction, of the pathogenic affects attached to the memory of the trauma.

In his use of hypnosis, Freud encountered obstacles. First, he was unable to hypnotize many of his patients: “The percentage of cases amenable to somnambulism was very much lower in my experience than what Bernheim reported” (Freud, 1893-1895, p.108). Secondly, Freud realised that therapeutic success obtained through hypnosis does not last. In fact, the success lasts only as long as the patient is under the influence of the physician: “even the most brilliant results were liable to be suddenly wiped away if my personal relation with the patient became disturbed” (Freud, 1925[1924]b, p.27). When the suggestion of the doctor disappears, the patient falls again under the spell of a more antique and a more rooted suggestion, and the symptoms reappear.

This antique suggestion is that of infantile sexuality, which the case of Anna O. had already demonstrated. Recalling the end of Anna O’s cure, Freud specified: “over the final stage of this hypnotic treatment there rested a veil of obscurity, which Breuer never raised for me; and I could not understand why he had so long kept secret what seemed to me an invaluable discovery instead of making science the richer by it” (*Ibid.*, pp.20-21) Freud explained what the “veil of obscurity” was in a letter to Stefan Zweig of 1932: “the evening of the day that all her symptoms had been brought under control, Breuer found her confused and writhing with abdominal cramps. Asked what was the matter she replied, ‘Now comes Dr. Breuer’s child’”. At this point, adds Freud, Breuer had “the key in his hand” but “he dropped it” (In Gay, 2006, p.67). Anna O’s unconscious phantasy of being impregnated by her father, which had previously been expressed through her symptoms, found another way to express itself in the relationship with Breuer. In the same way, Freud described how an experience with a hysterical patient showed him “in the crudest light” what he had long suspected:

It related to one of my most acquiescent patients, with whom hypnotism had enabled me to bring about the most marvellous results, and whom I was engaged in relieving of her suffering by tracing back her attacks of pain to their origins. As she woke up on one occasion, she threw her arms round my neck. (...) I was modest enough not to attribute the event to my own irresistible personal attraction, and I felt that I had now grasped the nature of the mysterious element that was at work behind hypnotism. (Freud, 1925[1924]b, p.27)

Thus, the secret of hypnosis was hidden in what Freud would later conceptualise under the term of transference. The patient accepts the suggestion of the physician only because this suggestion of the present allows the patient to reproduce a suggestion of the past: that of infantile sexuality. Breuer was incapable of facing the transference in its crudely infantile sexual form. In his introduction to *Studies on Hysteria*, Strachey has stressed that this “chief difference of opinion” between Freud and Breuer was: “the part played by sexual impulses in the causation of hysteria” (Strachey, 1955, p.xxv). Freud recalled how when he “began more and more resolutely to put forward the significance of sexuality in the aetiology of neuroses,” Breuer “was the first to show the reaction of distaste and repudiation” (Freud, 1914b, p.12).

Behind the question of the role played by infantile sexuality in the hysterical symptom, what is at stake is an understanding of neurosis as an abnormal physiological state, against neurosis as a psychological conflict. Freud explained how Breuer “preferred what might be called a physiological theory”: abnormal hypnoid mental states would lead to the abnormality of hysteria. Freud on the other hand did not appeal to abnormality but was inclined to suspect the existence of psychological conflicts “such as are to be observed in normal life” (Freud, 1925[1924], p.23). Hence Freud summarized the divergence as: “a case of ‘hypnoid hysteria’ versus ‘neuroses of defence’” (*Ibid.*, p.23).

By writing to Fliess, Freud was making contact with someone who recognised the importance of sexual aetiology and in this way covertly went against Breuer, who had fled from this idea. It is perhaps worth noticing that Freud’s intellectual transference was mingled with a therapeutic one, as Fliess became Breuer’s successor not only emotionally and intellectually but also as Freud’s physician. In April 1894 after a medical crisis, Freud favoured “Fliess’s diagnosis of nicotine poisoning” over Breuer’s suggestion “of myocarditis” and this “episode, which Freud experienced as life-threatening, contributed to the transfer of his trust from Breuer to Fliess” (Knight, 1984, p.342).

Hence, I agree with Knight when she writes that the *Project* was “a suppressed response to the theory of hysteria presented by Josef Breuer in his and Freud’s joint

work” (Knight, 1984, p.340) and I would argue that this response can be articulated around two points:

- The existence of divided mental processes that can lead to neuroses of defence.
- The importance played by sexual ideas in pathological mental conflicts.

In his manuscript, Freud developed the first of these two points through a model of the mental apparatus, and the second around the so-called theory of the hysterical proton pseudos.

A Memory Without Objects

The *Project* contains the first Freudian map of a divided psychical life. The originality of the model developed in the *Project* is to describe the subject in conflict through the language of natural science: a language that knows only energy (Q) and matter (the neurone). Thus, by “tracing all the *qualities* of our sensations back to *external quantities*” the path followed by natural science would be the exact reverse of the one operated by the nervous system, which “consists of contrivances for transforming external *quantity* into quality” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.309). This first model of the psychical apparatus is made of three systems of neurones. Neurones that compose the three systems are the same entities: they don’t differ in their essence; they are morphologically or histologically equivalent.

The difference of functioning between the neurones of these three systems comes from the way they facilitate the passage of energy. Even more precisely, the difference comes from the quantity of energy to which their positioning in the nervous system exposes them: “A difference in their essence is replaced by a difference in the environment to which they are destined” (*Ibid.*, p.304). The system Φ (phi) is the system that serves for perception, its neurones are permeable: they offer no resistance to the passage of external energy. The system Ψ (psy) is the system of memory, its neurones are impermeable “loaded with resistance, and holding back” the passages of energy, in such a way that “*memory is represented by the facilitations existing between Ψ the neurones*” (*Ibid.*, p.300). The system ω (omega)

describes the qualitative aspect of consciousness, its neurones are filled with the minimum amount of energy and are incapable of receiving flux of energy but they are sensitive to the period of the passages of energies in the two other systems.¹⁹

Starting from the idea that there is no difference in essence between the neurones, but that only the *facilitation* of energy allows a representation of the different mental systems, Jacques Derrida proposed in *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, what seems to me, a deeply original and fruitful reading of the *Project*. Derrida noticed that the hypothesis of facilitation “is remarkable as soon as it is considered as a metaphorical model and not as a neurological description”(Derrida, 1978[1967], p.252)²⁰. If, according to Derrida, the facilitation metaphor “is remarkable” it is because its models are “borrowed not from spoken language or from verbal forms, nor even from phonetic writing, but from a script which is never subject to, never exterior and posterior to, the spoken word” (*Ibid.*, p.249). To describe memory as an interplay of facilitations existing between neurones is a metaphor that indicates a form of writing that “makes what we believe we know under the name of writing enigmatic” (*Ibid.*, p.250). This writing is enigmatic because it is made of traces.

Derrida distinguished the sign and the trace. He understood the sign to be the element of a nomenclature: an object that classifies meaning and which is observable in itself, in its essence. This idea of the sign is at the basis of Derrida’s attack against structuralism. At the beginning of *Of Grammatology*, Derrida argues that by using the sign to reach objectivity, structuralism limits “the sense of being within the field of presence” under “the domination of a linguistic form” (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.23). The essence of the trace, on the other hand, cannot be exposed because it finds its origin in differences: the trace appears in the differences between objects. The

¹⁹ The “ω neurones are incapable of receiving $\mathcal{Q}\eta$, but that instead they appropriate the *period* of the excitation and that this state of theirs of being affected by period while they are filled with the minimum of $\mathcal{Q}\eta$ is the fundamental basis of consciousness” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.310).

²⁰ ‘Facilitation’ is the translation found in Freud’s Standard Edition for the word ‘Bahnung’. In *Freud and the scene of writing* Derrida’s translation of ‘Bahnung’ in French is «frayage». To translate Derrida’s «frayage» Alan Bass used the word ‘breaching’. According to Alan Bass “Derrida’s translation of Bahnung” in frayage “has an idiomatic connection to pathbreaking in the expression, se frayer un chemin. ‘Breaching’ is clumsy, but it is crucial to maintain the sense of the force that breaks open a pathway, and the space opened by this force; thus, ‘breaching’ must be understood here as a shorthand for these meanings.” (Bass, 1978, p.426) I will myself remain faithful to the translation of the Standard Edition apart from when I am quoting Bass’ translation of Derrida.

nature of these objects, in which the trace appears, then becomes almost contingent and secondary. Derrida invented the concept of archi-trace precisely to stress that the trace could not be reduced to an empirical system of notation.

In Derrida's reading of the *Project* the cathected neurone corresponds to the sign. Ideally, the cathected neurone could be observed under the microscope as an empirical reality. The trace however could never be observed because there is no "pure facilitation" without difference. Memory is constituted by the facilitation between the cathected neurones, but facilitation without difference would be "insufficient for memory": "An equality of resistance to" facilitation "would eliminate any preference in the choice of itinerary. Memory would be paralyzed. It is the difference between" facilitations "which is the true origin of memory, and thus of the psyche" (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.252).

Approaching the question of memory from another perspective the philosopher Clément Rosset has reached very similar conclusions. He pointed out that to forget is not the disappearance of a memory but rather a mental state in which each memory appears undifferentiated - in the terminology of the *Project*: an equality of resistance to facilitation. In such a way, Rosset has argued, that it would be impossible to distinguish between a state of total amnesia and a state of total reminiscence (Rosset, 1977, p.18-20).

The enigmatic writing of the psyche uses a "script" that cannot be observed, that does not have an essence, in as much as "*différance* is not an essence" (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.255). *Différance* is a neologism coined by Derrida, "a witticism of Derrida" as Geoffrey Bennington has stated, since "in French the difference between "différence" and "différance" is only marked in writing, which thus takes a certain revenge on speech by obliging it to take its own written trace as its reference if, during a lecture for example, it wants to say this difference" (Bennington, 1993[1991], pp.70-71). It is a concept that comes from Derrida's critical reading of structuralism: by accentuating the idea of difference, which is at the basis of the structuralist principle of the sign, Derrida challenged the reduction of the sign to phonetic language. Broadly speaking, Derrida's *différance* designates "the non-signifying difference that traverses (...) produces and maintains those systems of opposition (signifier/signified, speech/writing, presence/absence, nature/culture, etc.)" (Wortham, 2010, p.37). Now, what seems crucial to me, is that by putting the concept of *différance* at the core of the memory apparatus described in the *Project*, Derrida allows us to perceive that already in Freud's

early work there is the presence of a type of memory that is activated by non-signifying and non-observable objects.

Thus, Derrida's reading of the *Project* shows a model of mental life in which memory is not formed of empirical objects. It is not an archival storage facility as it is not the qualitative memory that is described in the *Project*, but a contrivance capable of registering traces. In reality, it would be the whole psyche that confronts us with non-qualitative, non-empirical objects since memory "is not a psychical property among others; it is the very essence of the psyche" (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.252). Freud writes in the *Project* that the neurones from the system Ψ "are the vehicles of memory and so probably of psychical process in general" (Freud, 1950[1895], p.300) and Derrida noticed that the representation of memory by the system Ψ corresponds to the very nature of the psyche.

This reading has a fundamental and somehow ironic consequence: in his attempt to furnish a natural science for the study of mental life, Freud discovered a description of the psyche that escaped natural science: instead of an anatomical chart (or of any form of observable nomenclature), a script of absences. When Freud turned the positivist light on in the darkroom of the psyche, the ghost of the trace has already escaped the room: "Life must be thought of as trace before Being may be determined as presence"(Derrida, 1978[1967], p.252). The fact that the description of the psyche through facilitations led to a non-empirical 'psychical writing' constitutes, I believe, the great discovery of the *Project* and one of the main reasons for its abandonment.

The young Derrida, who proposed this original reading of Freud's *Project* in *Writing and Difference*, is in fact a reader of a very peculiar type. Derrida's first works are a series of critical close readings. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida conceptualised this form of close reading under the name 'deconstruction'. In his reading, Derrida does not adopt the position of the philosopher who judges from the outside the epistemological value of disciplines that would be in the ignorance of their metaphysical premises. Rather, as pointed out by Patrice Maniglier (2011), Derrida reads in order to prolong the elements from a text that operate beyond an organisation of knowledge described as 'metaphysics of presence'.

The metaphysics of presence are those theoretical systems that think in two moments: first, a beginning that is the presence of an experience in the mind, and secondly a sign that represents this experience in its absence and which is necessarily derived from a devalued sense of appearance and is deceptive with respect to the first.²¹ These systems imply a linear conception of time in which past, present, future are fixed categories and in which logical connections are irreversible. Derrida deconstructs Saussure's *phonocentrism* by prolonging in Saussure's text his definition of language in terms of difference; he deconstructs Husserl's demand for presence by prolonging in Husserl's texts his thought of ideality in terms of repeatability and he deconstructs Freud's neurological fable by prolonging in the *Project* Freud's model of memory in terms of facilitations.

Patrice Maniglier has identified Chapter two from *Of Grammatology* as the paradigmatic example of Derrida's deconstruction. This chapter is in fact a critical commentary on Chapter six of Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics (CGL)* and the is considered responsible for the shift from "structuralism to post-structuralism, from a philosophy of the structures to a philosophy of the differences" (Maniglier, 2011, p.371). I think it is enlightening to establish a parallel between Derrida's reading of the *Project* and his reading of the *Course in General Linguistics*. These two texts share many similarities. Freud and Saussure belonged to exactly the same generation as the first was born in 1856 and the second in 1857. Like Freud, who received through Brücke the positivist training of the Helmholtz school, Saussure was trained in Leipzig by the neogrammarians whose ambition was to transform the study of language into a natural science based on observation and induction.

Like Freud's *Project*, Saussure's *Course* was, for its author, an impossible text: it was published posthumously from materials compiled out of lectures Saussure had given between the years 1906 and 1911 at the University of Geneva. I believe that it is the impossibility of these two texts that motivated Derrida's reading. He saw in it an philosophical escape, a major disruption in the ontological discourse. It was perhaps the

²¹ In the book he wrote in collaboration with Derrida, Geoffrey Bennington proposed this elegant definition of the metaphysics of presence: "The metaphysics of presence think in two (logical and often historical) moments: presence first, of the world to a gaze, of a consciousness to its own inspection, of a meaning to a mind, of life to itself, of a breast to a mouth; absence next – the world veiled, consciousness astray, nonsense, death, debauchery, language, weaning. By thinking the second moment as derived with respect to the first, one returns, if only in thought, the complex to the simple, the secondary to the primary, the contingent to the necessary. This is the very order of reason and meaning of the *logos*" (Bennington, 1993[1991], pp. 17-18).

most radical shift away from Plato's ontology, as Patrice Maniglier has argued: "not because it gives up the ontological plan but on the contrary because it splits the notion of Being" from the one of presence, "to identify it with the one of variance" (Maniglier, 2011, p.385, my translation).²²

Experiences produced by a scientific approach to subjectivity raise new epistemological problems. Studies on language or on the psyche produce new sorts of signs that cannot be apprehended within the frames of the *Weltanschauungen*: signs in search of causality and in search of meanings. Thus, the *Project* and the *Course* - two research studies that took their means of investigation (the psyche and language) as an object of study - reveal contents that escape the logos. A significant difference however, is that whilst Saussure never ceased resisting this escape, Freud, through his metapsychology, found a way to explore it. He transformed the impossibility of the *Project* into Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Derrida showed that Freud's description of facilitations of energy between the ψ (psy) neurones revealed that the psyche is constituted by correlations of differences. At this point, my aim is not to discuss the correctness of this idea but rather the problem that it raises. Thus, if at the core of Freud's theory of the psyche – as it appeared in the *Project* – there is a "psychic writing" that resists direct observation and any form of nomenclature, in other words, that resists the classical logos; my question is, how did Freud formalize this in his text so as to draw a portrait of a being whose memory is represented by the facilitations existing between neurones? This question is not just relevant for the model of the psyche put forward in the *Project*. In fact, I think that this problem will reappear with each new model Freud will discover for the psyche.

I would like to propose that, at the stage of the *Project*, Freud described ideas that operate beyond the logos through a theory of the ego and the so-called "hysterical proton pseudos" (Freud, 1950[1895], p. 352). The ego is described as the instance that incarnates the logos and the proton pseudos are the ideas that deceive the ego. Thus begins the tragic destiny of the ego in Freud's ontology: that "poor creature" which from the *Project*

²² "Si renversement du platonisme il y a jamais eu, celui-ci est peut-être le plus radical: non pas parce qu'il renonce au projet ontologique, mais au contraire parce qu'il sépare la notion d'être de celle d'invariant, pour l'identifier à celle de variance."

to *The Ego and the Id* “owes to too many masters” (Freud, 1923, p.56) and is menaced by dangers from both the external and internal world.

I is an Other...

Jean Laplanche has emphasized that the *Project* was: “the great Freudian text on the ego, a far more focused consideration of the question than any of Freud’s subsequent writings, including *The Ego and the Id*, would be” (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.54). Indeed, the *Project* is the foundation of a Freudian theory of the ego because for the first time it is defined as the instance that distinguishes external perceptions from internal ideas. The ego allows the mental apparatus to recognize the object wished-for as not real: “We have brought forward the hypothesis that, during the process of wishing, inhibition by the ego brings about a moderated cathexis of the object wished-for, which allows it to be cognized as not real” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.327).

The fruitfulness of this model, what “animates” it and “makes it something different from a purely speculative construct is the clinical experience of a still emerging psychoanalysis and the rather strange phenomena it observes” (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.55). Freud identified in hysteria, obsessions and dreams, situations in which the mental apparatus is not capable of differentiating between what is perceived and what is wished for. In those situations the ego is unable to cope with a hallucinatory mode of thinking. It is crucial to notice that already at the stage of the *Project*, Freud did not conceive hallucinatory processes as pathological manifestations. These psychic processes “are daily presented to us during sleep” and moreover “the pathological mechanisms which are revealed in the psychoneuroses by the most careful analysis have the greatest similarity to dream-processes” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.336).

By abandoning Charcot’s “position as master-hypnotist to allow himself to be taught by the patient’s knowledge” (Vives, 2012, p.873) and by replacing Breuer’s pathological hysterical ego by an ego in conflict, as it can be observed in normal life, Freud took the ego out of its rational temple. Ola Andersson has shown that during the year 1895 – the year he wrote the drafts that would become the *Project* – Freud focused his concern on “the relation between health and disease in the field of neurosis” and discovered against the doctrines of heredity and degeneration that “the psychic processes in his patients

were not, in principle, different from those of healthy persons” (Andersson, 1962, p.193-194).

The appearance of the term “psychoneurosis” in Freud’s vocabulary is an element of this discovery: Freud borrowed it from Krafft-Ebing who had employed it for many years “to designate neurotic affections in persons with no (...) ‘hereditary taint’”(Ibid., p.194). The ego of the healthy and that of hysterical subjects are both deceived, only a matter of degree differentiate them: pathology makes things larger and coarser and so it can draw our attention to normal conditions which would otherwise have escaped us. Years later Freud would write about “the reverential awe which peoples of the past felt for the insane. They have turned away from external reality, but for that very reason they know more about internal, psychical reality and can reveal a number of things to us that would otherwise be inaccessible to us” (Freud, 1933[1932]a, p.59).

Freud described an “ego” that is not threatened by madness but by memories. Hence, what characterizes a pathological state ceases to be heredity or degeneration but rather the intensity of the conflict between the ego and a certain type of reminiscence. This conception of the ego is in fact a challenge for “the boundary between reason and madness that had been established by the constitution of modern scientific rationality” (Whitebook, 1999, p.34). Once again, we find in the reading of the *Project* an example of “Freud’s relationship with the natural sciences”: “ironical at best and, at times, even ‘subversive’”(Friedman and Alexander, 1983, p.303). Starting from the honest attempt to describe psychology in a scientific language, Freud gave birth to a concept of the ego closer to Rimbaud’s “I is an *other*”²³ than the Cartesian cogito. A concept of the ego, which “restored, in medical thought, the possibility of a dialogue with unreason....” (Foucault, 1965[1961], p.198).

The model of the ego elaborated by Freud in the *Project* comes from the clinical observation of its failure. Dreams, because of the “*unloading*” of the ego, or hysteria, because “the ego would come in action too late” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.358) give rise to ideas of a hallucinatory nature. In the *Project*, Freud used a few names to designate those hallucinatory ideas: “excessively intense ideas”[*überstarke Vorstellung*] (Ibid., p.295);

²³ From a letter written by Arthur Rimbaud to Georges Izambard dated the 13th of May 1871 and which constitutes the first of the so called *Lettres du voyant* (Rimbaud, 2009, p.454).

“imaginary idea” [*Phantasievorstellung*] (*Ibid.*, p.325); and “hallucination” (*Ibid.*, p.339). Freud inferred from the hallucinatory nature of the dream “*that primary wishful cathexis, too, was of a hallucinatory nature*” (*Ibid.*, p.340). Thus, through the “experience of satisfaction” Freud made of the hallucinatory mode of thinking a sort of ontological bedrock.

The initial way used by the mental apparatus to face a need is the wishful activation of the memory trace attached to the object that satisfied that need. In the same way the primary defence against an experience of pain is a form of negative hallucination: the “hostile mnemonic image” attached to the object that was perceived as the cause of the pain “is regularly abandoned by its cathexis as soon as possible” (*Ibid.*, p.322).²⁴ At first, the endogenous stimuli are dealt with through “wishful activation”, which “produce the same thing as a perception – namely a *hallucination*.” (*Ibid.*, p.319) Indeed, the ω (omega) neurones, which constitute the qualitative aspect of consciousness, furnish the same indication of reality for the object perceived in a hallucinatory manner and for an external perception:

If the wished-for object is abundantly cathected, so that it is activated in a hallucinatory manner, the same indication of discharge or of reality follows too as in the case of external perception (*Ibid.*, p.325).

As Laplanche noticed: “the problem of hallucinations is the fact that there is already *too much* reality in the system” (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.61). In fact, rather than a problem, this surplus of reality constitutes “the *mainspring* of the psychical mechanism” since it is the non-coincidence between these two forms of reality that “gives the impetus for the activity of thought, which is terminated once more with their coincidence” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.328).

In the *Project*, Freud provided an economical model for the hallucinatory mode of thinking. Freud distinguishes the primary function, which consists in bringing the level of energy in the neurones to zero, and the secondary function, that strives at maintaining a constant level of energy in the nervous system. The primary function is the outcome of a principle posited by Freud: the “principle of neuronal inertia” according to which

²⁴ At this stage of his thinking, Freud is still describing a mental apparatus rather than the psychical apparatus he will describe in Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In the former, Freud still did not have the concept of psychical reality and so did not distinguish the memory trace (or mnemonic image) from the thing presentation that is created from this trace and which forms the atom of psychical reality.

“neurones tend to divest themselves” of energy (*Ibid.*, p.296). The secondary function is an adaptation of the principle of neuronal inertia to “*the exigencies of life*”. Indeed, the survival of a living system whose energy would tend towards zero is hard to conceive. In order to think the actions necessary to its functioning, the nervous system must maintain a store of energy.

It has been suggested that the secondary processes could be equated with the concept of homeostasis (Strachey, 1966, p.296, fn.1). The ego is “a group of neurones which is constantly cathected and thus corresponds to the *vehicle of the store* required by the secondary function” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.323): the ego is the instance that maintains the homeostasis of the nervous system. In the Ψ (psy) neurones, psychological primary processes generate wishful cathexis to the point of hallucination. The ego is defined “as a network of cathected neurones” that “*inhibit* psychological primary processes” (*Ibid.*, p.323-324).

It is this inhibition that is described as psychological secondary process and by which the ego “*makes possible a criterion for distinguishing between perception and memory*” (*Ibid.*, p.326). The ego operates a distinction between the ideas produced by a wishful psyche and perceptions from the external world. This crucial and vital function is a necessary condition for the functioning of rational thoughts: “The *process of thought* consists in the cathexis of Ψ neurones accompanied by a change, brought about by side-cathexis from the ego” (*Ibid.*, p.334). With some memories, however, the ego seems to fail in distinguishing between what is perceived and what is hallucinated. Freud named those memories: “the hysterical proton pseudos”.

The Ontological Lies

My hope in this part of my chapter will also be to show that it was through his attempt to understand the nature of ideas in which rationality gets lost that Freud would eventually redefine the concept of sexuality: a ‘polymorphously perverse’ sexuality built around infantile sexuality and which is at the core of psychological reality.

In the second part of the *Project*, Freud tries to understand the nature of those memories that escape the control of the ego. According to him, what characterizes these reminiscences is sexuality. Some sexual reminiscences get around the ego defence

mechanisms and trigger in the mental apparatus pathological defences, in other words *symptoms*. Amongst the ideas that evoke a distressing affect in the ego, only sexual ideas seem to have the power to generate neurotic symptoms. What is this power contained in some sexual ideas? To answer this question, Freud proposed the theory of the *proton pseudos*.

According to James Strachey, the term *proton pseudos* “occurs in Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* (...), a work dealing with the theory of the syllogism which was later included in what came to be called the *Organon*. The chapter deals with false premises and false conclusions, and the particular sentence asserts that a false statement is the result of a preceding falsity (*proton pseudos*)” (Strachey, 1966, p.352, fn.1). Ola Andersson has shown that even though he had borrowed the term from Max Herz's “critical psychiatry”, Freud had not been influenced by Herz's views: “It seems likely that Freud found the conceptions of an “abuse” of normal psychic “mechanisms” and a “first lie” useful and illuminating for his own work, and on that account applied them quite apart from their framework in Herz's reasoning” (Andersson, 1962, p.196-197).

Proton pseudos could be translated from Greek into ‘first lies’. Andersson proposed that the “lie” was an indication of “the ‘false connection’ occurring between the affective state of the hysteric and the ‘symbol’ when a ‘sexual idea’ had been ‘repressed’” (*Ibid.*, p.196). Indeed, at first glance the clinical exploration of hysteria showed that the connection between an idea and an affect appeared “(1) *unintelligible*, (2) *incapable of being resolved by the activity of thought*, (3) *incongruous*” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.348). Freud's famous stroke of genius was to reveal, in the face of scientific prejudices, that what seemed *unintelligible* and *incongruous* – like the dream or the hysterical symptom – had its own logic, the logic of the primary process: “The pathological process is one of *displacement*, such as we have come to know in dreams – a primary process therefore” (*Ibid.*, p.350). Hence, the logic of the hysterical lie would be that of the primary process.

What excludes the hysterical lie from the secondary process, and therefore from the “*process of thought*”, is “the special psychological determinant from natural characteristic of sexuality” (*Ibid.*, p.353). This natural characteristic of sexuality is the retardation of puberty. When he wrote the *Project*, Freud had not yet discovered infantile sexuality and so he assumed that “no sexual experiences produce any effect so long as the subject is

ignorant of all sexual feeling – in general, that is, till the beginning of puberty” (*Ibid.*, p.333). In such a way that after puberty a sexual memory “arouses an affect which it did not give rise to as an experience” (*Ibid.*, p.356). That some memories contain a hidden sexual charge constitutes the essence of the hysterical lie. On the 15th of October 1895, Freud had “revealed” to Fliess this “great clinical secret”: “Hysteria is the consequence of a presexual *sexual shock*” (Masson, 1985, p. 144). The proton pseudos is a sexual Trojan horse that deceives the control of the ego: ideas that “unexpectedly release unpleasure, and the ego only discovers this too late. It has permitted a primary process because it did not expect one” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.358). The power of the proton pseudos comes from the fact that they release a sexual affect similar to the one of an actual experience: the ego is not capable of distinguishing between what is perceived and what is hallucinated. Hence, the terrifying situation of the hysteric would be, that some ideas that are imprisoned in his inner life, act as an external sexual assailant.

A way to understand the fact that Freud characterized the hysterical lie as *proton*, as a *first* lie could be that it is the *primary* process which produces those lies: “*The retardation of puberty makes possible posthumous primary processes*” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.359, my italics). Ideas produced by a primal mode of thinking disturb the process of thought. The hysteric is like a somnambulist whose waking thoughts are invaded by dream images: ideas of a hallucinatory kind barge in, in the middle of verbal ideas.²⁵ As the proton pseudos are excluded from the process of thought, they are ideas that are not thought but enacted. With the proton pseudos, Freud described psychical presentations that escape the logos, ideas whose meaning escapes the mind but that are instead acted through the body, which becomes the scene of the hysteric’s private theatre.

Precisely because of this theatricality of the symptom, hysterics have been accused of lying and many “thought that it was no disease at all but rather female subterfuge and fakery” (Makari, 2008, p.16). The other side of the same idea was to present hysteria as the only possible protest against patriarchy (Showalter, 1987). In fact from the angle of the hysterical proton pseudos, the first victim of the hysterical lie, or the one to whom the protests are addressed, is the hysteric himself. Indeed, as Jean Laplanche noticed, the proton pseudos is “something other than a subjective lie”, what is “at stake is a transition

²⁵ “One shuts one's eyes and hallucinates; one opens them and thinks in words” (Freud, 1950[1895], p. 339).

from the subjective to a grounding – perhaps even to a transcendental – dimension: in any event a kind of objective lie inscribed in the facts” (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.34). The nature of the hysteric’s lie is ontological and it is the ontological nature of the proton pseudos that resolves the contradiction concealed in this term: the *proton pseudos* can be both *lie* and *primary* because it is inscribed in the psychic destiny of the subject.

I believe that his hypothesis of a transcendental lie will reappear in Freud’s work with the notion of primal phantasies. This ontological dimension of the proton pseudos does not mean that hysteria is universal, but rather that the unconscious processes at stake in hysteria are universal. Juliet Mitchell has revealed how the “presence of male hysteria (along with an analysis of dreaming) enabled Freud to found psychoanalysis as a theory built on the observation of universally present unconscious processes (...) Through the awareness of male hysteria at the end of the nineteenth century it could be seen that the symptoms of hysteria were the writing large of ordinary and universal processes. The exaggeration of neuroses shows us the psychopathologies of everybody’s everyday life” (Mitchell, 2003, p.5).

The ontological peculiarity of the proton pseudos rests on the nature of a psychical writing - a form of writing of the primary process made of facilitations - that lies to the metaphysics of presence in as much as it escapes it. The proton pseudos falls within this psychical writing: it is a form of memory that is not an archive and whose observation has always escaped, even the subject who owns it. A trace “that refers to an absolute past (...) because it obliges us to think a past that can no longer be understood in the form of a modified presence, as a present-past” (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.67). However, when he wrote the *Project*, Freud still believed in his *neurotica*: he held to the reality of the seduction scene, which was reawakened at puberty to produce a neurosis. He had not yet discovered the form of reality created by unconscious phantasies and their consequences, as beautifully summarized by Laplanche: “*what is repressed is not the memory but the fantasy derived from it or subtending it*” (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.102). This is, I believe, the main reason for the impossibility of the text: the attempt to describe a trace as an archive. The tension of the *Project* exists because Freud had identified the strange nature of hallucinatory ideas that are the outcome of psychical reality but was obliged to translate them through the realm of material reality.

Conclusion: The Witch

What is at stake in the shift from a representation of hysteria through the pictures taken at the Salpêtrière, showing patients in all the postures of their delirium, to its representation through the diagram that Freud drew to illustrate the functioning of the proton pseudos (Freud 1950[1895], p.354, fig.16) – is Freud’s discovery that the bodily symptoms of hysteria were physical expressions of hallucinatory ideas.

In the *Project*, Freud identified hallucinatory ideas that coexist with perceived ideas. In order to describe the functioning of those hallucinatory ideas, Freud proposed a model of the psyche: the system ψ whose functioning is enlightened by Derrida’s concept of trace. A psyche that is not made of *objects-ideas* observable in their positivity, but rather of *facilitations-ideas*, which exist only in their difference to other facilitations. It follows, that memory and the act of recollection is not the excavation of an archive but the transcription [*Umschrift*] of past facilitations from the activation of the present. It is from this understanding of memory that Freud’s concept of deferred action [*Nachträglichkeit*] stemmed and it is precisely this functioning that Freud described through the proton pseudos.

The proton pseudos was, of course, a way to describe the seduction theory (or trauma theory as this hypothesis came to be called) but it also represented ideas that operate from an economical point of view beyond homeostasis and from a descriptive point of view beyond self-presence. The hysteric lie would in fact be the expression of a more fundamental lie: the ontological lie of the psychic writing. This probably explains the universal character of hysteria: “every adolescent must carry the germ of hysteria within him” (Freud, 1950[1895], p.356) wrote Freud and what makes of hysteria “not *a* disease but *the* disease in its pure form, the one, which is nothing in itself but is likely to take the shape of every other disease” (Swain, 1994, p.53, my translation).²⁶ Through this great plasticity of forms, the hysteric transcribes every other disease in the hallucinatory code of infantile sexuality, and in such a way that the hysteric continuously enacts the ideas that horrify him. Jacqueline Schaefer has compared this tragic destiny to that of the ruby: a stone that displays red, the only colour that it rejects (Schaefer, 1986).”

²⁶ “L’hystérie n’est pas *une* maladie, elle est *la* maladie à l’état pur, celle qui n’est rien par elle-même mais susceptible de prendre la forme de toutes les autres maladies.”

“The mind of the hysterical patient is full of active yet unconscious ideas; all her symptoms proceed from such ideas”, Freud would write almost twenty years after the *Project* (Freud, 1912b, p.262). The failure of the *Project* resulted partly from the attempt to describe these active unconscious ideas in a model that ignored the dynamic unconscious. To speak in Derrida’s terms, the failure to represent a *trace-idea* in a topic made of *signs-neurons*.

A few months after giving up his text, in a letter to Fliess dated the 13th of February 1896, Freud coined the term metapsychology: “I am continually occupied with psychology – really metapsychology” (in Masson, 1985, p.172). Freud’s metapsychological endeavour will resume the question discovered in the *Project*: how to describe a form of psychical writing that operates beyond the logos? Freud will try to describe the ontological lie that the hysterics – that modern form of the witch – were enacting in their convulsions, in a kind of theoretical trance, which, enigmatically enough, he will name in one of his last texts, quoting Goethe’s *Faust* ‘the witch metapsychology’: “We can only say: ‘So muss denn doch die Hexe dran!’ (*We must call the Witch to our help after all!*) - the Witch Meta-psychology” (Freud, 1937a, p.225). Hence, the other name of metapsychology is borrowed from a great literary work. Literature and metapsychology: two forms of knowledge alternative to the logos and the figure of the witch, who appears as the incarnation of the knowledge of hallucinatory processes as revealed by hysteria.

Chapter 4

The Infantile Prophecy

From the Hysterical Theatre to the Text of the Dream

Serge Viderman wrote that, from a technical angle, “the discovery and the development of psychoanalysis was dominated by the attempt to recover memories through which the past could be reconstructed (Viderman, 1970, p.13, my translation)”.²⁷ Along the path that led Freud from hypnosis to free association, *the attempt to recover lost memories also incorporated Freud’s research to formalise them: to create a way to write memories*. Indeed, I think that Freud’s technical discoveries were not only clinical but also formal: Freud invented new ways to write the psyche. Through the many forms that patients’ resistance took on, through the discovery of transference and through the impossibility of distinguishing between truth and fictional memories, Freud perceived that the faculty of memory did not operate like an archiving system²⁸. By liberating his patients’ speech, Freud faced a memory whose functioning escaped the verbal means through which it expressed itself.

This functioning raised obvious theoretical issues but also formal ones. I understand the *Project’s* failure as Freud’s discovery that the modes of thinking at the core of memory resist being transcribed into writing. The neurotic subject is suffering from this nonverbal memory, which to be understood, Freud had recognised, required a new psychology. Referring to the power of the hysterical unconscious memory, Freud wrote: “You see that the remainder of the problem lies once more in the field of psychology—and, what is more, a psychology of a kind for which philosophers have done little to prepare the way for us” (Freud, 1896b, p.219). In this scientific communication, Freud named this new psychology of the unconscious: the “future *psychology of the neuroses*” (*Ibid.*, p.219), but in the secrecy of his correspondence with Fliess, he had already forged the more esoteric name of *metapsychology*.

²⁷ “L’histoire de la découverte et du développement de la psychanalyse est dominée théoriquement par la découverte de l’inconscient, techniquement par la récupération de la mémoire grâce à quoi le passé est reconstruit.”

²⁸ In his early psychoanalytic papers Freud thinks of resistance as a psychological force “*opposed to the pathogenic ideas becoming conscious*” (Freud, 1893-1895, p.268).

As the seduction theory was losing its theoretical capacity to describe the neurotic subject, it was gradually being replaced by a more ambitious ontological project: metapsychology. The iconic letter of the 21st of September 1897 – in which Freud announced to Fliess that he no longer believed in his *neurotica* – contains the shift from the one to the other: “In this collapse of everything valuable, the psychology alone has remained untouched. The dream [book] stands entirely secure and my beginnings of the metapsychological work have only grown in my estimation” (Masson, 1985, p.266). The seduction theory attributed the origin of neurosis to a real event, whereas metapsychology became Freud’s attempt to rethink the aetiology of neurosis within a universal question: the question of the genesis of memory.

This “metapsychological work” would push Freud to hear the story associated with the symptom no longer as an archive but as the attempt to verbalize an unconscious wish. The hypothesis that neurotic symptoms are determined by psychical reality made of unconscious wishes allowed Freud to connect two of his fields of inquiry that hitherto seemed separate and independent: dreams and neurosis: like dreams, neurotic symptoms are wish fulfilments. In a letter dated the 19th of February 1899, Freud wrote to Fliess: “Not only dreams are wish fulfilments so are hysterical attacks. This is true of hysterical symptoms, but probably applies to every product of neurosis (...) Reality – wish fulfilments – it is from these opposites that our mental life springs” (*Ibid.*, 1986, p.345). Thus, the study of dreams offers a new angle to both theorise and formalise psychoneuroses and the writing of a dream will become a new way to write the psyche.

In his work on Freud’s self-analysis, Didier Anzieu pointed out that, even though “the field of psychopathology itself was becoming increasingly familiar to Freud, he did not know to what extent it overlapped the field of normal, general psychology (...). In order to clear up the problem, he needed to find a psychical phenomenon half way between the two fields which would enable him to establish how human beings move from a normal to a pathological state. He was becoming increasingly interested in a phenomenon that seemed to satisfy those requirements: the dream. The dream is at once a normal phenomenon (everyone has at least one dream every night) and a pathological phenomenon (the dream is a brief hallucination)” (Anzieu, 1986, p.124). The study of dreams was also a way to shift from a traumatic towards a metapsychological explanation of neurosis.

However, if the abandonment of the seduction theory is such an epistemological breakthrough, how must we understand the similarity between the proto-metapsychology put forward in the *Project* and the first metapsychology as it appeared in the last chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*?

In his introductions to Freud's writings, James Strachey pointed out that, the "general account of the working of the mind in Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams* still shows much resemblance to the *Project*" (Strachey, 1966, p. 292, fn.1). Strachey explained how the *Project* constitutes "a first approach to a coherent theory of dreams"²⁹ and, moreover, already gives "a clear indication of what is probably the most momentous of the discoveries given to the world in *The Interpretation of Dreams*—the distinction between the two different modes of mental functioning, the Primary and Secondary Processes" (Strachey, 1953, p.xv). The question I want to raise here is: what has changed between the *Project* and Chapter seven of the *Traumdeutung*?³⁰

If the theoretical models described in these two texts share so many similarities, how is it that, on the one hand, Freud rejected the *Project* as a "kind of madness" and that later in his life "he seems to have forgotten it or at least never to have referred to it" (Strachey, 1966, p.290) – when on the other hand, Chapter seven concluded a work that Freud described as "the most valuable" of all his discoveries, the outcome of an insight that "falls to one's lot but once in a lifetime."³¹ Through which evolutions in his thought and in his writing, has Freud transformed what appeared to him as an impossible text into a founding text, a 'shibboleth' of his theory?

As noted by André Green, the answer to this question could not be univocal and the explanation of this evolution has to be found in a mix of "clinical, personal and

²⁹ Strachey gives a list of the elements of Freud's dream theory that are already in the *Project*: "(1) the wish-fulfilling character of dreams, (2) their hallucinatory character, (3) the regressive functioning of the mind in hallucinations and dreams (...), (4) the fact that the state of sleep involves motor paralysis, (5) the nature of the mechanism of displacement in dreams and (6) the similarity between the mechanisms of dreams and of neurotic symptoms." (Strachey, 1953, p.xv)

³⁰ For brevity's sake, I will hereon refer to this key chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams* merely as "Chapter seven".

³¹ Preface to the Third (Revised) English Edition written by Freud in 1931, *S.E.*, 4, p. xxxiii.

theoretical experiences” (Green, 1972, p.254, my translation).³² My aim in this chapter will not be to propose a general hypothesis to explain Freud’s evolution. Instead, I would like to propose a reading of Chapter seven in the light of the *Project’s* failure. I would like to show that behind the apparent continuity, what is at stake between these two texts is the emergence of a new question in Freud’s research: the question of the genesis and the formalism of the unconscious wish. I propose that it is through this question that in Chapter seven, Freud redefined his metapsychology as both a theoretical and formal endeavour.

From a theoretical angle, Chapter seven is the birth of a new object of study. Rather than a memory perceived as an archive that would suffer from ‘unrepresentable’ traumatic experiences, the object of the first metapsychology will be that part of the psyche which can generate unconscious wishes. Thus, the *scene of seduction* is replaced, as a foundational experience, by *the experience of satisfaction*. The story of the symptom is not made of sexual ideas introduced by a familial object. Instead, the fiction of the symptom is built of hallucinatory sexual ideas created in the absence of the familial object. In the second part of this chapter, I will compare the experience of satisfaction as it is described in the *Project* and in Chapter seven. My aim will be to show that the experience of satisfaction in Chapter seven deals with a question that is absent from the *Project*: that of unconscious wishes formed of ideas that are inadmissible to consciousness.

From a formal angle, the *Traumdeutung* corresponded to Freud’s attempt to transform images into a text: to make the visible readable – and also, to describe the psyche through a fiction. I believe that these two aspects were the main evolutions introduced in Chapter seven to the psychical writing that Freud had invented in the *Project*.

The Emergence of a New Question

In the first part of this chapter, I will try to show how Freud’s repudiation of the seduction theory, as a general explanation for the aetiology of neuroses, led to the emergence of a new question.

³² “Il est clair que la réponse ne peut être univoque. Les plans s’enchevêtrent: expérience clinique, expérience personnelle, expérience théorique s’allient et se contrarient pour aboutir au grand œuvre.”

When he started describing the clinical work he was engaged in with his hysteric patients, Freud realised that the case histories he was writing, “read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science” (Freud, 1893-1895, p.160). The reason for this, he argued, was not “any preference of his own” but rather “the nature of the subject”: the “intimate connection between the story of the patient’s suffering and the symptom of his illness” (*Ibid.*, p.161). Hence, there is an “intimate connection” between the languages of the neurotic symptom and that of story telling. It is precisely this connection that Freud discovered when, on abandoning hypnosis as a way to obtain pathogenic recollections, he assured his patients that “they *did* know it” (*Ibid.*, p.268). By travelling backwards into their past, “step by step, and always guided by the organic train of symptoms and of memories and thought aroused” (Freud, 1896a, p.151), Freud’s patients would try to remember the experiences that were at the origins of their symptoms.

This origin, which Freud searched for in the memories of his patients, seemed to converge on one story: the story of “childhood scenes in which they were sexually seduced by some grown-up person”, with “female patients the part of seducer” being “almost always assigned to their father”³³ (Freud, 1925[1924], p.33-34). Freud would obtain from his neurotic patients, the same seduction story with such uniformity that “if the preconditions of these experiences” were not “always of the same kind” one could almost “believe that there were secret understandings between the various patients” (Freud, 1896b, p.205). In April 1896, Freud gave a lecture to the local Society for Psychiatry and Neurology in which he revealed his discovery: the solution to this psychiatric enigma, this “source of the Nile” that was the aetiology of hysteria, was in fact a story of a “surprising simplicity and uniformity”: “*A passive sexual experience before puberty*” (Freud, 1896a, p.152).

Freud’s lecture was published the same year in the *Wiener Klinische Rundschau* and it subsequently appeared in the Standard Edition under the title *The Aetiology of Hysteria* (1896c). The reading of this paper helps to clarify what Freud meant by “seduction”. Indeed, the use of the term seduction can appear euphemistic or at least rather enigmatic.

³³ Jean Schimek has stressed that in the published papers of the years 1896-1897 which describe the seduction theory, the “father does not play a major role, in fact is not even directly mentioned” (Schimek, 1987, p.951). However in a letter of the 6th of December 1896, Freud clearly expressed to Fliess that, “heredity is seduction by the father” (in Masson, 1985, p. 212).

Thus, John Forrester starts his paper 'Rape, Seduction, Psychoanalysis' with this confession: "Around 1981, I began to ask myself the question: why did Freud characterise this theory by the term seduction rather than rape?" (Forrester, 1990, p.62). In fact, *The Aetiology of Hysteria* brings a clear answer to this question. It shows that Freud's use of the term seduction designated the invasion of adult sexuality into the child's life. However, this invasion is not necessarily a rape.

From the eighteen cases that constituted his empirical material, Freud distinguished three kinds of invasions: first, the case of rapes "mostly practised on female children, by adults" (Freud, 1896b, p.208), secondly, a love relationship between an adult and a child and through which the adult "has initiated the child into sexual intercourse" (*Ibid.*, p.208) and thirdly, "child-relationships proper—sexual relations between two children of different sexes" (*Ibid.*, p.208). This last case would contradict the premise that Freud was still holding at the time, namely the absence of spontaneous infantile sexuality, but Freud specifies the reason for this "prematurely awakened libido". It is caused by the fact that, "the boy - who, here too, played the part of the aggressor - had previously been seduced by an adult of the female sex" and it is under the pressure of this memory that, "he tried to repeat with the little girl exactly the same practices that he had learned from the adult woman" (*Ibid.*, p.208). In such a way that the "foundation for a neurosis would (...) always be laid in childhood by adults" (*Ibid.*, p.208-209).

This invasion of sexual ideas in childhood, constitutes I believe, the most important aspect of the seduction theory. It seems to me that in this theory, it is not the traumatic aspect of the seduction that is to be found in the mechanism of hysterical symptoms.³⁴ Actually, on some occasions the traumatic aspect seems completely absent. For instance, Freud describes the case of a child who through accidental circumstances stimulated "the genitals of a grown-up woman with his foot", which "was enough to fixate his neurotic attention for years on to his legs and to their function, and finally to produce a hysterical paraplegia" (*Ibid.*, p.215). This patient's legs seem to have become the canal (or rather the

³⁴ One of the great advocates against Freud's seduction theory in its perception as a theory of trauma is Jean Laplanche. Laplanche reads the seduction theory as a description of the unavoidable encounter between an infant and the messages generated by adult's sexuality. In his so called "general seduction theory", Laplanche (1999) has conceptualised this encounter as an ontogenesis of the psyche. I will return to Laplanche's theory in my next chapter.

cannon) carrying threatening alien sexual ideas and, as a result, paralysis appeared to be the only possible defence against the terrifying question: ‘what are these enigmatic legs?’

When they speak about their symptoms, Freud’s patients produce logical or associative connections that can be traced back to these scenes, which all contain feelings of invasion. Freud read the neurotic symptom as ‘a defensive effort’ against these invasions, hence the name, the ‘neuroses of defence’ to designate hysteria and obsessions. My point is that the mechanism of neurosis put forward by the seduction theory in 1896 is not so much the traumatic aspect of the seduction – even under the form of a trauma as a deferred action – but rather the invasion by unfamiliar sexual ideas. Since in many cases these ideas are linked with the father or a familial figure, I would be tempted to consider the seduction as *unfamiliar familial ideas*. The pathologic power of these ideas comes from the child’s passivity in the face of sexual representations. The neurotic subject is dominated by the reactivation of these antique ideas that have been stored without being associated with a network of presentations.

Predictably the physicians who attended Freud’s lecture gave it “an icy reception” and one of the most famous amongst them, the psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing made this striking comment that Freud mentioned in a letter to Fliess: “It sounds like a scientific fairy tale” (Masson, 1985, p.184). Indeed, like a fairy tale, seduction stories display a remarkable homogeneity in their structure and like a fairy tale, the outcome seems always to be the same: the constitution of a couple. Moreover, Krafft-Ebing’s remark already forecast the fragile relationship between narratives of seduction and reality. Like Freud’s acknowledgement of the similarity of his work with that of a novelist, this remark highlights the link between neurotic symptoms and narratives. Freud’s insight, that “there are no indications of reality in the unconscious”, so that one cannot distinguish between truth and fictional memories that have been cathected with affect (*Ibid.*, 1986, p.264), will provide this link with a completely new significance: both the symptom and the fiction associated with the symptom contain an unconscious wish.

At this stage of the seduction theory, the ideas that threaten to take control, and against which symptoms develop, do not differ in their essence from the rest of the ideas that compose the psyche. They are linked to memories of real events and they are expressed in a verbal language. Hence, the ontology of the neurotic subject proposed by the

seduction theory remains within the frame of the logos. The challenge of the seduction theory led Freud to read neurotic symptoms and childhood memories as expressions – forms of writing – of ideas that differ in their essence from conscious ideas. They differ first of all, because they are linked with an unconscious reality of a wish and secondly, because they are expressed in a hallucinatory mode made of images.

I would like to stress how the shift from the *proton pseudos* to the *unconscious wish* happened gradually in Freud's work between 1895 and 1899 and how Freud's concept of the latter appeared as an answer to a new line of thought.

As long as he held to the seduction theory, Freud was trying to locate in the texture of the symptom the exogenous pathogenic ideas that an adult's seduction would have laid down in the child's memory. In the second part of the *Project*, Freud named those enigmatic ideas: the *hysterical proton pseudos*. He described how an incidental circumstance post-puberty could activate the pathological power of those pre-sexual sexual ideas. It is not the traumatic aspect of the seduction that makes the proton pseudos pathological but the fact that – because of the retardation of puberty – they generate a primary hallucinatory mode of thinking.

A premise of the seduction theory was that memories of seduction were “*excluded from the process of thought*” (Freud, 1895b, p.351). The therapeutic hope was then to bring them back under the control of verbal thoughts. Hence, Freud was trying to identify seduction memories in the patients' associations and, at times, he would try to help these ideas to emerge as an archive that could be dated. Yet, when he wrote his theoretical section of *Studies on Hysteria*, he had already communicated his doubts about the essence of the memories that appear in the analytic encounter:

The ideas which are derived from the greatest depth and which form the nucleus of the pathogenic organization are also those which are acknowledged as memories by the patient with greatest difficulty. Even when everything is finished and the patients have been overborne by the force of logic and have been convinced by the therapeutic effect accompanying the emergence of precisely these ideas—when, I say, the patients themselves accept the fact that they thought this or that, they often add: ‘But I can't *remember* having thought

it.’ It is easy to come to terms with them by telling them that the thoughts were *unconscious*. But how is this state of affairs to be fitted into our own psychological views? Are we to disregard this withholding of recognition on the part of patients, when, now that the work is finished, there is no longer any motive for their doing so? Or are we to suppose that we are really dealing with thoughts which never came about, which merely had a *possibility* of existing, so that the treatment would lie in the accomplishment of a psychical act which did not take place at the time? It is clearly impossible to say anything about this—that is, about the state which the pathogenic material was in before the analysis—until we have arrived at a thorough clarification of our basic psychological views, especially on the nature of consciousness. (Freud, 1895a, p.300)

In this extract, Freud clearly raised the possibility that crucial early experiences revealed by the analytic treatment are not archive-memories of real past events but rather, are constructed memories of thoughts that had a *possibility* of existing. In fact, Jean Schimek has proposed in a convincing way that already during the years 1896-1897, infantile memories “were not directly reported by the patients but were (re)constructed by Freud on the basis of his interpretation of a variety of more or less disguised and partial manifestations and ‘reproductions,’ with the likelihood of a strong transference element” (Schimek, 1987, p.944). Hence, there existed in these years a discrepancy between the neatness of the theoretical scheme and the strangeness of the clinical material.³⁵ In the clinical encounter and in his self-analysis, what Freud was gradually discovering “on the nature of consciousness” was that childhood memories populating consciousness are constructed: they are fictional. It is important to stress that the proposal that memories are constructions does not imply that they are not genuine.

The elaboration of this idea about childhood memories can be followed in the letters Freud wrote to Fliess a few months before he renounced the seduction theory. In May 1897 he wrote: “Fantasies arise (...) according to certain tendencies. These tendencies are toward making inaccessible the memory from which symptoms have emerged” (Masson, 1985, p.247) and in July 1897: “What we are faced with [in dreams and in the psychology

³⁵ In this clinical material, Freud’s self-analysis played a paramount role. Indeed, as it has been stressed by Ernst Kris amongst others: “The first and perhaps most significant result of Freud’s self-analysis was the step from the seduction theory to full insight into the significance of infantile sexuality.” (Kris, 1954, p.33)

of the neuroses] are falsification of memory and fantasies” (*Ibid.*, 1985, p.255). This idea of the fictional nature of memories will find a first real expression, and I would say radical formulation, in *Screen Memories*, a text published in 1899. This text shows how the hallucinatory nature of the unconscious wish is screened by the construction of a fictional memory: “You projected the two phantasies on to one another and made a childhood memory of them. (...) I can assure you that people often construct such things unconsciously – almost like works of fiction” (Freud, 1899, p. 315).

The term ‘construction’ does not mean here that the memory is not genuine, as this memory could have been selected “from innumerable others (...) because, on account of its content (which in itself was indifferent) it was well adapted to represent the two phantasies” (*Ibid.*, p.315). I believe it fruitful to push this text to its limits and to understand the use here of the term ‘screen memory’ not as a particular type of memory amongst others, but as the definition of a memory: the essence of childhood memory is to contain and to screen unconscious wishes. Freud is not far from such an idea when he writes: “It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all *from* our childhood: memories *relating to* our childhood may be all that we possess” (*Ibid.*, p.322). Fourteen years later, Freud would reiterate this astonishing statement that, in the analytic encounter, every conscious memory of childhood is a screen memory:

In some cases I have had an impression that the familiar childhood amnesia, which is theoretically so important to us, is completely counterbalanced by screen memories. Not only *some* but *all* of what is essential from childhood has been retained in these memories. It is simply a question of knowing how to extract it out of them by analysis. They represent the forgotten years of childhood as adequately as the manifest content of a dream represents the dream-thoughts. (Freud, 1911-1915[1914], p. 148)

The hypothesis that childhood memories told in analysis are constructions has been, I believe, widely misinterpreted by a range of historians and scholars. Frank Cioffi’s 1975 article *Was Freud a Liar?* gives us access to a whole body of scientific literature that attacked Freud, claiming his observations to be worthless on account of his having

suggested the stories of seduction to his patients.³⁶ I think such criticisms miss the point that what was at stake in Freud's abandonment of the theory of seduction was precisely his discovery that memory is suggestible. The analytic situation activates the construction of childhood memories, which are fictional memories representing repressed sexual ideas.

Freud's confession to Fliess: "I no longer believe in my *neurotica*" is rightly understood as an epistemological breakthrough, because it changed the semiology of the psychoanalytic cure: from an archive-memory to a screen memory. Juliet Mitchell has shown how the "social realism of, amongst others, Reichian and feminist critiques" ignored the unconscious dimension of psychical reality in their criticisms of Freud and that they were "therefore, in this respect not so much anti-Freudian as pre-Freudian" (Mitchell, 1974, p.9). Similarly, I think these historical criticisms read the abandonment of the seduction theory from a pre-Freudian paradigm that ignores or reifies the unconscious but also ignores the dimension of psychical reality.

I would like to establish a parallel between the idea that childhood memories, as they appear in the analytic dialogue, are fictional and the phenomenon of post-hypnotic suggestion that Freud had witnessed in the summer of 1889 when he went to observe Hyppolite Bernheim's work in Nancy. This phenomenon must have had a great impact on Freud, as half a century later he recalled it as an experimental proof of unconscious psychical acts:

The doctor enters the hospital ward, puts his umbrella in the corner, hypnotizes one of the patients and says to him: 'I'm going out now. When I come in again, you will come to meet me with my umbrella open and hold it over my head.' The doctor and his assistants then leave the ward. As soon as they come back, the patient, who is no longer under hypnosis, carries out

³⁶ Amongst the most important texts attacking Freud from this angle are: Borch-Jacobsen, M. (1996). *Neurotica: Freud et la Théorie de la Séduction*; Esterson, A. (2001). *The Mythologizing of Psychoanalytic History: Deception and Self-Deception in Freud's Accounts of the Seduction Theory Episode*; Israël, H., and Schatzman, M. (1993). *The Seduction Theory*; Scharnberg, M. (1993). *The Non-Authentic Nature of Freud's Observations: Vol.1. The Seduction Theory*. In a book called *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*, Jeffery Masson, the editor of the Freud-Fliess correspondence, addressed the exact opposite reproach to Freud. According to Masson, Freud gave up the seduction theory so as not to disturb the Viennese bourgeoisie that composed his clientele. Although these two reproaches are diametrically different, they both refuse the idea that at the level of psychical life "whatever the facts and figures of the situation, the desire was far more prevalent than the act" (Mitchell, 1974, p.9).

exactly the instructions that were given him while he was hypnotized. The doctor questions him: 'What's this you're doing? What's the meaning of all this?' The patient is clearly embarrassed. He makes some lame remark such as 'I only thought, doctor, as it's raining outside you'd open your umbrella in the room before you went out.' The explanation is obviously quite inadequate and made up on the spur of the moment to offer some sort of motive for his senseless behaviour. It is clear to us spectators that he is in ignorance of his real motive. (Freud, 1940 [1938], p.285)

The childhood memories verbalized in the 'talking cure' are equivalent to the explanations given by the 'post-hypnotized' subject. What is at stake in the collapse of the seduction theory is Freud's discovery that memories are not remembered but are activated, they don't "*emerge*" they are "*formed*": "Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, *emerge*; they were *formed* at that time."³⁷ (Freud, 1899, p. 322) Just as a fiction is activated by both the hypnotic suggestion and the doctor's questions, childhood memories are activated by both the unconscious wish and the analytical work.

In California, at the end of the seventies, a researcher named Michael Gazzaniga conceived an experiment, which shared many similarities with that of post-hypnotic suggestion.³⁸ Gazzaniga conducted this experiment on a patient whose corpus callosum had been severed in an operation known as a corpus callosotomy. This patient was suffering from epilepsy that was resistant to the treatments available at the time and the aim of the operation was to reduce the number and the severity of his epileptic fits. The corpus callosum is a structure that connects the left and the right hemisphere. After the removal of the corpus callosum, the two hemispheres of this patient's brain could no longer communicate, thus forming a split-brain. Gazzaniga's idea was to ask the patient to sit in a room where the message: "Walk" would appear on a screen. This message was

³⁷ Later in the "Wolf Man", Freud will affirm that the primal scene had not been remembered but activated [*Aktivierung*] (1918[1914], p.120).

³⁸ This experiment was described in a paper entitled *Language, Praxis, and the Right Hemisphere: Clues to Some Mechanisms of Consciousness*, published in the *Journal of Neurology* in 1977.

shown only to his left eye, and so would be processed by the right hemisphere of his brain. The right hemisphere is able to understand a short one-word message like “Walk”, but since the functions of language exist mainly in the left hemisphere, the patient would not have been able to verbalize the message.

After seeing the message, the patient stood up and walked out of the room. When Gazzaniga asked the patient why he was leaving, the patient immediately came up with a fictional answer: “I am leaving because I am thirsty” or “I have to go home to check that I have switched off the gas”, and so on. Gazzaniga’s question had been posed to the left hemisphere of the patient’s brain, the one that processes language. The left hemisphere did not receive the message on the screen and so had no idea why he was leaving the room. Rather than confessing his ignorance about the causes of his behaviour, the patient’s left hemisphere immediately invented a fictional answer.

Many other experiments and the study of neurological diseases have empirically confirmed the importance of fictional interpretation for consciousness. In 2006, Lionel Naccache, a neurologist and researcher in cognitive neuroscience published a book entitled *Le Nouvel Inconscient: Freud le Christophe Colomb des Neurosciences* [*New Unconscious: Freud, the Christopher Columbus of Neuroscience*] in which he stressed that the fictional interpretation of reality is an aspect of consciousness that has remained unrecognised by most of the cognitive models of the mind. Naccache thinks that Freud’s discovery that memories are constructed is fundamental to the understanding of the mind and yet, Naccache refuses to link these constructions with an unconscious psychological reality. According to him, Freud, rather like Christopher Columbus who discovered America whilst thinking he had found a new route to the Indies, imagined he was discovering the unconscious when in fact he was revealing a crucial psychic continent of *consciousness* – a continent of fictional interpretations.

Lionel Naccache argues that the most important aspect of Freud’s work was to use fictions built by the subject as material for the subject’s cure, and as a means to investigate a general understanding of the mind. It seems to me, that what escapes Naccache’s line of reasoning is that the analytical frame generates a very peculiar kind of narrative. A reading of the first clinical cases shows that, from the beginning of the *talking cure*, patients were surprised by the stories which appeared in their associations. As

if the fictions constructed by the subject on the couch were alien to this very subject. In the same way that it is impossible to predict the content of a dream, it is also impossible to predict the content of an analytical session. Even though the analysand is awake, his associations operate beyond the realm of the cogito and fall under another psychological influence. Freud's work rests on the hypothesis that the patients' associations are produced under an unconscious psychological influence.

I would argue that the question that the discovery of the fictional aspect of memory raised for Freud is not the one identified by Naccache. Indeed, Gazzaniga's experiment, as well as the example of post-hypnotic suggestion, raises two main questions. The first is: why, in such situations, do we not admit ignorance about the reasons that motivate our actions, but rather give a fictional account in order to justify them? It is this first question on which Naccache focuses. However, it also raises a second question, which is: why does the patient or the person under hypnosis obey the suggestion presented to them? Strangely enough, Naccache never confronted or even identified the question of an unknown psychological influence of which we are ignorant and to which we are obedient.

I believe that this second question is the Freudian question. In the intellectual movement that led Freud to abandon the seduction theory, the question of theorizing the unconscious impulses by which the subject is lived, became central to his work. The aim of the Freudian hermeneutic of the dream will be to decipher these impulses that lie behind the fiction of the spoken dream. The aim of the Freudian metapsychology in Chapter seven will be to propose a theory of the genesis of these unconscious forces and to imagine a language in which they could be formalized.

The *Mainspring* of the Psychological Mechanism

Reading *The Interpretation of Dreams*, one is struck by the fact that the seventh chapter appears to be of a different nature from the rest of the book. The function of this chapter – the questions that it raises but also the writing in which these questions are developed – seems to operate on another level. Chapters two to six are devoted to the hermeneutics of the dream. This hermeneutic explores two interpretative paths. Firstly, the interpretation of a dream, which begins with an account of the dream and the

associations linked with it, and moves on to the ideas that are hidden within it. Secondly, the reverse path which describes how the dream-work transforms ideas into both the dream and its account.

Chapter Seven, on the other hand, does not deal with the hermeneutics of dreams. It starts with a dream “which raises no problem of interpretation and the meaning of which is obvious” (Freud, 1900-1901, p.510) and yet this dream remains an absolute psychological enigma. Indeed, it “is only after we have disposed of everything that has to do with the work of interpretation that we can begin to realize the incompleteness of our psychology of dreams” (*Ibid.*, pp.510-511). In the same way that the abandonment of the *Project* challenged positivist readings of Freud, Chapter seven will be a spanner in the works to an exclusive hermeneutic reading of Freud.

Beyond the problem of dream-interpretation, Freud introduced a new question: why are the mental processes involved in dreaming so strikingly different from the ones of waking life? Freud’s endeavour in Chapter seven, the precise title of which is: *Psychology of the Dream-Processes*, was to conceive of a psychological theory of the modes of thinking at stake in dreams. To me, it seems that “processes” is the crucial word here: the dream is not only an object for interpretation; it also reveals psychical processes that challenge the previous psychological knowledge. Freud’s study of the dream-machinery in Chapter seven would reveal hallucinatory modes of thinking which were irreducible to a psychology of the logos, making this study a perilous one.

From the beginning of the chapter, Freud warned his readers that it would be a difficult enterprise: “the easy and agreeable portion of our journey lies behind us”, with the “mental process involved in dreaming every path will end in darkness” (*Ibid.*, p.511). For us, as readers of the *Traumdeutung*, Chapter seven will be like the beginning of Dante’s *Inferno*: at this point of our journey into the phenomenon of the dream, we find ourselves “in a dark wood; for the straight way was lost”.³⁹ The straight way of verbal language is lost/disappears/vanishes in the hallucinatory process of the dream.

Freud explains the reason for this difficulty:

³⁹ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto 1.

There is no possibility of *explaining* dreams as a psychical process, since to explain a thing means to trace it back to something already known, and there is at the present time no established psychological knowledge under which we could subsume what the psychological examinations of dreams enables us to infer as a basis for their explanation. (*Ibid.*, p.511)

In his paper on *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, Freud had already touched on the same difficulty:

It looks as though the difficulty of a present impression, the impossibility of transforming it into a powerless memory, is attached precisely to the character of the psychical unconscious. You see that the remainder of the problem lies once more in the field of psychology—and, what is more, a psychology of a kind for which philosophers have done little to prepare the way for us. (Freud, 1896b, 218-219)

The character of the psychical unconscious as it appears in dreams but also in the neurotic symptom cannot be ‘subsumed’ under a psychology of the logos. In fact, what is revealed by the psychology of the dream and by the psychology of neuroses is a faculty of memory irreducible to the logos. Hence, the attempt to create a new psychology of memory in which the object that is to be studied lies beyond the logos, both in terms of its theory and the writing of the theory: a beyond-psychology, a meta-psychology. A “psychology of a kind for which philosophers have done little to prepare the way for us” or a psychology for which “there is at the present time no established psychological knowledge under which we could subsume” (Freud, 1900-1901, p.511) it - are two definitions ‘ad absurdum’ of Freud’s metapsychology. They clearly show that metapsychology appeared as a new field of knowledge exploring a new question: the question of how to describe the functioning of an unconscious non-verbal memory.

In the first part of this chapter, I have tried to explain how the abandonment of the seduction theory played a key role in the appearance of this question. Indeed, the discovery that the talking cure could generate fictional memories showed that memory was not a ‘past-safe’ but on the contrary was an apparatus of great plasticity and creative power. If childhood memories are not archives of past events but constructions around past events, what internal force motivates those constructions? *What is a memory made of*

forces rather than a memory made of archives? The emergence of these metapsychological questions casts a new light on the intuitions that Freud had developed in the *Project*. Indeed, the neural apparatus that Freud imagined in this text seems to offer ideas concerning the question of memory's determinism. I would like to examine these ideas and to show how they are transformed in Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

In my previous chapter, I used Derrida's reading of the *Project* to show how the first part of this text already contains a model of memory functioning beyond the logos. I would like now to examine the consequences of such a model. Freud described memory through a non-verbal psychic writing: the writing of the difference of facilitations between the cathected memory-neurones.⁴⁰ What activates this writing of the memory is the passage of energy coming from the external world and from the interior of the body. Freud divided the memory-neurones into two groups: "the neurones of the *pallium* which are cathected from" external stimuli through the perception-neurones⁴¹ "and the *nuclear* neurones which are cathected from the endogenous path of conduction" (Freud, 1950[1895], p.315).

Hence, the *Project* differentiates a memory of the perceived external reality and a memory of the body: a psychical writing triggered by perceptions of external reality and a psychical writing triggered by the drives. The external stimuli reach the memory-neurones of the *pallium* through the protective screen of the perception-neurones. On the contrary, there is no mediation between somatic stimuli and the nuclear memory-neurones. According to Freud, the fact that the nuclear memory-neurones are exposed to the passage of somatic energy without protection is "the *mainspring* of the psychical mechanism" (*Ibid.*, p.316).

Through the idea that the screen between endogenous stimuli and memory is absent, and that this absence is the "mainspring of the psychical mechanism", Freud proposed a new concept of the psyche. To understand what is at stake in this concept of the psyche as it appears in the *Project*, it is necessary to clarify the protective role of the perception-neurones. This protective role is two-fold. First of all they restrict the energetic amount

⁴⁰ The neurones, that Freud named in the *Project* the psy (Ψ) neurones.

⁴¹ The neurones, that Freud named in the *Project* the phi (Φ) neurones.

of stimuli that can penetrate into the neurones' apparatus to medium quantities: high amounts of excitation "are broken up (...) into quotients" and "below a certain quantity no effective quotient at all comes into being" (*Ibid.*, p.313). Secondly, they act "as a sieve" on the qualitative characteristics of the stimuli so that only certain qualitative aspects of external reality are perceived. The qualitative stimuli's passage from the perception-neurones to the neurones of the pallium generates sensations in a third system of neurones: the neurones of consciousness.⁴²

The important point is that the perceptual apparatus randomizes ("sieves") the qualitative stimuli from external reality in such a way that "quantitative processes" in the memory neurones "would reach consciousness (...) as qualities" (*Ibid.*, p.312). Thanks to the qualitative screen of the "sense-organs" the stimulus from external reality can generate qualitative sensations. Indeed, as noticed by Filip Geerardyn in his reading of Freud's *Project*: "we only have a limited number of senses, each one of which functions as a sort of receptor for vibrations located within a well-defined period" (Geerardyn, 1997, p.212). Hence, in Freud's model the system constituted by the perception-neurones is "the part of the neuronal apparatus that is the least able to lay claim to the appellation 'psychical'" (*Ibid.*, p.212). The system of the perception-neurones plays the role of a phenomenological apparatus that translates external reality into qualitative phenomena.

On the other hand, the stimulus coming from the interior of the body does not encounter any quantitative or qualitative screen: "a direct path leads from the interior of the body" to the neurones of memory (Freud, 1950[1895], p.315) and as a consequence "psy is at the mercy of Q" (*Ibid.*, p.317). In other words: memory is at the mercy of the drives. Indeed, already in this passage of the *Project*, Freud named this internal force 'drive' ["*Trieb*"],⁴³ whose psychological outcome is the will (*Ibid.*, p.317). Strachey stressed

⁴² The neurones, that Freud named in the *Project* the omega (ω) neurones.

⁴³ I cannot resist voicing my complaint about what has been called the "Stracheysing" of Freud. There are two words in German: *Instinkt* and *Trieb*. Freud's choice of using *Trieb* fits his desire to describe the human psyche. He reserves *Instinkt* in the sense of instincts in animals. For the Standard Edition, James Strachey translates *Trieb* by *instinct* instead of *drive*. This choice has been very much attacked and part of the justification Strachey adopted in the General Introduction does not seem convincing to me. His main argument is that *drive* used in this sense is not an English word and, in a slightly xenophobic way, he "suspects" his opponents to be "influenced by a native or early familiarity with the German language" (Strachey, 1966, p.xxv). The verb *to drive* had the advantage of sharing with the German verb *treiben* the notion of movement. I nevertheless understand the motivation of Strachey in remaining faithful to the Freudian idea of an articulation between psychoanalysis and biology.

that it is “one of the very rare appearance of the word ‘*Trieb*’ in Freud’s early writing” (Strachey, 1966, p.317, fn.2). Freud’s use of “drive” in the *Project* to denote a continuous bodily stimulus is, in fact, very close to the definition he will attribute to this concept in his first theory of the drives

In a passage added to the *Three Essays* in 1915, he wrote of the drive as: “an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation as contrasted with a ‘stimulus’, which is set up by *single* excitations coming from *without*. “The concept of drive is thus one of those lying on the frontier between the mental and the physical” (Freud, 1905, p.168). In the same year, in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, he described it as a constant force operating “from within the organism” (Freud, 1915a, p.118). Hence, I think that what is described in the *Project* as the psychical consequence of the endogenous stimuli can be understood as the roots of Freud’s concept of the drive and I would follow Strachey when he writes in the introduction to *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* that, Freud’s notion of ‘endogenous stimuli’ that appears in the *Project* “had anticipated the idea” of the ‘drive’ “twenty years before” the writing of the 1915 paper. It seems to me legitimate and fruitful to force into the reading of this text the latter notion of the drive.

From a quantitative angle, the absence of protection between the endogenous stimuli and the nervous system implies that the drives continuously put the psyche to work. The body constantly releases small quantities of energy through the nuclear neurones. Lina Balestriere clearly described the distinction between the stimuli emanating from the external world – which are dealt with by the neuronal system on the model of the reflex movement – and endogenous stimuli, that activate psychical mechanisms because they cannot be escaped: “what comes from the outside can easily be manipulated, since those stimuli can be discharged on the model of the reflex movement. As a consequence external stimuli do not disturb the psychical rest. Endogenous stimuli, on the other hand (...) cannot be discharged through reflex movement; they disturb the psychical inertia and oblige the psyche to work. Hence, at first the neuronal system would be armed to face exogenous stimuli and disarmed in front of endogenous stimuli?” (Balestriere, 1998, p.42, my translation).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ “Au départ, ce qui vient de l’extérieur se manipule aisément, car tout stimulus peut être déchargé d’après le schéma de l’arc réflexe. Ce qui a comme conséquence que les stimuli externes n’entament pas le repos psychique. Par contre, les stimuli endogènes, exigeants, intarissables, ne peuvent pas être déchargés par des

From a qualitative angle this absence of protection implies that the drive is a non-qualitative stimulus: the demand of the drive is enigmatic for the psyche. In the *Three Essays*, Freud maintained this idea that the drive is without quality: “The simplest and likeliest assumption as to the nature of” drive “would seem to be that in itself” a drive “is without quality” (Freud, 1905, p.168). Unlike the external stimuli, which have been sieved by the screen of perception, internal stimuli fill the nuclear neurones as non-qualitative forces that are experienced as a meaningless “urgency” that is discharged in the first “expression of the emotions”: the baby screams or kicks helplessly. In as much as those first expressions of emotion are the outcome of non-qualitative stimuli, in that they are not associated with a set of presentations, they can be described as meaningless.

To answer the question of how these continuous and enigmatic stimuli would acquire meaning and how they would put the psyche at work, Freud proposed a conceptual experience that he named: *The Experience of Satisfaction*. The experience of satisfaction reappears at least five times in Freud’s texts. It was first foreshadowed in Draft E that Freud sent to Fliess with his letter of the 21st of May 1894 (in Masson, 1985, p.78) and in Freud’s first paper on anxiety neurosis published in January 1895 entitled: *On the Grounds for Detaching a Particular Syndrome from Neurasthenia under the Description ‘Anxiety Neurosis’* (Freud, 1895[1894]). It then appeared explicitly in the first part of the *Project* written in 1895, in Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900 and finally in the 1911 paper: *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*.⁴⁵

At a phenomenological level the experience of satisfaction describes how the helpless infant’s need is satisfied by a specific action introduced through extraneous help. The most intuitive instance is the hungry baby satisfied by the breast of the mother. At the level of the phi/psy/omega apparatus, the experience of satisfaction describes how a link (a facilitation) is established between the memory of the body (constituted by the nuclear neurones) to the memory of external reality (constituted by the neurones of the pallium): “as a result of the experience of satisfaction, a facilitation comes about between two mnemonic images and the nuclear neurones which are cathected in the state of urgency”

mouvements réflexes, troublent l’état de repos et obligent le psychisme à fournir un travail. *Au départ donc, le système neuronique serait armé par rapport aux stimulations exogènes et désarmé par rapport aux stimulations endogènes.*”

⁴⁵ Freud, 1911b.

(Freud, 1950[1895], p.319). A facilitation is formed between the need felt in the nuclear neurones and the mnemonic image of the object that brought satisfaction perceived in the neurones of the pallium.

Through this facilitation, the non-qualitative endogenous stimuli will activate a presentation from the mnemonic image of the satisfying object. The absence of the satisfying object is replaced by a psychical presentation triggered by the bodily energy of the drive. Hence, the drives activate psychical mechanisms in the absence of the object. The presentation of an object in memory necessitates the absence of the object: a hallucination replaces a perception. At the stage of the *Project*, Freud named this psychical writing, constituted by the facilitation between the need and the hallucination of the object: a “*wishful activation*”. Memories are the result of (such) wishful activations.

Indeed, in the model of memory put forward by Freud in the *Project*, perceived external reality impinges on the neural apparatus through mnemonic images [*Erinnerung*] but it does not generate any idea or presentation [*Vorstellung*]. In other words, perceived external reality alone does not “leave any memory behind it”: “The qualitative characteristic of the stimuli (...) generates sensation (...) represented by a particular period of neuronal motion (...) This period does not persist for long and disappears towards the motor side; nor, since it is allowed to pass through, does it leave any memory behind it” (*Ibid.*, p.314). External stimuli produce facilitations between the neurones of the pallium but only the non-qualitative bodily stimuli (the enigmatic drives) can activate a memory in a hallucinatory way. External reality is represented in the psyche from “an internal pressure that strives for satisfaction” (Balestriere, 1998, p.42, my translation).⁴⁶

A memory arises from the internal pressure of the drive that activates perceived mnemonic images. Because of the absence of protection between the endogenous stimuli and the nuclear neurones this internal pressure is not sieved. It is the equivalent of a non-randomized signal: a non-qualitative noise. Memories activated by endogenous stimuli do not reproduce reality: the endogenous non-qualitative noise that follows the facilitations from the nuclear neurones to the pallium neurones will generate a presentation that deforms the mnemonic image. Wishful activation does not produce the exact mnemonic

⁴⁶ “L’extérieur n’existe pas en tant que tel pour le psychisme (...) il ne se définit que sous la pression d’un « intérieur » qui cherche à être apaisé.”

image of the object but it creates presentations derived from those mnemonic images. Rather than an archive room, memory would be a scene on which a grimacing representation of perceived reality is played.

The Hallucinatory Mode of Thinking

I would like to describe the form of thinking at stake in the *wishful activation* as the *hallucinatory mode of thinking*. Hence, the hallucinatory mode of thinking is the facilitation that unites a bodily non-qualitative stimulus to the mnemonic image of a perceived object. In the *Project*, the hallucinatory mode of thinking can be understood as a psychical writing that constructs from the non-qualitative noise of the body, a system of presentations derived from perceived external reality. It constitutes the primary mode of thinking. From a developmental angle, the demand made by endogenous stimuli is at first worked-through by the neural apparatus in a hallucinatory way. Those hallucinations are the outcome of a mode of thinking because the perception of objects is transformed into “an imaginary *idea*” (an imaginary *Vorstellung*).

The incompatibility between the functions of perception and the one of memory led Freud to distinguish the mnemonic image [*Erinnerung*] generated by a perception [*Wahrnehmung*] of an object and the presentation [*Vorstellung*] hallucinated in the absence of the object. In the first part of the *Project*, memory is understood as a system of presentations, which are the result of a hallucinatory mode of thinking. Hence, *memories are informative not so much of the past but rather of the wishes from the past*. Freud’s empirical discovery that childhood memories produced in the clinical encounter were of a fictional nature led him to rewrite this intuition in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In exploring his dreams, Freud also searched for a confirmation that what activates a memory is not external perceptions but the way non qualitative endogenous stimuli reconstruct the perceived reality: in other words *the intuition that a memory is activated by a wish*.

The significant difference between Freud’s description of *wishful activation* in the *Project* and in Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams* is that in the latter, the fulfilment of wishes becomes the characteristic of the system unconscious. In this chapter, Freud proposed a dynamic definition of the unconscious as the system “whose activity knows no other aim than the fulfilment of wishes and which has at its command no other forces than wishful impulses” (Freud, 1900, p.568). The hypothesis of a primal hallucinatory

activity of the psyche that Freud had put forward in the *Project* becomes in Chapter seven the prototype of unconscious thinking. The aim of Chapter seven will be to understand the functioning of the dream as a product of this unconscious thinking.

The evolution towards a dynamic unconscious is partly the theoretical consequence of a correction that Freud brought to his neural model. This modification of the $\Phi\Psi\omega$ apparatus is to be found in a letter sent to Fliess on the 1st of January 1896. According to André Green the *Project* “died with this letter”, which would contain the main theoretical breakthrough that led from the neural apparatus to the psychical apparatus (Green, 1972, p.269). In this letter, Freud proposed to insert the neurones that generate consciousness (the omega neurones) between the neurones of perceptions and the neurones of the psyche. It follows that psychic processes are in the first place unconscious: “The ψ processes themselves would be unconscious and would only subsequently acquire a secondary, artificial consciousness through being linked with processes of discharge and perception” (in Masson, 1985, p.160). Neurones of perception transfer the qualitative stimulus to the neurones of consciousness, which in turn “transfers neither quality nor quantity to ψ but merely excites ψ ” (*Ibid.*, pp.160-161). In other words, perceived external reality activates unconscious thinking.

In Chapter seven, Freud further developed this idea, describing how the thoughts of the preconscious-conscious system would stir up unconscious thinking. The dream is the result of such phenomenon: “an unconscious wish is stirred up by daytime activity and proceeds to construct a dream” (Freud, 1900, p.561). Psychological processes are not the product of consciousness. They are, in the first place, unconscious. Against the philosophical and scientific traditions, which equate the psyche with consciousness, Freud’s letter of the 1st of January 1896 gave birth to a model in which consciousness is an epiphenomenon of psychological processes. The conscious system (C.s.) is not part of the psychological apparatus that Freud conceived in Chapter seven: “The psychological apparatus (...) is itself the external world in relation to the sense-organ of C.s.” (*Ibid.*, p.616). It receives excitation from the two peripheries of the psychological apparatus.

In one direction, excitations are received from the perceived external reality, which generate psychological qualities. In the other direction, excitations are received from internal reality, which can only impart consciousness with the psychological qualities of pleasure and

unpleasure. Rather than the “omnipotent” organ of thoughts, consciousness becomes “*a sense-organ for the perception of psychical qualities*” (*Ibid.*, p.615): a screen that would receive a combination of *perceptions* [*Wahrnehmung*] from perceived external reality and *presentations* [*Vorstellung*] from internal psychical reality.⁴⁷ This sensitive perception of the world would play the role of a catalyst for psychical activity, whose functioning is unconscious.

Taking into account the unconscious nature of the psyche, Freud rewrote the ‘experience of satisfaction’ in Chapter seven. In this new version, the hallucinatory mode of thinking is not understood as a ‘wishful activation’, as it was in the *Project*, but as an ‘unconscious wish’. In both the *Project* and in Chapter seven, the experience of satisfaction is a speculative experience at the origin of the psyche. It raises the question: what would be the genesis of the first presentation (of the first memory)? Freud’s intuition is that the apparition of memory is linked with the state of helplessness [*Hilflosigkeit*] of the newborn infant. This state of helplessness is for Freud “an essentially objective *datum*-the situation of impotence in which the newborn human infant finds itself” (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973[1967], p.189).

From Freud’s perspective, if one conceives of an omnipotent infant capable of fulfilling all its biological needs, this imaginary infant would not have memories. Because of its lack of instincts – in the sense of the German word *Instinkt* i.e. a set of hereditary behavioural patterns specific to a species which enable the homeostatic maintenance of its physiological functions – the newborn is put in a state of physiological distress that can be resolved only through the aid of an external object. Freud conceived the experience of satisfaction to be the original experience through which the physiological demand is represented in psychical ideas. To describe the way physiological distress acts as a demand made upon the mind for work, Freud used the concept of the drive [*Trieb*]. In other words, drives are linked to biological needs for which there are no instincts.

⁴⁷ In *Learning from Experience*, Bion commented on Freud’s definition of consciousness as the sense organ of psychic quality and he reused the distinction between the qualitative external excitation and the non-qualitative internal one in a different terminology: “But there are no sense-data directly related to psychic quality, as there are sense-data related to concrete objects” and he adds this very enlightening clinical remark: “Hypochondriacal symptoms may therefore be signs of an attempt to establish contact with psychic quality by substituting physical sensation for the missing sense data of psychical quality.” (Bion, 1962, p.53)

In the *Project*, Freud described the construction of the first presentation as the result of a link (a facilitation) between the non-qualitative memory of the body and the qualitative memory of perception. In Chapter seven, Freud used the experience of satisfaction to define the psychical nature of an unconscious wish. In this text, the first presentation is the result of the transformation of a somatic need into a psychical wish. Freud described how a link is established between “the memory trace of the excitation produced by a somatic need” and “the mnemic image” of the perceived object that helped satisfy the need (Freud, 1900, p.565). A wish is the psychical impulse that generates a psychical presentation from a somatic need. The most primitive way in which the psychical apparatus transforms a somatic need into a psychical presentation is through hallucination: “The first wishing seems to have been a hallucinatory cathecting of the memory of satisfaction” (*Ibid.*, p.598). Unconscious wishes are these primitive wishes, which reconstruct a sensory image from a perceived mnemic image.

In my work, I propose to name this reconstruction of a perceived mnemic image into an unconscious presentation, a *hallucinatory mode of thinking*. Hence, *unconscious wishes operate through a hallucinatory mode of thinking*. The thoughts generated by unconscious wishes represent reality in a hallucinatory form. At the level of the psyche, perceived external objects are transformed into unconscious presentations. The psyche does not perceive the external object but instead it hallucinates a presentation derived from this object. This hallucinatory mode of thinking, which “once dominated waking life, while the mind was still young and incompetent, seems now to have been banished into the night (...). *Dreaming is a piece of infantile mental life that has been superseded*” (*Ibid.*, p.567). The discovery of “the concealed *dream-thoughts*” provided Freud with a sort of empirical evidence for a primitive mode of thinking. The hypermnesic power, which Freud attributed to dreams, finds an explanation in this idea that the dream reproduces an infantile mode of thinking.

If the dream has a capacity to reach material from early childhood, it would be because dreams and primal memories are made of the same psychical material, one which is formed of sensory images in which “the thought is represented as an immediate situation with the ‘perhaps’ omitted” and in which “the thought is transformed into visual images and speech” (*Ibid.*, p.534). As André Green put it: the unconscious wish replicates the experience of satisfaction and the dream replicates the unconscious wish (Green, 1972,

p.283, my translation).⁴⁸ Since a dream operates like the primitive psychological apparatus, through a hallucinatory mode of thinking, its motive force can be only an unconscious wish: “*a wish which is represented in a dream must be an infantile one*. In the case of adults it originates from the Ucs.” (Freud, 1900, p.553).

A wish from the unconscious is the “capitalist” of the dream: it provides the necessary psychological impulse for the construction of a dream. During sleep, unconscious wishes impose their mode of thinking on the psychic apparatus to such an extent that in “so far as our thought-processes are able to become conscious in the normal way at night, we are simply not asleep” (*Ibid.*, p.555). When conscious thought-processes are put to sleep, a hallucinatory mode of thinking is revealed. However, the hallucinatory mode of thinking is also active in daytime. Freud indicated that the clinical treatment of neurosis had shown him that “unconscious wishes are always on the alert, ready at any time to find their way to expression” (*Ibid.*, p.553).

As a product of the infantile psychic apparatus, the ideational content of unconscious wishes is not made of words but of “sensory images, to which belief is attached and which appear to be experienced” (*Ibid.*, p.535). The hallucinatory character of unconscious wishes make them act like psychological orders, which have the power to generate dreams or neurotic symptoms: “the activity of the unconscious during the daytime (...) is the instigating agent of dreams no less than of neurotic symptoms” (*Ibid.*, p.592). Freud’s use of the term, “purposive idea” [*Zielvorstellung*] describes this force of attraction, which is yielded by some presentations.⁴⁹ Laplanche and Pontalis have pointed out that the term purposive idea “brings out what is original in Freud’s view of psychological determinism”. Indeed unlike “the doctrine of associationist psychology, according to which the stream of associations can always be accounted for in terms of juxtaposition and similarity alone, (...) in Freud’s view associations are subordinated to a specific aim” (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973[1967], pp.373-374).

⁴⁸ “Le désir est la réplication de l’expérience de satisfaction, le rêve la réplication du désir.”

⁴⁹ The purposive idea shows, in a striking way, how Freud’s metapsychology offered paradigms to his clinic. Indeed, the fundamental rule that specifies the analytic treatment: the method of free association is motivated by Freud’s conviction that in the patient who free associates the conscious purposive ideas are replaced by unconscious purposive ideas. The seemingly arbitrary lines of thought followed by the patient are determined by these unconscious purposive ideas.

At a conscious-preconscious level this aim could potentially be verbalized. The conscious purposive idea would direct the flow of thoughts according to the secondary process in order to establish a thought identity. At the level of the unconscious, the purposive idea designates unconscious sensory images, which are the results of the infantile memory. They form “a wide sphere of mnemonic material (...) inaccessible to preconscious cathexis” (Freud, 1900, p.604). This infantile memory is the outcome of unconscious wishes. It is not made of archive-memories but of wish-memories. Infantile memory is not formed from perceived external objects but from the hallucinatory presentations derived from these perceptions. The hallucinatory power of the infantile memory disturbs rational thought processes, which “even in normal mental life (...) remains exposed to falsification by interference from the unpleasure principle” (*Ibid.*, p.603). During the daytime, thinking is partly determined by unconscious purposive ideas formed from infantile presentations. As such, unconscious purposive ideas resist being verbalized.

If unconscious motivations generated by the hallucinatory mode of thinking are the source of mental conflicts, it is primarily because they are formed from psychological material that is irreducible to that of consciousness. As Sebastian Gardner notes: “*Cs-Pcs* and *Ucs* are not *intrinsically* antagonistic to each other; conflict occurs between them only because of the particular character of the content of *Ucs* and their consequent connection with repression” (Gardner, 1991, p.150). The text of dreams or the text of neurotic symptoms is constituted by the compromise between this psychological writing of infantile presentations and rational thought-processes. Dreams and neurotic symptoms reveal trains of rational thought that are submitted to an unconscious order: “a train of thought comes into being in the preconscious which is without a preconscious cathexis but has received a cathexis from an unconscious wish” (Freud, 1900, p.595). In other words, the logos is drawn into a pre-logos, a more archaic hallucinatory mode of thinking. Freud’s concept of the unconscious as it appears in Chapter seven is not an “unconscious consciousness” but a psychological system whose mode of activity operates beyond the logos: the system unconscious is “*inadmissible to consciousness*” (*Ibid.*, p.615).

Conclusion: “*How One Becomes What One Is*”

Philippe van Haute and Thomas Geyskens have pointed out a rare event in psychoanalytic literature: the event of a quasi-general consensus.⁵⁰ This consensus is “around the idea that the true birth of psychoanalysis coincided with Freud’s abandonment of the seduction theory as the cause of pathologies” (Van Haute and Geyskens, 2010, p.33, my translation).⁵¹ I believe that the abandonment of the seduction theory is such a foundational landmark because from there, Freud invented a new model of memory that is specific to psychoanalysis: an archaic memory that operates beyond the logos. In his paper on Freud’s notion of the unconscious, Sebastian Gardner wrote: “that the dynamic unconscious (...) is closely related to, as a failure and cause of disturbance of, the faculty of memory” (Gardner, 1991, p.137). Gardner seems to imply that memory is cheated by the unconscious, as if the ‘honest’ memory, in its cognitive capacity to recall the past, was falsified by the ‘dishonest’ deviant unconscious.

However, I think that what Freud challenged in Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams* was the very existence of a pure faculty of memory. Infantile memory would not so much be a faculty to remember perceptions from the past, but rather, wishes from the past. Moreover, some of these wishes are written in a psychical material, which make them inaccessible to consciousness. When Freud intuited that the infantile memories elaborated in the cure were fictional, he did not perceive them as falsifications of real memories. Such fictions are not intellectual errors but constructions that reveal the functioning of an infantile mode of thinking. There are similarities between infantile memories and the fictions invented by the post-hypnotized subject to justify a suggestion that his consciousness ignores. The constructions of memories in the analytic cure would act like a screen for an enigmatic determinism by which the subject is lived. The memories of seductions that Freud assembled with his neurotic patients don’t so much reveal the reality of an acted seduction, but rather the reality of perceptions deceived by an unconscious wish. Freud’s metapsychology stemmed from the question of this unconscious determinism.

⁵⁰ They nevertheless indicate at least one exception to this consensus: Blass, R.B. (1992). ‘Did Dora have an Oedipus Complex? A Re-examination of the Theoretical Context of Freud’s “Fragment of an Analysis”’, *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, n°47, pp.158-187.

⁵¹ “Il semble qu’il y ait un consensus tant parmi les psychanalystes que parmi les critiques de la psychanalyse, autour de l’idée que la véritable naissance de la psychanalyse coïncide avec l’abandon par Freud de la théorie de la séduction comme cause de la pathologie.”

In Chapter seven, Freud proposed a model of unconscious determinism by which the subject is partly lived by its infantile memory. At the level of subjectivity, one is lived by the psychical writing of infantile presentations. Instead of being a contrivance to remember the past, infantile memory appears as an engine of unconscious wishes that prescribes a destiny. The vision of infantile memory as a well-ordered archive room is transformed into that of a hypnotizer whose hypnotic suggestions would be made of sensory images. The 'Freudian subject' hallucinates in the writing of these sensory images.

To justify that Chapter seven did not give "any exhaustive treatment to the part played in dreams by the world of sexual ideas" Freud mentioned "the still unresolved problems of perversion and bisexuality" (Freud, 1900, pp. 606-607, fn.2). As pointed out by André Green, the intellectual inhibition of bisexuality might indicate that, at this stage, Freud's transference to Fliess was not yet completely resolved (Green, 1972, p. 499, fn.36). In my next chapter, I will try to show how Freud's discovery of infantile sexuality refined the hallucinatory mode of thinking and how 'the Freudian subject' hallucinates in the psychical writing of infantile sexuality.

A year after the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud wrote: "One could venture (...) to transform *metaphysics* into *metapsychology*". In a way, the model of infantile memory that Freud developed in Chapter seven somehow 'transformed' a metaphysical fate into a metapsychological unconscious. From this angle, infantile memory has as much to do with the future of the subject as with his/their past, its presentations being always on the alert, reshaping perceived reality into an enigmatic writing. Pindar's line: "*How one becomes what one is*" could be a slogan for the metapsychological unconscious. In the symbols of the Oedipus myth, the hermeneutic unconscious could be compared to the sphinx that raises enigmas and the metapsychological unconscious would take the form of the infantile prophecy.

Chapter 5

A Hallucinatory Form of Writing

Derrida's Alliance

In his book, *Freud, la Philosophie et les Philosophes*, published in 1976, Paul-Laurent Assoun explored Freud's ambivalence towards philosophy. This ambivalence plays out on at least two different levels. First, at the level of Freud's biography: the gap between Freud's personal aspiration to philosophy, as it appears in his most intimate correspondence, and the repeated criticisms of philosophy as a discipline in his published work. Secondly, at the level of Freud's texts: in the tension between the claim that the theory of psychoanalysis is based on observations of psychical phenomena and the necessity to anchor these observations in a set of speculative principles.⁵²

Freud's concept of the unconscious has a paradoxical empirical status since it is an object that cannot be directly observed and yet, in as much as it stems from a practice, it has, for Freud, the value of an experimental fact. Indeed, the unconscious cannot be directly observed, rather it is "something which we really do not know, but which we are obliged by compelling inferences to supply" (Freud, 1905, p.162). Freud gradually invented speculative hypotheses to map the empirical material collected in this practice. Mental phenomena observed by Freud – such as hypnosis, dreams, psychoneurosis etc. – couldn't be objectivised since they escaped the control of the subject. What Freud tried to observe behind these mental phenomena were, "psychical processes which behave actively but nevertheless do not reach the consciousness of the person concerned" (Freud, 1907[1906], p.47). Thus, Freud was somehow obliged to conceptualize his observations.

However, even Freud's speculative research seemed to entertain 'a dialogue of the deaf' with the mainstream philosophy of his time. According to Assoun, the main obstacles to this dialogue were the concepts of consciousness as constructed by the prevailing western philosophical movements of the nineteenth century. The thesis of "the parity

⁵² Assoun noticed that it is precisely when Freud multiplied his critical and sarcastic remarks towards philosophers that his discourse seems the most influenced by philosophical references (Assoun, 1976, p.18).

[*Gleichstellung*] between the psyche and the conscious and the election of consciousness as the exclusive mode to define the psyche” (Assoun, 1976, p.23, fn. 1) is in direct opposition to Freud’s notion of the unconscious. This thesis of parity is precisely the main theoretical reproach that Freud addressed to philosophy:

The physician can only shrug his shoulders when he is assured that ‘consciousness is an indispensable characteristic of what is psychological’, and perhaps, if he still feels enough respect for the utterances of philosophers, he may presume that they have not been dealing with the same thing or working at the same science. (Freud, 1900, p.612)

Maurice Merleau-Ponty proposed that subjectivity was a philosophical event, a philosophical discovery. According to him, this discovery took place through very diverse movements of thought from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Merleau-Ponty spoke of “discovery”, not in the sense of the discovery of America or of the discovery of potassium, but in the sense of a common construction that, once introduced, could not be ignored. From Montaigne’s essays to the transcendental Kantian subject or from Descartes’ cogito to Kierkegaard’s notion of subjectivity, the construction of a common paradigm exists, which tends towards founding the being on self-consciousness (Merleau-Ponty, 1956, p.616).

The point defended by Paul-Laurent Assoun, is that the Freudian unconscious raised the question of subjectivity in a totally new way: a way that radically confronted the model of the introspective subject. The Freudian subject cannot be founded on self-consciousness because in “psycho-analysis there is no choice for us but to assert that mental processes are in themselves unconscious and to liken the perception of them by means of consciousness to the perception of the external world by means of the sense-organs” and so “psycho-analysis warns us not to equate perceptions by means of consciousness with the unconscious mental processes which are their object” (Freud, 1915c, p.171).

With Freud’s notion of the dynamic unconscious the subject is wider than his/her consciousness. In other words, at the level of subjectivity, one is lived by unconscious processes. Subjectivity rests on mental processes that escape consciousness. It is this radical novelty that André Green stressed when he wrote: “it will be necessary one day to

finally recognise that the most subversive aspect of Freud's thought was to drastically change the theory of subjectivity by putting at its foundation the myth of the drive, by transforming the subject into the subject of the drive"⁵³ (Green, 1995, p.16, my translation).

Freud's new conception of the subject was, at first, what limited the dialogue between psychoanalysis and philosophy but subsequently it is what fed this dialogue. Indeed, it is around the question of a new concept of the subject that psychoanalysis became a privileged interlocutor of the "French philosophical moment of the 1960's" (Badiou, 2012, p.19). The term 'philosophical moment of the 1960's' was coined by Frédéric Worms to name a period of French intellectual history which began with Claude Lévi-Strauss' publication of *The Savage Mind* in 1962 and ended with Jean-François Lyotard's book, *Discourse, Figure* in 1971 (Worms, 2009).⁵⁴

This idea of a 'philosophical moment' stresses the existence of a common philosophical program during these ten years. The unity expressed by this term does not reflect a common thesis, nor a similar methodology or argumentative line, but rather a set of shared problems. The same type of questions pushed this group of philosophers to think through a great diversity of voices. According to Patrice Maniglier, "the problems, which constitute the divergent matrix" of this philosophical moment come "from practice or fields that are not intrinsically philosophical (...) the refusal to think of philosophy as a discipline, which would receive from itself its own questions"⁵⁵ (Maniglier, 2011, p.19, my translation). Rather than exploring the 'eternal philosophical questions', the writers of this 'moment' incorporated interrogations borne from practices external to philosophy. Amongst these practises, psychoanalysis played a central role: "to discuss with psychoanalysis, to compete with it and to do as good if not better on the capacity to

⁵³ "Car il faudra bien qu'un jour on se résolve à admettre ce qu'il y a sans doute de plus subversif dans la pensée freudienne, à savoir qu'elle bouleverse la théorie de la subjectivité en installant à son fondement le mythe de la pulsion, en faisant du sujet le sujet de la pulsion."

⁵⁴ The main works that constitute this philosophical moment are: Claude Lévi-Strauss: *The Savage Mind* (1962); Louis Althusser: *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* (1965); Jacques Lacan: *Écrits* (1966); Michel Foucault: *The Order Of Things* (1971[1966]); Jacques Derrida: *Speech and Phenomena, Of Grammatology, Writing and Difference* (1967); Gilles Deleuze: *Difference and Repetition* (1968), *The Logic of Sense* (1969); Jean-François Lyotard: *Discourse, Figure* (1971).

⁵⁵ "Les problèmes qui constituent la matrice divergente de ses inventions sont posés à la philosophie par des pratiques ou des disciplines qui ne sont pas intrinsèquement philosophiques (...) le refus de concevoir la philosophie comme une discipline qui recevrait d'elle-même ses propres problèmes."

think a subject irreducible to consciousness, hence a subject irreducible to psychology” (Badiou, 2012, p.23).⁵⁶

Within this scene of interaction with psychoanalysis, it seems to me that Jacques Derrida occupied a very peculiar position. Indeed, rather than a philosophical reading of Freud, Derrida proposed a Freudian reading of philosophy: “not a psychoanalysis of philosophy” but “the most daring way of making the beginnings of a step outside of philosophy” (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.359). According to Derrida, Freud’s concepts belonged to the history of metaphysics, however I think that Derrida also perceived that Freud’s attempt to think the psyche led him to go beyond metaphysics. Derrida used Freud’s texts as a tool to differentiate himself and to challenge the ‘prejudices of philosophy’ and especially of the two major contemporary philosophical currents: phenomenology and structuralism. Derrida’s reading of Freud occupies such a central place in the strategy of his work, that in a 1971 interview he asked: “is it entirely useless to recall first that since *Of Grammatology* and *Freud and the Scene of Writing* all my texts have inscribed what I will call their psychoanalytic import?” (Derrida, 1981[1972], p.83).

With *Of Grammatology*, Derrida undertook one of his main philosophical endeavours: to challenge what makes objectivity possible, “the originary constitution of objectivity” (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.88). Derrida searched for an alternative to a philosophy of consciousness and intentionality, in which philosophers “from Descartes to Hegel” apprehend “presence as consciousness, self-presence conceived within the opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness” (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.248). But in his escape from the cogito, Derrida’s aim was also to overcome structuralism. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida argued that notions of sign and signifier have a fundamental link with Western metaphysics of presence. By using the sign to reach objectivity, structuralism limits “the sense of being within the field of presence” under “the domination of a linguistic form” (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.23).

In structuralism’s view objectivity becomes that which, in the object, subjects itself to the sign. In his criticism of an objectivity defined around reason or defined around linguistic structures, Derrida identified Freud as an ally. Derrida found in Freud’s model of the

⁵⁶ “Discuter avec la psychanalyse, rivaliser avec elle et faire aussi bien qu’elle, sinon mieux qu’elle, en ce qui concerne la pensée d’un sujet irréductible à la conscience, donc à la psychologie.”

dynamic unconscious, intentional processes beyond consciousness, which seem to play a part in the constitution of objectivity. Contrary to Lacan, and in a way against him, Derrida thought that these unconscious processes could not be apprehended through structuralism. In Derrida's view, the language of the unconscious described by Freud isn't organized around the notion of the sign.

To describe this language of the unconscious, Derrida invented the term *psychical writing*. This psychical writing "cannot be read in terms of any code". Moreover, the "absence of an exhaustive and absolutely infallible code means that in psychic writing, which thus prefigures the meaning of writing in general, the difference between signifier and signified is never radical. Unconscious experience (...) does not borrow but produces its own signifiers; does not create them in their materiality, of course, but produces their status-as-meaningful (significance). Henceforth, they are no longer, properly speaking, signifiers" (Derrida, 1978[1967], pp.262-263). Thus, objectivity would have its roots in "psychical writing", a writing that functions beyond the sign and beyond self-presence. This use of Freud comes from a reading that Derrida summarized very clearly at the beginning of *Freud and the Scene of Writing*: "Our aim is limited: to locate in Freud's texts (...) those elements of psychoanalysis which can only uneasily be contained within logocentric closure" (*Ibid.*, p.249).

It is this aim of Derrida's that I would like to incorporate under the form of a question - the question of what escapes the logos in Freud's work? I think that this question has a great significance beyond the use that Derrida made of it for his own research. My aim is to use this question to understand what is at stake in Freud's 1915 papers on metapsychology. I would like to propose that Freud's metapsychological papers describe the evolution from a mode of thinking that cannot be reduced to the logos towards a verbal mode of thinking. According to this hypothesis, metapsychology would provide a model of the genesis of the mental apparatus and its functioning through the cohabitation of two modes of thinking: a primary *hallucinatory mode of thinking* and a secondary *verbal mode of thinking* and would thus give the basis for an understanding of objectivity.

In my previous chapter, I tried to identify a hallucinatory mode of thinking in the *Project* and in Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The hallucinatory mode of thinking

appeared in the *Project* as a primal mode of thinking that would generate infantile presentations [*Vorstellung*]. In Chapter seven, the hallucinatory mode of thinking also became the prototype for unconscious thought. The objects of study in this chapter will be Freud's 1915 papers on metapsychology. I would like to read these papers in the light of Jacques Derrida's concept of 'psychical writing' in order to describe 'the hallucinatory mode of thinking' as a psychical writing made of infantile sexual ideas. What sustains this reading is *the belief that the philosophical echo, which Derrida found in Freud, opens the path for an original reading of Freud's metapsychology.*

Vannina Micheli-Rechtman listed three main contemporary categories that approach Freud's metapsychology from an external epistemological perspective: a psychological reading, that refuses the dynamic unconscious and therefore "excludes the radicalism of a subjective singularity" (Micheli-Rechtman, 2010, p.13, my translation);⁵⁷ a hermeneutic reading, whose consequence would be to subsume the manifestations of the unconscious under a regime of meanings and a positivist reading, that reduces the unconscious to its observable dimensions. Unlike approaches inspired by psychology, philosophy or science, I think that a reading, which would stem from Derrida's reflections on writing, could reveal Freud's metapsychology as both a theoretical and formal writing performed by the unconscious. On a theoretical level, the purpose would be to understand unconscious thought as a form of archaic writing. On the formal level, the purpose would be to invent a way of writing that could evoke this archaic writing.

From this angle, Freud's metapsychology would be an event of great epistemological subversion. This metapsychological project challenges the limits of two classical forms of access to knowledge: rationalism and empiricism with the hypothesis of an unconscious mode of thinking that would not have a sensory existence and that could not be reached through rational introspection. Hence, a Derridean reading of Freud's metapsychology leads us to think "that the event of psychoanalysis was the advent, under the same name, of *another concept of analysis*. Of a concept different from the one that has held sway in the history of philosophy, logic, science. And at the same time a total displacement would have occurred in all the concepts that form a system with it. Beginning with the concept of truth" (Derrida, 1998[1996], p.19).

⁵⁷ "La psychologisation contemporaine de la psychanalyse vise à vider l'inconscient de sa dynamique et exclut de ce fait la radicalité de la singularité subjective."

“The central concepts of” the first part of *Freud and the Scene of Writing* “were those of presence and of archi-trace” wrote Derrida in his introduction to the text (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.246). This first part is indeed a demonstration that Freud’s model of the psyche apprehends its objects not as the sign of a presence but through the archi-trace of an archaic writing in their absence. The alliance that Derrida formed with Freud rests on a reading of the psychic apparatus that does not experience objects in the mode of a presence but in the mode of an archaic writing: an archi-writing before speech. Derrida used this model of the psychic apparatus to analyze “a historical repression and suppression of writing since Plato. This repression constitutes the origin of philosophy as episteme, and of truth as the unity of *logos* and *phone*” (*Ibid.*, p.246). Hence, Derrida did not propose another philosophical reading of Freud, but rather, he resumed Freud’s critical work towards philosophy.

For this reason, I feel that Derrida’s use of Freud is faithful to the part of Freudian metapsychology that operates beyond a *Weltanschauung* of the logos. The basis of this Freud-Derridian deconstruction of the logos stems from the hypothesis that “a lithography before words: metaphonetic, nonlinguistic, alogical” (*Ibid.*, p. 259) would be at the core of subjectivity. As noticed by Alain Badiou, Derrida uses “writing” as “an act of thinking” (Badiou, 2008, p.123). From this angle, the archaic form of psychical writing is closely akin to Freud’s concept of the unconscious as it appears in the 1915 metapsychological papers. In this chapter, I wish to extract three points from a reading of these metapsychological papers. First, I would like to show the hallucinatory dimension of the psychical writing. Secondly, I want to indicate the infantile sexual nature of this archaic writing. Thirdly, I will try to think of primary repression not as a moral censorship but as the irreducibility between psychical writing and a verbal mode of thinking.

A Hallucinatory Writing

In the last part of his paper *The Unconscious*, Freud proposed that the character of strangeness attributed to schizophrenic symptoms in comparison with those found in transference neurosis comes from the schizophrenic’s use of words (Freud, 1915c, p.200). The words that compose the speech of the schizophrenic are used in the

hallucinatory grammar of dreams: the primary psychical process made of condensations and displacement. Hence, the impression of strangeness comes from the hybrid nature of the schizophrenic language that hallucinates words or, to use Freud's metapsychological terminology, that treats "word-presentations" like "thing-presentations". In "schizophrenia object-cathexes are given up" but "the cathexis of the *word*-presentation is retained" (*Ibid.*, p.201) and therefore words seem invaded by an unconscious mode of functioning: "all observers have been struck by the fact that in schizophrenia a great deal is expressed as being conscious which in the transference neuroses can only be shown to be present in the *Ucs.* by psycho-analysis" (Freud, 1915c, p.197).

The words of the schizophrenic are not in the service of the reality principle, but rather, in the service of the drives. Hence, words acquire a sort of magical power through which they incarnate what they represent. The psychotic is led "to feel that words are the actual thing" wrote Bion in his paper on the *Differentiation of the Psychotic from the Non-Psychotic Personalities* (Bion, 1967[1957], p.48). Because word-presentations appear as hallucinations of what they represent, the schizophrenic uses an "organ speech": a speech in which language is divested of its symbolic function. Hanna Segal described this confusion as a use of speech in which the patient equates but does not symbolize (Segal, 1957): "The symbol does not represent the object, but is treated as though it was the object" (Segal, 2001, p.150).

In these 'schizophrenic' utterances or in the way "the dream-work occasionally treats words like things" the verbal language is invaded by an unconscious mode of thinking. This led Freud to the idea that "the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of things plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone" (Freud, 1915c, p.201). Bion argued that the psychotic does not live in a dream world but rather in a world in which objects' presentations are used in a way equivalent to a dream (1967[1957]). Thus, the use of words, both in dreams and in the psychotic's speech, reveals that word-presentations are haunted by thing-presentations. Derrida wrote: "It must be seen that insofar as they are attracted, lured into the dream, toward the fictive limit of the primary process, words tend to become things pure and simple" (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.275). Derrida wanted to show that dream-work, or the psychotic, puts "speech back in its place" because they

demonstrate the presence of a form of writing, which “exceeds phonetic writing” (*Ibid.*, p.274).

In his work, Derrida often refers to Artaud and, in particular, in *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, he stressed that Artaud resumed Freud’s attempt to identify how speech can be subordinated to a mode of thinking beyond the logos: “In point of fact, Freud, like Artaud later on, meant less the absence than the subordination of speech on the dream-stage” (*Ibid.*, p.274). What has been repressed “by so-called living, vigilant speech, by consciousness, logic, the history of language, etc.” is the hallucinatory dimension that is at work in the very “materiality” of words: “their scenic capacity, their *Darstellbarkeit* [their ‘representability’: their capacity to be represented] and all the forms of their spacing” (*Ibid.*, p. 275).

This conception of the system unconscious, populated by ‘thing-presentations’ functioning in a hallucinatory mode of thinking, goes way beyond a reductionist hermeneutic view of the unconscious. A hermeneutic model would reduce the unconscious to a container of hidden meanings: an unconscious understood as a psychic store of repressed mental contents that would only be accessible through the analytical process. Against such a view, Freud’s 1915 metapsychology papers present the unconscious as a system that generates a hallucinatory mode of thinking.

In a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé on the 1st of April 1915, Freud wrote that his paper *The Unconscious* “will contain a new definition of the term, which is really tantamount to an ‘agnostization’ [*Agnoszierung*]” (Andreas-Salomé, 1970[1912-1913], p.38). As Prado De Oliveira explained, ‘agnostization’ is a neologism, which “based on the German *Agnoszierung*, suggests a religious or sacred character, marked by a strong belief, linked to the unconscious beforehand. Freud intends to propose a new definition, agnostic. A keen study of his text allows us to conclude in which sense his definition was a new one, not as much concerning the thesis of his times on the subject, but mainly concerning the Freudian approaches themselves” (Prado de Oliveira, 2005, p.109).

The concept of the unconscious had been mainly described through its symbolic expression: the discovery that the neurotic symptom had an unconscious meaning. Beyond the ‘exegesis’ of the symptom and the ‘religious’ quest for the hidden meaning,

Freud's new approach in his metapsychological papers is to apprehend the concept of the unconscious through its mode of functioning. Rather than the unconscious meaning of a symptom, the question becomes: how can an unconscious idea trigger a symptom? What is the nature of unconscious thinking if it can generate a dream or a symptom?

At the core of the description of this unconscious mode of thinking we can find the paradoxical notion of 'unconscious presentation'. The German word for 'presentation' is '*Vorstellung*'. In the Standard Edition, James Strachey has translated it by 'idea' or by 'presentation'. Here I will translate '*Vorstellung*' only by 'presentation', which seems to me more faithful to the philosophical origins of the word. Indeed, '*Vorstellung*' is a key concept of Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy. Ola Anderson pointed out the possible influence that the notion of a 'mechanic of presentations' [*Vorstellungsmechanik*] developed by Johann Friedrich Herbart may have had on Freud: "Herbartianism was the dominant psychology in the scientific world in which Freud lived during the formative years of his scientific development. During that time psychological discussion in Austria was almost exclusively conducted in terms of "Vorstellungsmechanik" (Anderson, 1962, p.224).

The notion of presentation also came to Freud through the work of Franz Brentano. Freud absorbed his philosophical assumption "that every mental state can be analyzed into two components": a presentation and its charge of affect (Wollheim, 1971, p.35). However, Freud would propose that the concept of presentation also has a latent content. Freud would show the 'unobservable' side of Brentano's presentation.⁵⁸ In *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, published in 1874 while Freud was studying with him, Brentano developed a view in which a 'presentation' is not a psychical content, nor the idea derived from an object, but the perception of the object in its actuality: the 'presentation' is not the colour but the vision of the colour. Hence, Brentano's concept remains empirical since a presentation is the outcome of the world as perceived by the senses.

This understanding of presentation is at the root of Brentano's rational psychology. Everyone has private access to one's own presentation and by "introspection, properly

⁵⁸ Freud often takes over major philosophical concepts in a curious way. To paraphrase Gilles Deleuze, it is as if he was making illegitimate children with the philosophers from whom he borrows concepts.

conducted, everyone can collect facts about one's own mental life". As explained by Clark Glymour, Brentano thought "there must be regularities revealed in any one person's mental life, and the regularities will be the same from person to person. Those regularities are the laws of mental life, and to find them is the proper goal of empirical psychology" (Glymour, 1991, p.47). In fact, Brentano's concept of presentation prefigures Husserl's phenomenology more than Freud's metapsychology.

Indeed, Freud used the concept of 'presentation' in an original way that led him to this specifically Freudian notion of 'unconscious presentation': not a mental phenomenon that can be observed through inner perception but a mental process that is both active and unconscious at the same time. A mental process that is not a perception but a transformation of the object and whose functioning draws the outlines of psychical reality. Unlike Brentano, Freud's concept of presentation does not rest on the subject's sensitive presence to the world. On the contrary, it describes a psyche, which experiences the object in its absence.

The unconscious 'thing-presentation' does not consist in the cathexis of the direct memory-image of the thing, but "of remoter memory-traces derived from these" (Freud, 1915c, p.201). In *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud gets more specific: the "unconscious (thing-) presentation of the object (...) is made up of innumerable" unconscious traces derived from single impressions (Freud, 1917[1915]b, p.256). To describe 'an unconscious presentation' as 'a cathected memory-trace' puts us on the trail of the Freudian unconscious functioning as a psychical writing that cannot be subjected to consciousness. The ideational content of a memory-trace is registered under the force (or cathexis) of a hallucinatory wish. It is a hallucinatory impression that has never been perceived. Derrida describes it as a "subterranean toil of an impression. This impression has left behind a laborious trace which has never been perceived, whose meaning has never been lived in the present, i.e., has never been lived consciously" (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.269).

Freud distinguished memory-traces in which the experiences of the *Ucs.* are fixed from conscious memory. Memory-traces do not correspond to memories of past events but to the recollection of past wishes: rather than pictures of objects from the past they are hallucinations in the absence of the objects. The external object becomes a psychical

content through the trace that is hallucinated in its absence. Hence, at the level of memory an external object is hallucinated before being perceived. It is this metapsychological paradox that Derrida translated into the language of ontology: “Life must be thought of as trace before Being may be determined as presence” (*Ibid.*, p.255).

The experiment of ‘post-hypnotic suggestion’ illustrates a situation in which an intentional content is received without being perceived. The post-hypnotic suggestion was used by Freud throughout his work as “a laboratory production” to demonstrate that a presentation can be “*active and unconscious* at the same time” (Freud, 1912b, p.261).⁵⁹ The trace of the hypnotizer’s suggestion is first inscribed into the mind of the hypnotized, in a condition of latency and secondly, the post-hypnotized subject consciously fulfils the suggestion, though the motivation remains unconscious. Hypnotic suggestion is an unconscious presentation – an unconscious intentional content – that has never been present to consciousness.

What makes the hypnotic suggestion active is its hallucinatory nature. The hallucinatory mode of thinking is performative, what is thought is created: “unconscious processes (...) equate reality of thought with external actuality, and wishes with their fulfilment (Freud, 1911b, p.225). Monique David-Ménard described how the hysterical symptom organizes the body in an hallucinatory “regime of desire”: the “hysteric posits the object of her desire in the element of presence – as if it were there” (David-Ménard, 1989[1983], p.110). To stress the performative aspect of the hysterical symptom, David-Ménard coined the translation “presentification” for the German notion of *Darstellung*.⁶⁰ The hysterical symptom is a “presentification” of a hallucinatory mode of thinking of/through the body.

Thing-presentations created by the hallucinatory mode of thinking generate a reality: the psychological reality. Hence, those presentations have a psychological truth-value. To an extent we “submit ourselves to material reality out of obligation. We have to in order to survive and even to live. However, what drives us, in our self is the unconscious thing-

⁵⁹ Freud had originally witnessed the experiment of post-hypnotic suggestion in the summer of 1889 when he went to observe Hyppolite Bernheim’s work in Nancy. He mentioned it in *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment* (1905 [1890]); *A Note on the Unconscious* (1912b); *The Unconscious* (1915c); *Some Elementary Lessons in Psycho-Analysis* (1940[1938]c).

⁶⁰ In the conclusion of chapter 6, I discuss the various translations that have been proposed for ‘Darstellung’.

presentation of psychical reality” (Green, 1995, p. 116, my translation).⁶¹ For that very reason the presentations produced by the hallucinatory mode of thinking are similar to the suggestions that the hypnotized receives from the hypnotist.

In a pre-analytic paper written in 1890 for a collective work on medicine entitled *Health [Die Gesundheit]* Freud had noticed that the hypnotic subject “has been seeing and hearing just as we see and hear in dreams—he has been ‘hallucinating’” (Freud, 1905[1890], p.296).⁶² Moreover, he concluded this paper with the intuition that will remain at the core of his metapsychological work: “the beginnings of [mental life] are based precisely on hypnotic experience” (*Ibid.*, p.302). The state of hypnosis puts forward a hallucinatory mode of thinking and the hypnotized understands the messages from the hypnotist as orders. It is as if, at the core of the self, a hypnotist was to be found who produces suggestions. Except that this hypnotist would use the enigmatic language of unconscious presentations.

Freud’s metapsychological texts propose a “fiction” that describes the genesis of the structure and function of the mental apparatus. In this fiction, “at the beginning of our mental life we did in fact hallucinate the satisfying object when we felt the need for it” (Freud, 1917[1915]a, p.231). Hence, according to Freud, the hallucinatory perception of reality that appears in dreams or in hypnosis is also the way through which psychic life begins, with “the constitution of a scene below any distinction between the subject and the object” (Safatle, 2011, p.402).

Through this primary hallucinatory mode of thinking a biological need is transformed into a psychical wish. The mnemonic image linked to the object subjectively perceived in ‘the experience of satisfaction’ (of a need) is reinvented under the form of a presentation in the hallucinatory experience of the wish. As a consequence, psychical reality must be distinguished from the subjective perception of material reality. Jean Laplanche proposed to name the latter ‘psychological reality’ (Laplanche, 1999, p.77). Freud usually distinguishes two levels of reality: psychical reality and material reality. To add this third

⁶¹ “Nous nous soumettons à la réalité matérielle par force. Il le faut bien pour survivre et même pour vivre. Mais ce qui nous meut, en notre for intérieur, c’est la représentation-chose inconsciente de la réalité psychique.”

⁶² This paper was first dated 1905, which is in fact the date of the third edition of this collective work. Saul Rosenzweig, Professor at Washington University corrected the mistake in 1966.

level of 'psychological reality' clarifies the specificity of psychical reality. The 'object' belongs to material reality. The subjective 'mnemic image' attached to the perception of the object belongs to psychological reality. The 'presentation', which is the result of the 'mnemic image' reinvented through a hallucinatory mode of thinking, belongs to psychical reality.

Psychical reality transforms the subjective perception of material reality into a hallucinatory unconscious reality. It is the outcome of a hallucinatory mode of thinking that escapes consciousness and can be understood as a psychical writing made of 'unconscious presentations'. An unconscious presentation is a cathected memory-trace: it results from a hallucinatory act that has never been present to consciousness. In Derrida's view, in as much as a memory-trace differs from the material of consciousness, it can be described as a "psychical writing": a form of psychical registration that cannot be linked to words. Thus through his reading of Freud, Derrida can describe memory as the interpretation of a text that has never been present to consciousness.

To understand Derrida's idea, it is necessary to go back to a question put forward by Freud in his paper *The Unconscious*. When he approached the system *Ucs.* from a topographical point of view, Freud raised the question of how a presentation "is transposed from the system *Ucs.* into the system *Cs.*" (Freud, 1915c, p.174). Freud considered two hypotheses. First, the *topographical* hypothesis that implies a topographical change: the conscious presentation is a fresh registration of the unconscious one in a new localization of the psychic apparatus. Secondly, the *functional* hypothesis according to which "the transposition consists" of a functional change in the state of the presentation, "a change involving the same material and occurring in the same locality" (*Ibid.*, p.174). To sum up: from the viewpoint of the first hypothesis, the difference between the system *Ucs.* and *Cs.* would be a topographical separation and from the viewpoint of the second, the difference would be a functional change of state.

The analysis of schizophrenia in the last chapter of the paper leads Freud to refute both the topographical and the functional hypotheses. In this chapter, Freud proposed that, "the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone" (*Ibid.*, p.201). Therefore a presentation is transposed

from the system *Ucs.* into the system *Cs.* by the “thing-presentation being hypercathected through being linked with the word-presentation corresponding to it” (*Ibid.*, p.202). Thus, the conscious presentation acquires a new qualitative registration.

The difference between the system *Ucs.* and *Cs.* is not topographical nor is it functional but rather qualitative and I propose to name this third hypothesis, which has Freud’s blessing, the *qualitative* hypothesis. Thing-presentations are “in themselves without quality and unconscious, and (...) they attain their capacity to become conscious only through being linked with residues of perceptions of *words*” (*Ibid.*, p.202). The system *Ucs.* can be described as a non-qualitative registration system: a system made of traces, which is absent from the registration system made of words. The subject is lived by the hallucinatory cathexis of a text made of non-qualitative traces and, following Derrida, the act of memory can then be described as the attempt to interpret this non-qualitative text, a text that resists the logos.

An Aboriginal Population in the Mind

When reading *Writing and Difference*, one can have the impression that Derrida’s intention was to put the structuralist endeavour into brackets: to pause in front of its intellectual mechanics in order to question its presuppositions. The first sentence of *Force and Signification*, the text opening *Writing and Difference*, presents structuralism as a past-artefact: “If it recedes one day, leaving behind its works and signs on the shores of our civilization, the structuralist invasion might become a question for the historian of ideas, or perhaps even an object”(Derrida, 1978[1967], p.1). Derrida wrote this text in 1963, three years before the public peak of structuralism, and yet it seems that he already tried to grasp its breaking point. *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* – the text closing *Writing and Difference* – was a paper given by Derrida in the autumn of 1966 at the symposium organised in Baltimore to introduce structuralism in America. However, this text again put into question the system by which structuralism operates. In an interview, David Carroll gave to Derrida’s biographer Benoit Peeters, he remembers: “we were just discovering structuralism and yet he was already challenging what we were beginning to learn” (Peeters, 2010, p.210-211).

Derrida takes up the structuralist critique of language, but beyond that, he tries to locate the premises that are both inherited by this critique and against which the critique was built. It is, in a way, the tragedy of critical discourse that it “borrows from a heritage the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself” (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.357). Derrida’s term “*différance*” that appears in the last paragraph of the text, points towards this ‘vanishing point’ within the structuralist critical discourse. As Alain Badiou points out, it is principally this idea of a vanishing point through which Derrida detaches himself from structuralism (Badiou, 2008, p.124). This is the idea that, for any form through which a discourse articulates itself, there is a point that escapes its articulation.

In his writing, Derrida attempted to map those points that resist the logic of discourse, which “escape the order of the sign” (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.369). This aspect of Derrida’s research did not aim to decipher the true meaning of a discourse but rather to locate the moments in a discourse that cannot be brought back toward its truth or an origin. In fact, such vanishing points can never be observed in their full presence: they “must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence” (*Ibid.*, p.369). They are the type of objects that resist being observed in their positivity, in as much as they are always, so to speak, traces ‘on the run’.

In accompanying Derrida in this approach, we can perceive how Freud’s metapsychological concept of the unconscious resists both direct observation and transparent interpretation, but manifests itself through vanishing points: a “sort of fatalism or pessimism” of the metapsychological unconscious “that reckons with a portion of darkness and situates the unanalyzable as its very resource” (Derrida, 1998[1996], p. 16). In Derrida’s reading of Freud the system *Ucs.* is not a neural organ nor a metaphysical entity but an archi-text. The psychological writing of this text is not made of signs but of “archi-traces” or of an “archi-writing”. An “archi-writing” cannot be compared with the various graphic systems that have been invented to represent speech. It is rather an archaic writing that precedes speech and makes it possible. Derrida’s intuition is “that the generally admitted relations between speech and writing (and the traditional primacy of speech) rest on a dubious argumentation, to the extent that these relations must draw their possibility from an earlier root: we call this root (...) “archi-writing” ”(Bennington, 1993[1991], p.60).

The archi-traces that compose the unconscious psychical writing are not signifiers referring to other signifiers. The trace is not, for instance, the internal presentation of the breast referring to the external breast-object, but is rather the way the perception of the breast-object is replaced by its hallucination. In the hallucinatory creation of the trace, the reference to the external object is scrambled. Jean Laplanche explained that he could speak of a “realism of the unconscious” (1999, p.76) precisely because, in the shift towards an unconscious status, the idea loses its direct reference to an external thing: an unconscious presentation has its own hallucinatory reality that is detached from perceived reality. Bion would describe how the primitive hallucinatory thought is in fact forced by a perceptual void: “primitive thought springs from experience of a non-existence object, or, in other terms, of the *place* where the object is expected to be, but is not” (Bion, 1965, p. 51). Hence, in their practical attempts to read Freud’s metapsychology, both Laplanche and Bion conceive a primitive hallucinatory idea that would have lost its reference to the object.

It seems to me that this proposal raises a question: how to conceive of a primitive thought detached from perceived reality? Indeed, a primitive thinking detached from reality would suppose a set of presentations that pre-exist the existence of the subject. What would the mental code of such a primitive mode of thought be? To conceive of primitive thought as formed of archi-traces also provides an answer to this question because it indicates a thought that rewrites perception beyond the scene that gave birth to those perceptions. Derrida built the concept of archi-trace from the intuition that a system of writing was a necessary condition of speech. Consequently, the concept of archi-trace is operational beyond the empirical manifestation of language, beyond the origins of what it makes possible. Derrida therefore describes the archi-trace as a “quasi-transcendental” concept, a concept “more ‘ancient’ than the origin” (Derrida, 1998[1996], p. 29). A memory made of trace would have resources that pre-exist its origin.

In a paper that aims at explaining the Freudian roots of Derrida’s concept of memory, Vladimir Safatle pointed out that, from the concept of the unconscious memory-trace, Derrida discovered in Freud an understanding of “temporality very similar to the one that ‘deconstruction’ discovers through its own means” (Safatle, 2011, p.403). If Derrida’s deconstruction “is also the interminable drama of analysis” (Derrida,

1998[1996], p. 29) it is because it raises the question of an absolute past. The impossibility for the memory-trace “of re-animating absolutely the manifest evidence of an originary presence refers us (...) to a past that can no longer be understood in the form of a modified presence, as a present-past” but “refers to an absolute past” (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.67).

The psychic writing of the system unconscious would, therefore, be a primary form of thinking that does pre-exist speech and whose presentations do pre-exist the history of the subject. The unconscious text “is not a past present text, a text which is past as having been present. The text is not conceivable in an originary or modified form of presence. The unconscious text is already a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force are united – a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are *always already* transcriptions”(Derrida, 1978[1967], p.265-266).

The unconscious text confronts the subject with presentations that are both transcendental archives and immanent transcriptions. Through its developmental history, each subject reinvents presentations that do not correspond to any past-events, “repositories of a meaning which was never present, whose signified presence is always reconstituted by deferral”(Ibid., p.266). Psychic writing can thus be described as a ‘quasi-transcendental’ and ‘supra-temporal’ text that forces its way into the subjective perception of the external object.

From this angle, the system unconscious is not “a vestigial organ, a residuum from the process of development” (Freud, 1915c, p.194) that would preserve repressed past memories, but a dynamic mode of thinking through which perceptions are transformed into a psychic writing made of archaic traces. Unconscious traces can be thought of as archaic not only because they are preverbal, but also because they are irreducible to a point of origin in the subject: they manifest themselves through an exteriority to the subject. When he compared the content of the system unconscious “with an aboriginal population in the mind” (Ibid., p.195), Freud described this irreducible otherness of unconscious traces, which creates a mode of thinking beyond the function of the logos.

Unconscious thinking operates through presentations that are in a position of otherness from the inside: both primary and non-assimilated by the mind.⁶³

What motivates the transformation of perceptions into unconscious traces is the internal psychological force that Freud named the drive [*Trieb*]. Because they, “maintain an incessant and unavoidable afflux of stimulation” which “originate from within the organism” the drives “oblige the nervous system to renounce its ideal intention of keeping off stimuli” (Freud, 1915a, p.120). In other words, drives threaten the homeostatic function of the nervous system.

In her reading of Freud’s metapsychology, Catherine Malabou explains how this psychological energy that the nervous system fails to regulate, gives birth to another system, which is “in a sense external to the nervous system”: the psychic apparatus (Malabou, 2012, p.32).⁶⁴ Such a proposal is not equivalent to the hypothesis of a psychic energy that would be separated from nervous energy. As Malabou notes, “there are not two types of energy but rather a differentiated organization of energy that is implemented in order to address the problem of *compatibility of the inside with itself*” (*Ibid.*, p.32). The psychic apparatus is this “other inside” that strives to contain this form of ‘aboriginal’ nervous energy: an energy, which operates in a mode of externality from the inside.

In a paper written in 2000, that strives to understand the breaking point between attachment theory and infantile sexuality, Jean Laplanche explained that only sexual drives would challenge a homeostatic functioning of the mind (Laplanche, 2007[2000]b). Laplanche stressed that in Freud’s first drives dualism, the economy of the self-preservation drive is adaptive and regulated by the principle of constancy, when, on the other hand, the economy of the sexual drive operates beyond any optimal level. To explain the articulation between attachment and the manifestation of infantile sexuality,

⁶³ An unconscious “presentation is made up of innumerable single impressions (or unconscious traces of them)” (Freud, 1917[1915]b, p. 256).

⁶⁴ “The only way to engage the drive through its aim, which is to achieve satisfaction and to maintain excitation at the lowest possible levels, is to divert the urgency of the drive from the inside, to deport the inside of the drive itself into *another inside* than that of the nervous system—another inside that thereby becomes, in a sense, external to the nervous system. This other inside is constituted by the psychic apparatus.” (Malabou, 2012, p.32)

Laplanche uses Freud's notion of anaclisis [*Anlehnung*]: the infantile sexual non-homeostatic energy leans on the attachment adaptive energy.⁶⁵

In as much as the psychic apparatus is understood as the system that deals with infantile sexual energy, I propose that there would be an anaclitic relationship between the nervous system and the psychic apparatus: *the psychic apparatus leans on the nervous system*. From an infantile sexual energy that functions beyond homeostasis, the psychic apparatus generates thoughts that operate beyond the logos. In correspondence with an economy of psychical energy that exhausts the mind there is a production of forms “which can only uneasily be contained within logocentric closure”: an aboriginal population in the mind.

In 1915, Freud would speculate about two forms of unconscious presentations generated by the drives. The first were “inherited mental formations (...) something analogous to instincts [*Instinkte*] in animals—these constitute the nucleus of the *Ucs.*” and the second were “what is discarded during childhood development as unserviceable” (Freud, 1915c, p.195). I would like to explain how the first of these two forms could be read as the core of unconscious phantasies and the second as auto-erotism. Thus, I hope to show that the hallucinatory mode of thinking appears through infantile sexuality.

Behind the hypothesis of “inherited mental formations” one can sense the notion of ‘primal phantasies’. During the following years, in Lecture XXIII of the *Introductory Lectures* (1916-17[1915-1917]) and in the ‘Wolf Man’ case history (1918[1914]), Freud would develop his speculations about primal phantasies. The concept had already been foreshadowed in *Totem and Taboo* (1913[1912-1913]), which “was the first stage towards overcoming a strictly ontogenetic causality that witnessed the introduction of a second pole of memory, collective rather than individual, anthropological and socio-historical rather than bio-psychological, hereditary rather than acquired” (Green, 2007, p.10). However, at the stage of *Totem and Taboo*, the question of an inheritance from the earliest time of the species “was confined to the anthropological pole” (*Ibid.*, p.13). At the time of

⁶⁵ The notion of anaclisis was central to Laplanche's reading of Freud from the elaboration of *The Language of Psychoanalysis* with Jean-Bertrand Pontalis in 1967 and his work *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* in 1970. It also plays a key role in Laplanche's general theory of seduction. In his translation of *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, Jeffrey Mehlman, used the term *Propping* to render Laplanche's notion of *Etayage*.

the metapsychological papers, the hypothesis of phylogenetic patterns began to be formulated through the question of the aetiology of neurosis.⁶⁶

Freud first used the notion of primal phantasies in a published text in, *A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psycho-Analytic Theory of the Disease* (1915d). This text describes the paranoid delusion of a young woman:⁶⁷

Lying partly undressed on the sofa beside her lover, she heard a noise like a click or beat. She did not know its cause, but she arrived at an interpretation of it after meeting two men on the staircase, one of whom was carrying something that looked like a covered box. She became convinced that someone acting on instructions from her lover had watched and photographed her during their intimate *tête-à-tête*. (Freud, 1915d, pp.268-269)

Freud makes clear that if the “unlucky noise” had not occurred, the delusion would have been built around another accidental event. In the same way that the post-hypnotized subject would always find fortuitous elements to explain why he enacts a suggestion he ignores, the young woman elaborates a fiction to justify the suggestion of an unconscious phantasy: as Freud presents it, the phantasy of watching sexual intercourse between the parents. The intimate situation perceived in her adult body “activated” an infantile phantasy around which she elaborated the conscious fiction of being watched.

To my reading, the crucial point is the link between sensations of the body and unconscious thinking. In the perspective of this link, Freud goes very far in this text since he speculated that there was not any noise to be heard at all but that it could have been “a sensation of a knock or beat in her clitoris (...) that she subsequently projected

⁶⁶ The discovery in 1985 by Ilse Grubrich-Simitis of a manuscript that Freud had written in 1915 and sent to Ferenczi, confirmed Freud’s interest in the link between phylogenetic phantasies and neuroses at this stage in his work. The manuscript was published in English in 1987 under the title *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses*.

⁶⁷ In the *Schreber Case* (1911a), Freud had put forward the view that patients suffering from paranoia were “struggling against an intensification of their homosexual trend—a fact pointing back to a narcissistic object-choice” (Freud, 1915d, p.265). The question raised by this later paper is whether this view should be challenged by the observation of a case in which a “girl seemed to be defending herself against love for a man by directly transforming the lover into a persecutor” with “no trace of a struggle against a homosexual attachment” (*Ibid.*, p.265). Through the analysis of “the development of the delusion” Freud shows that the delusion was “at first aimed against” a woman and how “on this paranoid basis, the advance from a female to a male object was accomplished” (*Ibid.*, p.271).

as a perception of an external object” (*Ibid.*, p.270). In other words, a bodily sensation created an auditory presentation, which is a component of the phantasy of overhearing sexual intercourse between the parents. What I name the hallucinatory mode of thinking is an unconscious thinking - an unconscious production of presentations - created by the “erotogenic zones” of the body, which is to say, created by the whole body and its internal organs. Indeed, in his introduction to *On Narcissism* written the year before, Freud had redefined the erotogenic zones as the parts of the body, which “may act as substitutes for the genitals and behave analogously to them” but also “we can decide to regard erotogenicity as a general characteristic of all organs and may then speak of an increase or decrease of it in a particular part of the body”⁶⁸ (Freud, 1914c, p.84).

In the introduction to the Schreber Case, Freud had written that the paranoiac patient possesses “the peculiarity of betraying (in a distorted form, it is true) precisely those things which other neurotics keep hidden as a secret” (Freud, 1911a, p. 9). The secret revealed by the young woman’s paranoiac delusion is the manifestation of an infantile mode of thinking in her adult mind: *erotogenic zones ‘think’ through a hallucinatory mode*. The forms created by this primary thinking would draw unconscious categories that predate them: the primal phantasies. The beat in her clitoris becomes the noise of the primal scene: “the sounds which betray parental intercourse or those by which the listening child fears to betray itself” (Freud, 1915d, p.269).

Freud forged the concept of primal phantasy because he found it “necessary to postulate an organization” made of presentations “anteceding the effect of the event and the signified as a whole” (Laplanche and Pontalis, 2003[1964], p.122). In *A Case of Paranoia*, Freud mentioned three primal phantasies that would belong to “the store of unconscious phantasies of all neurotics, and probably of all human beings”: the phantasy “of the observation of sexual intercourse between the parents”, the one “of seduction” and the one “of castration” (Freud, 1915d, p.269). Laplanche and Pontalis pointed out that in “their content, in their theme” these three primal phantasies “relate to the origins. Like myths, they claim to provide a representation of, and a solution to, the major enigmas which confront the child”: “the primal scene pictures of the origin of the individual;

⁶⁸ In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, Freud would write: “The most prominent of the parts of the body from which this libido arises are known by the name of ‘erotogenic zones’, though in fact the whole body is an erotogenic zone of this kind” (Freud, 1940[1938]a, p.151).

phantasies of seduction, the origin and upsurge of sexuality; phantasies of castration, the origin of the difference between the sexes” (Laplanche and Pontalis, 2003[1964], p.124). Beneath the diversity of individuals, primal phantasies would be the way through which the subject is inhabited by the question of origin that escapes his/her own origin: the experience of being haunted by questions that come from a virtual memory. Hence, I propose that the hallucinatory mode of thinking would be a primary infantile mode of thinking that survives in the adult’s subjectivity as an unconscious thinking, which would be written in the text of the erotogenic zones and the text of the primal phantasies. *We hallucinate what we perceive through a text made of erotogenic zones that confront us with the meaning of the virtual memory of the ones who have preceded us.*

The hallucinatory mode of thinking escapes any metaphysic of presence since a text made of erotogenic zones or primal phantasies cannot be brought back to any primary starting point. The subject hallucinates forms that have never been present to its consciousness: in the play of presentations generated by the hallucinatory mode of thinking, the points of origin become ungraspable. The origins of the hallucinatory mode of thinking are ungraspable because they escape the history of the subject. The process of thoughts starts with ideas that contain an externality to the subject.

Rather than locating consciousness at the centre of mental life, Freud’s metapsychology suggests that thought is determined by unconscious ideas whose foundations seem alien to the subject who experiences them. The hallucinatory mode of thinking creates presentations that belong to the past of the human species (to the ‘human animality’) and to the enigmatic past of infantile sexuality.⁶⁹

The difficulty raised by the aetiology of psychoneurosis comes precisely from the fact that it cannot be explained through causality internal to the subject’s history. Manifestations of psychoneurosis reveal ideas that belong to an ‘absolute past’ and that proceed from an ‘insuperable enigmatic’. In the ontogenesis imagined by Freud, there are vanishing points towards irreducible otherness. A historical otherness: the otherness of the species in the case of the primal phantasies and a bodily otherness: the otherness of infantile sexuality in the case of the erotogenic zones.

⁶⁹ With the introduction of the death drive in Freud’s metapsychology, this is a past, which is beyond even that of the species: a sort of cosmological past that participates in the genesis of human subjectivity.

Let us try to understand how the erotogenic zones could constitute an otherness of the body. Erotogenic zones emerge from the hallucinatory rewriting of the absent object [*Objektlösigkeit*]. The autoerotic functioning of erotogenic zones corresponds neither to a primary state of total absence of the object, nor to the presence from the beginning of a sexual object, but to the reinvention of the object in its absence. As explained by Jean Laplanche in the first chapter of *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*:

there is from the beginning an object, but (...) on the other hand sexuality does not have, from the beginning a real object. It should be understood that the real object, milk, was the object of the function, which is virtually preordained to the world of satisfaction. Such is the real object which has been lost, but the object linked to the autoerotic turn, the breast—become a fantasmatic breast (...). Thus the sexual object is not identical to the object of the function, but is displaced in relation to it (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.19-20).

In its absence, the object of the function is displaced into a fantasmatic object. This displacement is operated through a writing of the body and the erotogenic zones are the outcome of this bodily writing. Ana-Maria Rizzuto has shown that from *On Aphasia* (1953[1891]), Freud recognized that all object presentations [*Objektvorstellung*], “however removed from real objects they might be, are related to bodily representations. The mind is the body in representation and its later elaborations” (Rizzuto, 1990, p.246).

I propose that infantile sexuality emerges in this representation of the body. The infantile body is a territory on which the infant hallucinates objects or partial objects: breast, penis and other components of bodily life. The infantile body is a sort of palimpsest and infantile sexuality “can thus be thought of as a history of the semiotic body, a history of the meaning the body acquires over time, rather than as a history of the body that is independent of semiosis” (Golomb Hoffman, 2006, p. 400). Julia Kristeva has proposed naming this pre-verbal semiotic of the infantile body “le semiotique” as opposed to semiotics proper (“la semiotic”). She argues that it can be found in any given linguistic code where it does not represent the drives but is a manifestation of the drives and therefore acts as a threat to the symbolic capacity of language (Kristeva, 1982).

The peculiarity of this semiotic of the infantile body is that it is made of hallucinatory traces whose characteristics are well described by Golomb Hoffman: “body-images that precede language and locate the body in the realm of pictorial thought. Later in life, associations supply the pathway through which one regains access to early images and sensations by connecting unconscious memories or memory-traces to words and enabling them to reach consciousness” (*Ibid.*, p409). Thus, the object at the origin of the hallucinatory trace is ‘refound’ from the hallucinatory trace or, as in Freud’s famous expression: “The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it” (Freud, 1905, p.222). At the level of infant subjectivity, the real object of self-preservation is constituted reciprocally from the sexual object hallucinated onto the body. The hallucinatory trace becomes the origin of the origin and precisely for that reason can be described through Derrida’s concept of the archi-trace: a concept that wrenches “the concept of the trace from the classical scheme, which would derive it from a presence or from an originary nontrace and which would make of it an empirical mark, one must indeed speak of an originary trace or archi-trace” (Derrida, 1976[1966], p.62).

To Verbalize is to Repress

In the last part of this chapter, I would like to think of *the concept of repression as the impossibility of an exhaustive transcription of hallucinatory traces into word-presentations.*

The knowledge drawn upon by Freud from dreams, infancy and madness demonstrates the hallucinatory core of the psychic apparatus. The first kind of mental process is the unconscious mental process. In Freud’s metapsychological account, in the beginning was the unconscious, primary consciousness being reduced to the sense organs monitoring the psychical qualities of pleasure and unpleasure: it “is probable that thinking was originally unconscious (...) and that it did not acquire further qualities, perceptible to consciousness, until it became connected with verbal residues” (Freud, 1911b, p.221). A mode of thinking of consciousness emerges from a *verbal mode of thinking*: the capacity for an idea to be connected with verbal presentation “whose residues of quality are sufficient to draw the attention of consciousness to them and to endow the process of thinking with a new mobile cathexis from consciousness” (Freud, 1900, p.617).

I would like to put forward the hypothesis that this *verbal mode of thinking* specific to consciousness covers and hides the *hallucinatory mode of thinking* specific to the system unconscious. I propose to consider repression in the light of this hypothesis. In his paper on *Repression*, Freud indicated, “repression is not a defensive mechanism which is present from the beginning, and that it cannot arise until a sharp cleavage has occurred between conscious and unconscious mental activity” (Freud, 1915b, p.147). Since conscious mental activity is characterized by a verbal mode of thinking, Freud’s statement can be rewritten: repression cannot arise until the acquisition of a verbal mode of thinking.⁷⁰ Hence, *primal repression*: the first phase of repression, which consists of the psychological representative of the drive being denied entrance into the conscious, corresponds to thoughts that cannot be connected with verbal presentations and as a consequence these thoughts exist only in a hallucinatory form.

A primitive hallucinatory mode of thinking and a secondary verbal mode of thinking cohabit in the human psyche, but these two modes of thinking are not in a one-to-one correspondence. The censorship exercised by *primal repression* would not be a moral matter but rather the outcome of the irreducibility of two modes of thinking: because of the limits of language, some thing-presentations are caught in a hallucinatory mode of thinking. Presentations that cannot be expressed in the language of consciousness establish ‘*fixations*’ to very primitive thoughts in the mental apparatus – primitive, not only because of the hallucinatory mode of thinking that produced them, but also because of the bodily aspect of these thoughts. Infantile fixations in the unconscious are hallucinations produced by the anus, the mouth, the genitals and any regions of the body that can operate as an erotogenic zone. The various libidinal stages would correspond to the erotogenic zones through which thing-presentations are hallucinated. The infant would create presentations from memory traces of the external objects through specific erotogenic parts of its body.

Hence, the hallucinatory mode of thinking is closely linked with infantile sexuality because it is produced from parts of the body that are capable of producing sexual excitations. The connection between the primitive hallucinatory mode of thinking and infantile sexuality also has an exogenous origin. Through the care carried out by the

⁷⁰ Before this stage, the defensive mechanisms have a hallucinatory nature whose complexity was first explored by Melanie Klein.

adult, the infant also receives elements of the adult's sexuality. Not only a set of erotogenic stimuli (rubbings, quivering, smells, warmth...) but also, in a more enigmatic way, the infant receives something of the conscious and unconscious fantasies through which the adult invests his/her own body. The hallucinatory presentations created from parts of the adult body involve (in a complex way) the different stimuli and messages received from the adult.

Jean Laplanche has explored the enigmatic dimension of infantile sexuality in his *general theory of seduction* (Laplanche, 1999). Laplanche defends the idea that infantile sexuality has an exogenous origin. The adult, in the primary relationship between the adult and the infant, introduces infantile sexuality into the infant. The messages sent by the adult to the infant are compromised by the sexual unconscious of the adult. As a consequence, part of the adult's message remains enigmatic for the infant. Laplanche understands the process of repression as a repeated attempt to translate this enigmatic message.

Laplanche's general theory of seduction evokes the controversial paper on the *Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child* presented by Sandor Ferenczi in 1932 at the IPA congress. However, I would like to stress an essential difference that exists between the two. In his paper, Ferenczi describes a pathological situation in which the child is a victim of a true sexual assault.⁷¹ On the contrary, in Laplanche's view it is not that the adult consciously seduces the infant, and this seduction is neither contingent nor pathological.

As with all translation, the entirety of meaning from one form (the message of the adult in this case) can never be transferred to the form into which we are translating (in this case the presentation which is wished), and part of the message remains enigmatic. In insuring the vital functions of the infant, the adult suggests satisfactory objects, and these suggestions are contaminated by the adult's sexuality. The enigmatic part of the suggestion is linked with the sexuality of the adult. Not only the genital sexuality of the adult but mainly the fact that the adult has a sexual unconscious. The mother's breast is

⁷¹ "Even children of very respectable, sincerely puritanical families, fall victim to real violence or rape much more often than one had dared to suppose. Either it is the parents who try to find a substitute gratification in this pathological way for their frustration, or it is people thought to be trustworthy such as relatives (uncles, aunts, grandparents), governesses or servants, who misuse the ignorance and the innocence of the child. The immediate explanation—that these are only sexual fantasies of the child, a kind of hysterical lying—is unfortunately made invalid by the number of such confessions, e.g. of assaults upon children, committed by patients actually in analysis." (Ferenczi, 1988, p.201)

not only a milk factory. It is also an attribute of her sexuality, whose contact can arouse libidinal excitement. This breast as suggested to the infant is also the breast that holds a place in the phantasised relationship that the mother maintains with her body. One could think of many other examples in which the object suggested to the infant carries an enigmatic sexual meaning. Winnicott, for instance, described with astonishing lucidity:

some of the reasons why a mother hates her baby, even a boy:

The baby is not her own (mental) conception.

The baby is not the one of childhood play, father's child, brother's child, etc.

The baby is not magically produced.

The baby is a danger to her body in pregnancy and at birth.

The baby is an interference with her private life, a challenge to preoccupation.

To a greater or lesser extent a mother feels that her own mother demands a baby, so that her baby is produced to placate her mother. The baby hurts her nipples even by suckling, which is at first a chewing activity.

(...)

He excites her but frustrates—she mustn't eat him or trade in sex with him.

(Winnicott, 1958[1947] p.201)

Most of the thoughts described by Winnicott are a consequence of the mother's sexual unconscious. It is this kind of unconscious idea that contaminates the mother's message toward the infant and that makes her suggestion enigmatic. It is perhaps worth noticing, that if the sexual unconscious of the adult scrambles the message of the suggestion, the adult's unconscious is itself the result of an enigmatic suggestion. As a result, something of infantile sexuality is epigenetically transmitted through the enigmatic suggestion.

It would seem that Laplanche is supporting the view that, where usually the infant creates what he finds, in this area of the sexual, the infant finds without creating. I understand Laplanche's concept of *seduction* as the fraction of the idea representing the satisfactory object that is contaminated by the sexual unconscious of the adult. The adult suggests to the infant that it wishes for this enigmatic fraction of the object. Therefore the suggestion is enigmatic because the infant does not know what it wishes for.

According to Laplanche the suggestion contaminated by the seduction constitutes the bedrock of infantile sexuality.

However, I would like to balance this view of the exclusive exogenous origin of infantile sexuality. Indeed, the wished-for object is not only suggested - the infant also plays a part in its elaboration. The fraction of the perceptions that have been scrambled by the sexual unconscious of the adult - the enigmatic suggestion - is also used by the infant to form a presentation. Of course, since the suggestion is enigmatic, the presentation derived from it will also be enigmatic. I think that at the root of infantile sexuality is the wish for these enigmatic presentations. As a consequence, infantile sexuality does not bear an exclusively exogenous origin. It is, rather, the encounter between a suggestion contaminated by the adult's unconscious and the infant in the reality of its being. The point I am raising is in disagreement with Laplanche's general theory of seduction because in his theory the drive has an exclusively exogenous origin: "By opposing the drive [*Trieb*] to the instinct [*Instinkt*], I do not oppose the psychic to the somatic (...) The difference is between innate, inherited and endogenous on the one side and acquired and epigenetic on the other" (Laplanche, 2007[2000]a, p. 12, my translation).⁷²

I conserve Laplanche's distinction between the instinct, which aims at bringing the quantity of excitation back towards an optimum, according to the principle of homeostasis, and the drive that functions beyond homeostasis. But contrary to Laplanche, I would argue that the sexual drive of infantile sexuality has its origin in the encounter between the enigmatic suggestion of the adult, on the one hand, and the infant's somatic and psychic potential on the other. The infant translates the enigmatic suggestions into wishes for enigmatic ideas. This translation is mediated, first, by the bodily abilities of the infant, namely the erotogenic zones and secondly, by the psychic abilities of the infant. The auto-erotic activities of the infant combine the self-stimulation of erotogenic zones and phantazying. My proposal is therefore that auto-erotism is the means through which the infant translates the enigmatic suggestion coming from the adult. Where Laplanche ascribes an exclusively exogenous nature to infantile sexuality, I argue that infantile sexuality rests on two pillars. One is the enigmatic suggestion from

⁷² "En opposant la pulsion à l'instinct, je n'oppose pas le psychique au somatique (...) La différence ne passe pas entre somatique et psychique, mais entre d'une part inné, atavique et endogène et d'autre part acquis et épigénétique."

the adult - this has an exogenous origin. Another is the auto-erotic activity of the infant – this has an endogenous origin.

The infant creates presentations hallucinated onto the body through auto-erotism. In such a way that auto-eroticism is paradigmatic of the hallucinatory mode of thinking, infantile sexuality, which is at the core of the hallucinatory mode of thinking, is incompletely transposed in the verbal mode of thinking. The auto-erotic activity bears witness to the incapacity of a verbal mode of thinking to link sexual thing-presentations to word-presentations. It is because some presentations of infantile sexuality are fixated in a hallucinatory form that the sexual drive is so to speak ‘obliged’ to behave auto-erotically at first.

Presentations that exist only in a hallucinatory form create a terrifying world in which thoughts are omnipotent. Unconscious presentations of infantile sexuality are like suggestions experienced, on the one hand, in a hallucinatory way onto the body through auto-erotism and on the other hand, in the language of an eternal quest for meaning, which is expressed with such acute intensity in the child’s sexual curiosity that Freud “considered giving this epistemophilic urge the status of a separate drive” (Temperley, 2005, p.62). An effect of this curiosity, that motivates the child to discover answers in language, is to hide the hallucinatory nature of the sexual wish. In the same way, one of the functions of masturbatory scenarios built by the adult is to create a meaning that covers the hallucinatory noise of the sexual wish.

The psychical apparatus generates a hallucinatory mode of thinking whose characteristic is to be performative, and a verbal mode of thinking whose characteristic is to bring meaning. What comes first is the demand of the unconscious wish that results from the hallucinatory mode of thinking. Meaning is achieved secondarily in the *après-coup* of the hallucinatory wish as a way to hide the hallucinatory nature of the wish. In this perspective, one of the psychical functions of verbal language is to produce meaning that would, in the *après-coup*, conceal the hallucinatory nature of wishes. I propose to understand this masking function of verbal language as a repression *après-coup*: an ‘after-repression’.

The idea that meaning generated by verbal language achieves a repressive function is not only a theoretical one. It has, in fact, a very direct application in analytical practice. The fundamental rule of the psychoanalytic cure: the rule of free association, “which lays it down that whatever comes into one’s head must be reported without criticizing it” (Freud, 1911-1915[1914], p.107) is a method to verbalize beyond the logos. Likewise, on the side of the analyst, the unusual way of listening, which consists in not directing the attention to anything particular, the so-called ‘evenly suspended attention’ (Freud, 1911-1915[1914], p.111-112) is a way to listen beyond conscious meaning. The psychoanalytic technique endeavours to trap verbal language in order to bypass its repressive function. The aim of this technique is to generate a dialogue that challenges the repressive aspect of verbal meaning. As a consequence, the defence mechanisms that rest on verbal narratives are somewhat thwarted by the analytical framework. Therefore, more primitive defence mechanisms may manifest themselves in the analysis.

These primitive defence mechanisms - of which Freud gave an outline: “reversal into the opposite or turning round upon the subject’s own self” (Freud, 1915b, p.147) - are of a hallucinatory nature. I think that these hallucinatory mechanisms of defence appear on the analytical scene through what Freud had described in a letter to Groddeck as “the hubs of treatments” (in Freud, 1961, p.316): resistance and transference.

First, I will try to show how hallucinatory mechanisms can manifest themselves through resistance to the rule of free association. The stroke of genius of *The Interpretation of Dreams* was to establish, against scientific prejudice, that manifestations of the unconscious - dreams, parapraxis, symptoms, free association – have significance: they obey the laws of the primary process. A purpose of the analytical framework is to give birth to such productions of the unconscious in order to decipher them. Hence, the utopia of free association would consist in a speech guided by the grammar of the primary process: a kind of spoken dream. The rebus constituted by this ideal chain of free association could then be interpreted. In the reality of the analytic session a constant flow of free associations is an ideal never attained, as the speech of the one who is free-associating comes up against more or less explicit resistances. I think this resistance to free association is the expression of psychological phenomena that are not understandable through the primary process. The *primary process* describes the functioning mechanism of unconscious presentations.

What I have named the *hallucinatory mode of thinking* describes the hypothetical psychical act that creates unconscious presentations from perceptions. Because this hallucinatory mode of thinking is partly a bodily mode of thinking - as it appears in auto-erotism - unconscious presentations resist being verbalized. Thanks to free association the subject reproduces the functioning mechanism of unconscious presentations and the non-verbal aspects of those presentations can thus appear, so to speak, negatively: the pattern of the resistances to free association draws the outlines of presentations that are 'unrepresentable' in verbal language. Unconscious phenomena revealed by psychoanalytic practice, which seem irreducible to verbal expression, resist the primary process, i.e. resistance to free association, failure to dream or acting out.

This implies that non-verbal phenomena also manifest themselves in the clinic through what Freud qualified as "the more specific finding of analytic work" (Freud, 1914a, p.112): the transference. I think that it is partly because the analytical framework reduces the censorship of verbal meaning that the analysand hallucinates the analyst. In transference, the meaning of the analyst for the analysand gets lost.⁷³ The analysand creates unconscious presentations of the analyst in a similar way to the infant who creates unconscious presentations of the world that surrounds him/her.

The transference and the resistance to the cure replay, in the here and now of the analytic situation, a mode of thinking that was at the origin of psychical reality. Hence, part of the logos gets lost in the analytical encounter. The great specificity of psychoanalytic empiricism is to generate clinical phenomena that operate beyond the logos. It is this peculiarity of the psychoanalytical phenomena that raises so many questions to both the positivist and the hermeneutic traditions. In a way, the task of psychoanalysis is not only to study those psychical phenomena but also to invent a framework that can describe them. I believe that it is this very task that Freud addressed by seeking a form of writing that would describe psychical events functioning beyond the logos. I propose to call this form of writing, paraphrasing Derrida: *a metapsychological writing* – a metapsychological

⁷³ As Freud put it: "psycho-analysis does not create it [transference], but merely reveals it to consciousness and gains control of it in order to guide psychical processes towards the desired goal." (Freud, 1910, 51) Psychoanalysis doesn't have the monopoly on the phenomena of transference and one experiences it in day-to-day life, especially in situations of love. And certainly novels and plays have described the many ways through which reality of the language gets lost in love. I believe it would be interesting to think of love as a situation that generates a hallucinatory mode of thinking.

writing whose purpose would be to transcribe *psychical writing*. In my next chapter, I will try to describe the functioning of Freud's metapsychological writing.

Conclusion

A metapsychological perspective has revealed a system unconscious that does not work in the mode of the logos: a system unconscious understood not as a receptacle of hidden meaning but rather, as a creator of illusions. These illusions are generated by thing-presentations created through a hallucinatory mode of thinking. I have proposed to think of primary repression as the outcome of the superimposition between this hallucinatory mode of thinking and the verbal mode of thinking of consciousness. *Primary repression* results from the irreducibility between the hallucinatory mode of thinking and the verbal mode of thinking and as a result, some presentations are fixed in the system unconscious. It would be around these fixations that we hallucinate reality subjectively perceived. The meaning produced by verbal thoughts would conceal these hallucinations from consciousness. Verbal language generates meanings as an *après-coup* of a hallucinatory psychical reality. Meaning produced by consciousness is in the *après-coup* of unconscious wishes.

Derrida identified this aspect of Freud's model and used it against an objectivity that would be subjected to a metaphysics of presence. In fact, the repressive function of the logos in Freud would, rather, open up the possibility of an objectivity of absence. The performative aspect of the hallucinatory mode of thinking and the enigmatic nature of unconscious presentations means that unconscious wishes open up a breach in the subject. A quest for meaning would, rather, consist of a perpetual race behind this absence that unconscious wishes open up in the self: "signified presence is always reconstituted by deferral, *nachträglich*, belatedly, *supplementarily*: for the *nachträglich* also means *supplementary*" (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.266) I believe that Derrida formed his alliance with Freud around a conception of the logos that is not in the field of presence: logos as marked by the *après-coup* – logos as secondary to an enigmatic psychical writing, that I have tried to redefine in this chapter through a hallucinatory mode of thinking.

Chapter 6

A Metapsychological Formalism

A Textual Empiricism

Freud's Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams* and his metapsychological papers of 1915 describe the unconscious as a system. This is to be understood in contrast to a reductionist view by which the unconscious is perceived as a psychological receptacle of ideas expelled from consciousness. The system unconscious works in a way that is alien to consciousness. It generates infantile sexual wishes in the form of thing-presentations that appear in the subject's consciousness as enigmatic intentional content. Not only does the Freudian subject follow a purpose that he ignores, but also, more fundamentally, he follows a purpose that the verbal language ignores. Unconscious ideas resist being verbalised and unconscious determinism is not written in verbal formulations.

According to Bion, the "pre- or non-verbal" manifestation of the unconscious in the cure is what makes the communication of psychoanalytic work so difficult (Bion, 1970, p.15). Indeed, the written account of a psychoanalytic session raises very peculiar difficulties. Anyone, analyst or analysand, who has tried to write down the content of a psychoanalytic session, knows how complex an exercise it is. The complexity comes partly from the great heterogeneousness of the analytical material which becomes intermingled: an event from the day before, a dream, a type of silence, a fantasy, a certain noise, a distant memory, elliptical phrases, secret intimate languages, and so on. However, at a deeper level, I believe it is the non-verbal nature of some clinical phenomena produced by the analytical encounter that explains this difficulty.

Psychoanalytic practice generates phenomena that contain hallucinatory thoughts using the bodily writing of unconscious presentations. Bion pointed out that even the words uttered by the analysand can be used in a hallucinatory non-verbal way: "words are used both in the expression of verbal communication and in transformation in hallucinosis" (*Ibid.*, p.17). Hence, to write about an analytic session, one needs a form of writing that could transcribe this archaic hallucinatory non-verbal mode of thinking. I believe that Freud's metapsychology was also an attempt to create such a form of writing. Freud's

metapsychology would therefore be a double project: on the one hand, a speculative endeavour that aimed to understand the genesis of the subjective mind, and on the other, a formal endeavour to invent a form of writing of the unconscious, one formulated to express clinical phenomena specific to psychoanalysis. It is this formal aspect of Freud's metapsychology that I would like to explore in this chapter.

In the middle of Freud's major paper on *The Unconscious*, we find the most comprehensive definition of metapsychology:

I propose that when we have succeeded in describing a psychical process in its dynamic, topographical and economic aspects, we should speak of it as a *metapsychological* presentation (Freud, 1915c, p.181).⁷⁴

To me, this indicates that Freud's metapsychology is a form of writing of the psyche since what is at stake is the deconstruction of a psychical phenomenon into three coordinates: its location in the psychical apparatus (the topographical point of view), the outcome of the drives from which the psychical phenomenon results (the dynamic point of view) and the energies by which it is cathected (the economic point of view). However, the paradox of this system of notation is that *none of these three coordinates can be directly observed and so they can only be metaphorically referred to.*

From the topographical point of view, the psychical apparatus does not bear any anatomical reality: it is a "theoretical fiction" (Freud, 1900, p.603). From the dynamic point of view, Freud described the drives – that are at the source of the conflict between psychical forces – as psychoanalytic mythology: they are "mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness"(Freud, 1933[1932]a, p.95). From the economic point of view, the energies of a psychic nature cannot be measured and moreover "we know nothing of the nature of the excitatory process that takes place in the elements of the psychical systems" and "are consequently operating all the time with a large unknown factor, which we are obliged to carry into every new formula" (Freud, 1920, pp.30-31).

⁷⁴ The German word that Strachey translated into 'presentation' is *Darstellung*. In the conclusion of this chapter I discuss this translation.

Metapsychology is not a formal system made of quantifiable or observable data. I nevertheless believe that it can be thought of as an empirical system of notation since it is generated by an empirical experience: the analytical encounter. In order to record the non-verbal material of his psychoanalytic practice, Freud did not use a set of quantifiable data but invented a metaphorical system. Metapsychology appears as a metaphorical system to write the non-verbal dimension of the psyche. If, from a theoretical angle, the prefix 'meta' of metapsychology designates a psychology 'beyond' consciousness, from a formal angle this prefix could refer to a form of writing made of metaphors. The description of a fictional location, of mythological forces and of immeasurable energies corresponds to the description of an archaic mode of thinking.

I think it is this formal role of metapsychology that Peter Fonagy indicates when he writes: "Metaphors in metapsychology may be thought of as representing attempts on the part of the theorists to grasp the nature of the psychological processes and mechanisms of which we have no conscious knowledge and which are not available to introspection" (Fonagy, 1982, p.136). Fonagy notices in a clear way that a metapsychological writing is not an introspective writing, since it describes the functioning of a psyche that exceeds subjective knowledge of it. However, I would argue that what is at stake is not so much "to grasp the nature of the psychological processes" but to formalise them. From this angle, the aim of Freud's metapsychological metaphors would not be to explain psychological phenomena but to invent a system of notation that helps to formalize unconscious processes.

Freud's metapsychology could thus be considered as a system of notation that as a whole is metaphorical of the non-verbal unconscious thing-presentations. The way Freud uses metaphors in his metapsychology is formal rather than didactic: it creates a form of writing that aims to reproduce the strangeness of unconscious psychical writing. It is this peculiarity of the Freudian metaphor that Derrida stresses when he writes: "Freud, no doubt, is not manipulating metaphors, if to manipulate a metaphor means to make of the known an allusion to the unknown. On the contrary, through the insistence of his metaphoric investment he makes what we believe we know under the name of writing enigmatic" (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.250). The metapsychological metaphor is not explanatory but it is a way to write an unconscious mode of thinking, a system of notation whose purpose is to record the psychical writing of unconscious presentations.

The study of psychoneurosis led Freud to evolve from “local diagnoses and electro-prognosis” to the verbal “detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers” (Freud, 1893-1895, p. 160). Freud developed an empiricism that does not rest on the observation of the senses but on the intelligibility of a text. Regarding Freud’s textual empiricism, *The Interpretation of Dreams* is a founding text. This book is also the story of Freud’s self-analysis and many commentators have pointed out that it could be read as an autobiography.⁷⁵

The extreme originality of this autobiography, however, is that it is written from an unobservable point of view: the one of sleep, a point of view from which one escapes rationality, freewill and the capacity to directly introspect. Freud drew his self-portrait not through *an introspective writing* of the self but through *a writing from his otherness*. The way Derrida analysed the *fort:da* scene describes well the autobiographical dimension of this otherness – autobiographical as it is heterobiographical – that appears in Freud’s work: “far from entrusting us to our familiar knowledge of what autobiography means, it institutes, with its own strange contract, a new theoretical and practical charter for any possible autobiography” (Derrida, 1987[1980], p.322).

What makes this otherness-writing possible in *The Interpretation of Dreams* is the transformation of writing made of dream images into writing made of words. As pointed out by Stéphane Mosès “Freud does not study the dream as a visual structure but as a *text* (...) The most striking aspect of Freud’s approach is the transformation of images into words” (Mosès, 2011, pp.77-78, my translation).⁷⁶ In this book, Freud’s empiricism consists in making the visible readable, and it is from the *text* of the dream that knowledge arises. This is to say, that Freud used a form of empiricism, which does not resort to observables but to a text. Knowledge of an experience does not come from its sensory perception but from the transcription of this experience into a text. The text is empirical because it itself becomes the object of observation.

⁷⁵ Peter Gay, for instance, described it as “an autobiography at once candid and canny, as tantalizing in what it omits as in what it discloses” (Gay, 2006, p.104).

⁷⁶ “Bien que le rêve se présente à nous sous forme d’images, Freud ne l’étudie pas comme une structure visuelle mais comme un *texte*. (...) Le plus frappant dans la démarche freudienne est la transformation des images en mots.”

The child analyst, Laurent Danon Boileau explained that the knowledge contained in clinical cases also came from the discrepancies between the reality of the analytic dialogue as it happened and its written transcription. Indeed, he argues that a significant aspect of the cure comes from the evanescence of real language in the session, and this evanescence can be apprehended through the effort of the analyst to reinvent the analytic dialogue through his counter-transference (Danon Boileau, 1980, p.23, my translation).⁷⁷ Empiricism of data would perceive a weakness in the written transcription of a session and could be tempted to register the reality of the dialogue using, for instance, a tape recorder. On the other hand, from the angle of a textual empiricism, the fruitfulness of this method comes from its imperfections, because in those imperfections something of the evanescence of verbal language can be registered.

Following Freud, the field of psychoanalysis has accumulated an empirical knowledge about its practice that is expressed in the form of texts. This peculiar textual empiricism is something that lies at the heart of the bond between psychoanalysis and literature. Through the endeavour to describe mental processes, the psychoanalyst faces a very similar problem to that encountered by the creative writer or “*Dichter*”: the problem of inventing a form of writing to describe our inner minds. Edmundo Gomez Mango proposed that Freud perceived the fundamental link that unites literature and psychoanalysis through Sophocles’ tragedy *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (Gomez Mango, 2012, p.325). According to Freud, at the root of both these creations there lies a child’s wishful phantasy, and through their writing, the poets compel us “to recognize our own inner minds, in which those same impulses, though suppressed, are still to be found” (Freud, 1900, p.263).

Like neurotic symptoms or dreams, all genuinely creative writing expresses unconscious thoughts, but unlike symptoms or dreams, in literature this movement has a verbal formulation. The creative writer invents techniques to write a non-verbal psychical reality. Hence, the inventiveness of the *Dichter* can help the psychoanalyst by enriching

⁷⁷ “C’est de l’évanescence du langage dans la séance que naît une part non négligeable du processus de la cure. (...) Dès lors, comment faire si l’on veut dire quelque chose de l’échange tel quel, et des mots? Il faut évidemment les réinventer en laissant parler son contre-transfert. Il n’y a pas d’autre solution. (...) Dans les bons cas, donc, les mots inventés ne sont pas ceux de la réalité, mais ne changent ni la force ni le sens de ce qui a eu lieu. Au contraire : ce que l’analyste après la séance va placer dans la bouche du patient comme dans la sienne n’est sans doute pas vrai. Mais c’est justement parce que ce n’est pas vrai qu’il y a quelque chance que cela soit bien trouvé.”

the kind of textual empiricism that is so peculiar to its discipline. The cathartic effect produced by reading works of fiction can be understood in light of the creative writer's capacity to invent a form of writing that is able to express unconscious thoughts. "In my opinion" writes Freud, "our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tension in our minds" (Freud, (1908[1907]), p. 153).

James Strachey, in his paper called *Some Unconscious Factors in Reading*, further explored the unconscious nature of this liberation. He identified a sadistic oral component contained in the act of reading: the reader is the son "hungry, voracious, destructive and defiling in his turn, eager to force his way into his mother, to find out what is inside her, to tear his father's traces out of her, to devour them, to make them his own and to be fertilized by them himself" (Strachey, 1930, p.331). Strachey saw the act of reading as an efficient cathartic release of sadism and, according to him, "the facilities of reading offered to the whole population in modern life may, by providing the opportunity for a far-going sublimation of some of the sadistic components, actually contribute to a diminution of unmodified brutality" (*Ibid.*, p.329). Thus, according to Strachey the act of reading in itself would generate unconscious transformations independently of the content of the text. It seems to me, that the great importance of Strachey's paper comes from this point: to show how the written text cannot be reduced to language or meaning but is also a stage on which unconscious phantasies are being played.

In continuity with Strachey's research, Anne Golomb Hoffman compares the act of reading with "the ongoing exchange of conscious and unconscious thoughts between analysand and analyst" in a session (Golomb Hoffman, 2006, p.401). Like the experience of reading, that of psychoanalysis exceeds the intentional exchange of information. They are both verbal experiences and yet they generate a type of transformative knowledge that exists outside of verbal language: a transformative knowledge rather than an informative knowledge. My hypothesis in this chapter will be that Freud's metapsychology constitutes the attempt to formalize this transformative knowledge. I will explore this hypothesis in two main sections.

First, I will try to situate Freud's metapsychology by exploring the opposition between the philosopher and the poet. In this confrontation between the philosophical system and literary texts, the metapsychological corpus is sometimes deceptive because it can

appear as the most philosophical part of Freud's work but what is at stake, on the contrary, is a literary question: a question of how to write. Freud's metapsychology is not a metaphysic of psychoanalysis but rather the formal attempt to describe the psyche as an unconscious non-verbal writing rather than a conscious verbal language.

Secondly, I will try to identify the main stratagems conceived by Freud to write beyond the logos. What are the forms invented by Freud to inscribe unconscious thoughts that resist being verbalized? I will try to understand what characterises the strangeness of Freud's style in his metapsychological papers. A strangeness, which might not have so much to do with the esoteric nature of the text but more with a kind of hesitation. The aim would be to locate the passages in the text wherein Freud's speculations seem to hesitate. Perhaps it is the case, that the hesitation in his writing is so intimately linked with the object it tries to describe, that Freud's metapsychology is a project whose completeness is impossible.

The Dichter Against the Metaphysician

In his book on *Psychoanalysis and Literature*, Jean Bellemin-Noël mentioned this anecdote: when asked who his masters were, Freud answered by pointing to the novels on his bookshelves where he kept the masterpieces of western literature (Bellemin-Noël, 1978, p.11). Literary creation is not only a confirmation of psychoanalytic theories it also opens up new avenues of research. As suggested by Paul-Laurent Assoun, Freud attributes a “primacy to the *fact* of creative writing, which searches an appropriate expression in the metapsychology and not to overcome literature with science” (Assoun, 1997, p.539, my translation).⁷⁸ Indeed, in the invention of forms for writing the unconscious, Freud identifies the *Dichter* as an ally.

This alliance between fictional writing and psychoanalysis seems to me a richer field of study than merely an application of psychoanalytic concepts to literature. The study of a common knowledge at work in fictional writing and in psychoanalysis raises an epistemological question that is absent from a direct psychoanalytic interpretation of

⁷⁸ “Mais nous ne pouvons désormais perdre de vue ce primat de la référence au *fait* de la création littéraire, qui cherche dans l'instrument métapsychologique une expression adéquate – et non un ‘dépassement’ de la littérature par la ‘science’.”

literature. I would agree with Gomez Mango and Pontalis when they write: “in as much as one should be reserved towards psychoanalytic interpretations of literary texts, it seems necessary to enlighten the links that bind psychoanalysis to literature, links that are stronger and more intimate than with other types of artistic creations such as painting or music”⁷⁹ (Gomez Mango and Pontalis, 2012, p. 9). Theodor Adorno developed a critique against psychoanalytic interpretation of art on the basis that psychoanalysis reduces the artwork to its content and seems to ignore that an artwork is expressed through a medium (idiom, material, composition...): “psychoanalysis considers artworks to be essentially unconscious projections of those who have produced them, and, preoccupied with the hermeneutics of thematic material, it forgets the categories of form and, so to speak, transfers the pedantry of the doctors to the most inappropriate objects, such as Leonardo da Vinci or Baudelaire” (Adorno, 1997[1970], p.8).

At times, I would share this critique and yet I also think that Adorno misses the point that a psychoanalytic theory of creation cannot be reduced to its hermeneutics. For there is also an epistemological alliance between psychoanalysis and creation and, more specifically, between psychoanalysis and literary creation. Psychoanalysis and literature use the same medium to express a common object of knowledge: they both search forms of writing to express unconscious thoughts. Moreover, as stressed by Jacques Rancière in *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, Freud’s notion of the unconscious was made possible by a form of literary knowledge: “if it was possible for Freud to formulate the psychoanalytical theory of the unconscious, it was because an unconscious mode of thought had already been identified outside of the clinical domain as such, and the domain of works of art and literature can be defined as the privileged ground where this “unconscious” is at work” (Rancière, 2009[2001], p.4).

In addition to Freud’s papers specifically devoted to the analysis of fictional texts, there is, throughout his work, the understanding that he shares an epistemological field with the *Dichter*. Freud believed that literature created models of psychical life. It is because he held such a belief that he could transform characters of fiction into metapsychological concepts and that he frequently made reference to literary texts to “support his

⁷⁹ “Autant il convient de se montrer réservé à l’endroit des interprétations psychanalytiques des textes littéraires, autant il nous paraît nécessaire de mettre en évidence les liens qui unissent la psychanalyse à la littérature, des liens plus forts, plus intimes qu’avec les autres créations artistiques comme la peinture et la musique.”

demonstrations, such as the multiple references made in the *Interpretation of Dreams* to both the glories of the national literary tradition, such as Goethe's *Faust*, and contemporary works like Alphonse Daudet's *Sapho*" (*Ibid.*, p.2). More than an illustration of psychoanalytic concepts, Freud acknowledged an irreducible epistemological status to literary texts. As pointed out by Jacques Lacan about the writer Marguerite Duras: "the only advantage of the psychoanalyst's position is to recall with Freud that in his field of knowledge the artist is always in advance and so the analyst should not play the psychologist precisely when the artist opens the path to him" (Lacan, 2000, pp.192-193, my translation).⁸⁰

In Freud's eyes, creative writers acquire their invaluable knowledge of the mind through their technique of writing – through their *ars poetica* – but Freud never really explored how this technique functioned. Most of Freud's work on fictional writing focuses on a semantic analysis of the content rather than an analysis of the writing's formalism (Safatle, 2010). At the beginning of his study on Michelangelo's Moses, Freud confessed: "I have often observed that the subject-matter of works of art has a stronger attraction for me than their formal and technical qualities" (Freud, 1914a, p.211). Moreover, Freud seems to lay down his analytical arms in front of the technique of writing, which remains the *Dichter's* "innermost secret" (Freud, 1908[1907], p.153). However, I think that in his metapsychological texts Freud did, nevertheless, raise the formal and technical problems of writing, that are also central to fictional writing: the invention of forms to write an unconscious mode of thinking.

Freud's metapsychology is not, by any means, a theory about aesthetics but there is an aesthetic to Freud's metapsychology. My point is that Freud invented a metapsychological writing that falls within the province of *ars poetica*. Thus, the object of my chapter is not Freud's work on literature but the forms invented by Freud in his metapsychological texts. The specificity of Freud's metapsychological writing can be understood through its difference from the system of the philosopher and its similarities with the fiction of the creative writer. Freud establishes a fundamental distinction

⁸⁰ "Le seul avantage qu'un psychanalyste ait le droit de prendre de sa position, lui fût-elle reconnue comme telle, c'est de se rappeler avec Freud qu'en sa matière, l'artiste toujours le précède et qu'il n'a donc pas à faire le psychologue là où l'artiste lui fraie la voie."

between the texts of the creative writer and the ones of the philosopher: the opposition between the *Dichter's writing* and the *metaphysician's Weltanschauung*.⁸¹

At the beginning of his study on Jensen's *Gradiva*, Freud seems delighted to find in an imaginary work a type of knowledge "of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream":

But creative writers are valuable allies and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream. In their knowledge of the mind they are far in advance of us everyday people, for they draw upon sources which we have not yet opened up for science (Freud, 1907[1906], p.8).

In striking contrast with the admiration he expressed for the fiction of the creative writer, Freud made no secret of his scepticism and even his hostility towards the concept of the philosopher. My point in this chapter is not to analyse Freud's criticisms of philosophy but rather to study these criticisms in order to define the specificity of a metapsychological writing. In a lecture given before the *Wiener Medizinisches Doktorenkollegium*, Freud reassured his colleagues that his notion of the unconscious will not "land us in the depths of philosophical obscurities" since the psychoanalytic "unconscious is not quite the same as that of philosophers and, moreover, the majority of philosophers will hear nothing of 'unconscious mental processes'" (Freud, 1905[1904], p. 266).

If, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud recommended one should "shrug his shoulders" in front of "the utterance of philosophers" which assures that "consciousness is an indispensable characteristic of what is psychical" (Freud, 1900, p.612), in his correspondence he gave a more radical diagnostic of philosophy: "I believe that one day metaphysics will be condemned as a nuisance, as an abuse of thinking, as a survival from the period of the religious *Weltanschauung*".⁸² Until his very last work, Freud would attack

⁸¹ "'*Weltanschauung*' is, I am afraid, a specifically German concept, the translation of which into foreign languages might well raise difficulties. If I try to give you a definition of it, it is bound to seem clumsy to you. In my opinion, then, a *Weltanschauung* is an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which, accordingly, leaves no question unanswered and in which everything that interests us finds its fixed place" (Freud, 1933[1932]a, p.158).

⁸² Letter of 30th January 1927 from Freud to Werner Achelis (in Freud, 1961, p.375).

philosophy on the basis that “the majority of philosophers (...) declare that the idea of something psychical being unconscious is self-contradictory” (Freud, 1940[1938], p.158). However, I believe this main reproach of Freud’s contains another one, which would be addressed to the formalism of philosophy. A type of philosophical writing would cover and hide unconscious modes of thinking, which are precisely the ones that both a metapsychological and a poetic writing aim to express.

When he describes the dream-work, Freud compares the function of secondary revision to the one “which the poet maliciously ascribes to philosophers: it fills up the gaps in the dream-structure with shreds and patches” (Freud, 1900, p.490). The poem to which Freud alludes is Heinrich Heine’s *Die Heimkehr*. Freud quotes it again in the *New Introductory Lectures* to criticize the outrageous pretention of philosophical systems that aim to propose an absolutely coherent picture of the universe:

Philosophy is not opposed to science, it behaves like a science and works in part by the same methods; it departs from it, however, by clinging to the illusion of being able to present a picture of the universe which is without gaps and is coherent, though one which is bound to collapse with every fresh advance in our knowledge. It goes astray in its method by over-estimating the epistemological value of our logical operations and by accepting other sources of knowledge such as intuition. And it often seems that the poet's derisive comment is not unjustified when he says of the philosopher:

Mit seinen Nachtmützen und Schlafrocksetzen

Stopft er die Lücken des Weltenbaus

(Freud, 1933[1932], pp.160-161).⁸³

Freud considers that the purpose of the philosophical system is to subject knowledge to logical operations in the same way that the purpose of secondary revision is to subject the representation of dreams to a consideration of intelligibility. To further examine this comparison between the writing of the philosopher and secondary revision, I will try to

⁸³ Strachey’s translation of Heine’s lines goes as follows: “With his nightcaps and the tatters of his dressing-gown he patches up the gaps in the structure of the universe”. In *Lucien Leuwen*, Stendhal similarly mocked the grandiloquence of “the depth of German philosophy” (*Lucien Leuwen*, first part, chapter VIII).

expose the specific role that secondary revision holds amongst the different aspects of the dream-work.

In a footnote added in 1925 to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud warns against a confusion triggered by a too literal reading of his book, according to which, the essence of a dream would be its latent content. In fact, the latent content of a dream is not its essence but a transcription of its essence: the transcription of a hallucinatory mode of thinking into a verbal mode of thinking: “At bottom, dreams are nothing other than a particular *form* of thinking, made possible by the condition of the state of sleep. It is the *dream-work* which creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming” (Freud, 1900, p.506, fn.2). What characterizes the dream is the reactivation of a primal mode of thinking that pre-existed the verbal mode of thinking allowing the dream-work to be described as a temporal regression.

In a way, the rituals that one follows before going to sleep constitute the beginning of the dream-work as they stage a regressive movement towards infantile existence. Freud describes how this staging of the body – to get undressed, to take off “spectacles, false hair and teeth”, to “resume the foetal posture” – leads to an “undressing” of the mind: it “lays aside most of” the “psychical acquisitions” and thus, sleeping, one can “approach remarkably close to the situation in which (...) life began” (Freud, 1917[1915]a, p.222). Similar to the way that the dream-work creates forms that pre-exists the use of words: “thoughts are transformed into images, mainly of a visual sort; that is to say, word-presentations are taken back to the thing-presentations which correspond to them” (*Ibid.*, p.228). The dream-work operates a formal regression of verbal language “where primitive methods of expression and representation take the place of the usual ones” (Freud, 1900, p.548): word-presentations of the preconscious system are taken back to thing-presentations of the unconscious system. Freud described the primal form created by the dream-work as a primitive form of writing: “the dream-work makes a translation of the dream-thoughts into a primitive mode of expression similar to picture-writing” (Freud, 1916-1917[1915-1917], p.229).

Jacques Derrida proposed to understand this primitive writing of the dream as “a landscape of writing. Not a writing which simply transcribes, a stony echo of muted words, but a lithography before words: metaphonic, nonlinguistic, alogical” (Derrida,

1978[1967], p.259). Through the dream-work, words are transformed into the primal writing of thing-presentations and so verbal language is trapped by this operation, which removes the coding function from words: “for a dream all operations with words are no more than a preparation for a regression to things” (Freud, 1917[1915]a, p.229). Derrida very elegantly reformulated Freud’s idea when he described the dream “as a displacement similar to an original form of writing which puts words on stage without becoming subservient to them” (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.262). The dream is a form of thinking that is not subordinated to an established code, hence the impossibility of conceiving a systematic dictionary of dreams. As “with Chinese script, the correct interpretation” of the dream script “can only be arrived at on each occasion from the context” (Freud, 1900, p.353).

When it reaches the perceptual apparatus, the material of the dream is edited by the last function of the dream-work: secondary revision. Secondary revision introduces the coherence of a narration into the apparent disconnectedness of the psychical writing. Unlike the other factors of the dream-work, secondary revision is a psychical function operated by the activity of the preconscious and so is not restricted to the dream-work. It plays its part with every perceptual signal that reaches consciousness: “Our waking (preconscious) thinking behaves towards any perceptual material with which it meets in just the same way in which [secondary revision] behaves towards the content of dreams. It is the nature of our waking thought to establish order in material of that kind, to set up relations in it” (Freud, 1900, p.499). Secondary revision aims to introduce a waking, conscious form of thinking, into the dream’s script: “It moulds the material offered to it into something like a day-dream” (*Ibid.*, p.492).⁸⁴ Secondary revision displays a less primitive form of thinking than the other factors of the dream-work: it rearranges infantile wishes through a verbal mode of thinking. In other words, a psychical writing without a systematized code, that cannot be read through a dictionary, is organized into an orderly sequence of signs. Secondary revision brings back the picture writing of the dream towards the verbal images of narration. It is this factor of the dream-work which aims to transform the psychical writing of the dream into the speech of the day-dream.

⁸⁴ Ron Britton defines secondary revision as the “part played by daydreams in the formation of real dreams” (Britton, 1998, p.113).

In the psychical writing of dreams it is not so much that words have lost their meaning but rather that meaning has lost the use of words. Instead of verbal signs, meaning is expressed through a primitive picture-writing. A psychoanalytic approach to dreams shows how a hallucinatory mode of thinking through sensitive images pre-exists a verbal mode of thinking and as pointed out by the psychoanalyst José Renato Avzaradel: “the psychoanalytic process when directed toward developing the capacity to think finds a consistent basis in dreams for understanding the connections between image-rich dream language and thoughts” (Avzaradel, 2011, p.833).⁸⁵

The hypothesis that the construction of thought appears through a pre-verbal form of writing led Freud to replace the usual analogy between ontogenesis – the development of the individual – and phylogenesis – the development of the species to which the individual belongs – with an analogy between the genesis of thinking in the individual and the genesis of writing in the species.⁸⁶

Let us recall that we have said that the dream-work makes a translation of the dream-thoughts into a primitive mode of expression similar to picture-writing. All such primitive systems of expression, however, are characterized by indefiniteness and ambiguity of this sort (...) The coalescence of contraries in the dream-work is, as you know, analogous to the so-called ‘antithetical meaning of primal words’ in the most ancient languages (...)

The old systems of expression—for instance, the scripts of the most ancient languages—betray vagueness in a variety of ways which we would not tolerate in our writing to-day. Thus in some Semitic scripts only the consonants in the words are indicated. The reader has to insert the omitted vowels according to his knowledge and the context. The hieroglyphic script behaves very similarly, though not precisely in the same way; and for that reason the pronunciation of Ancient Egyptian remains unknown to us. The sacred script of the Egyptians is indefinite in yet other ways. For instance, it is left to the arbitrary decision of the scribe whether he arranges the pictures from right to left or from left to

⁸⁵ In my view, the key point is to describe this “image-rich dream language” as a psychical writing.

⁸⁶ It is worth noting that in his book, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, the American orientalist, Ernest Fenollosa developed a similar intuition that studying ideograms would help the understanding of primal mental mechanisms (Fenollosa, 1918).

right. In order to be able to read it one must obey the rule of reading towards the faces of the figures, birds, and so on. But the scribe might also arrange the pictographs in *vertical* columns, and in making inscriptions on comparatively small objects he allowed considerations of decorativeness and space to influence him in altering the sequence of the signs in yet other ways. The most disturbing thing about the hieroglyphic script is, no doubt, that it makes no separation between words. The pictures are placed across the page at equal distances apart; and in general it is impossible to tell whether a sign is still part of the preceding word or forms the beginning of a new word (Freud, 1916-1917[1915-1917], pp.229-230).

According to Freud, only speech through intonation and gesture would clarify the ambiguity of these primitive scripts and thus make communication possible. Secondary revision acts as a form of speech: it reorganises the writing of the dream that is “not a vehicle for communication” and “does not want to say anything to anyone” into a narrative that can be communicated. Freud’s comparison between the purpose of secondary revision and the one of the philosopher, finds its meaning in this tension between the narrative speech of the ego and the non-communicable psychical writing of the unconscious. The writing of the philosopher is demonstrative: its purpose is to communicate meaning and meaning is therefore presupposed to be communicable. The philosopher’s writing distorts the facts of the psyche that resist verbalization and it subjects the psyche to a writing of the logos, a writing of the communicative system. If Freud thinks that Adler’s Individual Psychology is incompatible with psychoanalysis it is precisely because Adler has substituted a metapsychological writing with a writing of the logos:

The Adlerian theory was from the very beginning a ‘system’ – which psychoanalysis was careful to avoid becoming. It is also a remarkably good example of ‘secondary revision’ (...) In Adler’s case the place of dream-material is taken by the new material obtained through psycho-analytic studies; this is then viewed purely from the standpoint of the ego (Freud, 1914b, p.52).

In Freud’s eyes a philosophical writing aims to establish a system: it is a type of writing which rationalizes the psyche by locking it up in the categories with which the ego is

familiar. Put otherwise: the system of the philosopher aims to conceal the primitive psychical writing through a rational speech pattern.

By opposing unconscious psychical writing and conscious speech, I want to emphasize how Derrida's radical separation of writing and speech is articulated with Freud's criticism of the philosophical system. Derrida wrote that grammatology "ought not be *one of the sciences of man*, because it asks first, as its characteristic question, the question of the *name of man*" (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.84). If Derrida acknowledges: "a certain privilege should be given to research of the psychoanalytic type" (*Ibid.*, p.89) it is because Freud attacked the idea that the *name of man* could be founded on rationality.

Freud described the three "blows to human narcissism": Copernicus destroyed the illusion that the earth was at the centre of the universe; Darwin, that man was at the centre of the animal kingdom; and Freud, the illusion that the ego was at the centre of the mind (Freud, 1917b, p.143). These three scientific revolutions threatened human narcissism because they challenged human ontology; they raised, in a dramatic way, questions about the existence of the human species. In the aftermath of each of these blows, new concepts were invented in order to redefine what Derrida calls the *name of man*. In his book *Natural Right and History*, Leo Strauss (1953) explains how Copernicus' and Galileo's revolution led Thomas Hobbes to completely rethink the status of man within the state of nature: if the universe is not organised around the earth but is determined by forces, how would our conception of man change? What would man be in a world of natural forces? Hobbes highlighted the consequences of the discovery that natural forces are intelligible, by defining that in the state of nature man was not centred around an essence but around these natural forces. He describes this as man being defined not by his reason but by his passions (Strauss, 1953, p.180).⁸⁷ In the same way that Hobbes constructed his notion of natural rights from the perspective of the emergence of modern natural science, I believe that Derrida's concept of the archi-trace appeared as a consequence of the emergence of psychoanalysis.

⁸⁷ Leo Strauss shows how Hobbes' conception of man in the state of nature, as centred in his passions rather than his reason made way for an entirely new type of political doctrine. With Hobbes, natural right is no longer defined as a state that allows the fulfilment of an essence but as a state that allows everything that is in one's power. Such a shift challenges the antique figure of the sage as the sage has knowledge of the essences but not of one's passions: there is a hierarchy of knowledge for the reasons, but not for the passions. This question is beyond the scope of my work, but I believe it would be fruitful to think about how – in a similar way to Hobbes – Freud's notion of the unconscious challenged the authority of the medical specialist, the modern figure of the sage.

According to Derrida, Freud's research revealed that instead of a rational essence, subjectivity is founded on a psychic writing: a script of thing-presentations that Derrida will redefine around the concept of the archi-trace. I propose to think of the archi-trace not as an empirical reality but as a concept born from an interrogation that Derrida addresses to Freud. This interrogation would be: what is the ontological consequence of a subjectivity that is not defined by an essence – such as rationality, truth, gods or any of the idealized notions that characterise Western metaphysics – but by unconscious forces and energy? What is the primal object of a psychology that is not a science of the logos but a science of writing? It is the archi-trace that would become this primal object, the 'natural being' of a psyche that operates through a "labor of the writing" which circulates "like psychical energy between the unconscious and the conscious" (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.266).

With the notion of the archi-trace, Derrida indicates that Freud's radicalism lies in the hypothesis that thought is determined not by consciousness but by a supply of infantile traces. By pointing out that unconscious mental processes rest on the transcription of primal traces, Derrida shows that the question of writing cannot be suppressed by psychoanalysis. The main steps in Freud's discovery of the unconscious correspond to the unveiling of forms of writing independent of the oral circuit of communication: firstly, the bodily text of the hysterical symptom; secondly, the pictorial text of the dream and thirdly, the text born from the clinical setting. The formations of the unconscious – neurotic symptoms, dreams, parapraxis, jokes and wit – reveal a form of infantile writing, which is autonomous from, and irreducible to, verbalisation. To a certain extent, the analytic session is also a production of the unconscious, because through its framework the analytic dialogue is partly transformed into a language of primary processes, an archaic writing. The analytic dialogue is not a two-voice conversation but, rather, a two-voice monologue, which tends towards the status of an autonomous text.

I would like to examine what, in the analytic framework, makes it possible to move from speech to an archaic writing. The analysand who, session after session, is confronted with the asymmetrical analytic dialogue, can evoke something of Scheherazade's destiny. Scheherazade is said to have told stories to the King of Persia, night after night, in order to avoid her own death. These stories form the text of *One Thousand and One Nights*,

which follows the story of a Persian King who, after discovering that his wife was unfaithful, decides to marry only virgins and to kill them after their first night together. Therefore, the stories told by Scheherazade, which are so often erotic, are a way to verbalize sexuality rather than enacting it. If one considers that the analytic position aims to verbalize transference instead of enacting it, it makes this analogy even more pertinent. But unlike Scheherazade and the king, both analysand and analyst try to follow rules: a certain way to tell stories, and a certain way to listen to them, and these techniques aim to reveal the infantile text in the patient's narrative.

The analysand tries to obey the fundamental rule that specifies the analytic treatment. In an article addressed to his colleagues in 1913, Freud stressed how this fundamental rule must be explained to the patient at the very beginning of the treatment:

One more thing before you start. What you tell me must differ in one respect from an ordinary conversation. Ordinarily you rightly try to keep a connecting thread running through your remarks and you exclude any intrusive ideas that may occur to you and any side-issues, so as not to wander too far from the point. But in this case you must proceed differently. You will notice that as you relate things various thoughts will occur to you which you would like to put aside on the ground of certain criticisms and objections. You will be tempted to say to yourself that this or that is irrelevant here, or is quite unimportant, or nonsensical, so that there is no need to say it. You must never give in to these criticisms, but must say it in spite of them—indeed, you must say it precisely *because* you feel an aversion to doing so. Later on you will find out and learn to understand the reason for this injunction, which is really the only one you have to follow. So say whatever goes through your mind. Act as though, for instance, you were a traveller sitting next to the window of a railway carriage and describing to someone inside the carriage the changing views which you see outside. Finally, never forget that you have promised to be absolutely honest, and never leave anything out because, for some reason or other, it is unpleasant to tell it. (Freud, 1911-1915[1914], p.134-135)

This method of free association is motivated by Freud's conviction about the existence of psychological determinism: "*Whenever one psychological element is linked with another by an*

objectionable or superficial association, there is also a legitimate and deeper link between them which is subjected to the resistance of the censorship” (Freud, 1900, p. 530). In the patient who free associates, the conscious *purposive ideas* are replaced by unconscious *purposive ideas*. The seemingly arbitrary lines of thought followed by the patient are determined by these unconscious purposive ideas. I believe that the unconscious purposive ideas are formed of the primal traces that constitute a psychical writing. Free association is therefore an attempt to get rid of the censorship of rationality so as to reach the hidden determinism of a written text.

In order for this text to appear, the psychoanalyst adopts a particular way of listening. Free association aims at investigating a psychic determinism hidden behind rationality, so the analyst must not reintroduce his own rationality, his own secondary elaboration. To avoid the analyst projecting his own purposive ideas onto the narrative of the patient, the analyst makes the conscious effort to suspend the motives which usually direct his attention. However, I would argue that the analyst cannot help but have his unconscious purposive ideas influence and orient his attention. Therefore, it could be understood that the analysand discovers his unconscious patterns through the medium of the analyst’s unconscious.

Freud at times thinks of the unconscious as an instrument: the analyst “possesses in his own unconscious an instrument with which he can interpret the utterances of the unconscious in other people” (Freud, 1913a, p.320). I believe that this notion of an instrument can be read in a literal sense. The analyst transforms his attention in such a way that his unconscious becomes a sort of optical instrument, something like a distorting mirror on which a text can appear.⁸⁸ The two-voice monologue of the analytic session becomes a palimpsest: the traces of the analysand appear on the parchment provided by the attention of the analyst.

That the analysand deciphers the enigma of his own infantile sexuality through the infantile sexuality of the analyst would justify why it is that every analyst must have a

⁸⁸ In *Attention and Interpretation*, which takes up the main Bionian concepts from the vertex of the analytic session, Bion theorises the transformation of the analyst’s attention in a very radical way. Bion proposes that for an analytic knowledge to emerge in the session, the analyst should “impose on himself a positive discipline of eschewing memory and desire.” Bion writes: “I do not mean that ‘forgetting’ is enough, what is required is a positive act of refraining from memory and desire” (Bion, 1970, p.31).

training analysis. Indeed, the aspects in the analyst's unconscious that would have remained too mysterious would be like a 'blind spot' in the understanding of the patient. From an epistemological point of view, this point holds great importance. Every truth that emerges from the psychoanalytic cure is a result of the encounter between two unconscious texts and is therefore a contextual truth.⁸⁹ Having said this, it should be clear why I believe that not only is it impossible to have a completely neutral attention, but also that it is precisely what is a-neutral in the analyst's listening that allows the analysand to identify what is a-neutral in his associations. In both cases, the a-neutral element is the instrument that deciphers unconscious thoughts.

Apart from suspended attention, Freud gives one other indication concerning the nature of the analyst's way of listening: "he must behave as 'timelessly' as the unconscious itself" (Freud, 1918[1914], p.10). The analytic dialogue does not function on a dialectical model. Rather than two viewpoints that argue, there is a two-voice monologue: the voice of the analyst alerts the analysand to what he/she hears in the voice of the analysand. If Freud indicates that the voice of the analyst must escape the influence of the present, it is because "the later impressions of life speak loudly enough through the mouth of the patient, while it is the physician who has to raise his voice on behalf of the claim of childhood" (Freud, 1919, pp.183-184). The voice of the patient and that of the physician create a sort of hybrid voice that reflects different levels of the patient's subjectivity. The patient hears the presence of another voice and yet at times he can feel that he is alone even in the presence of this other. This "aspect of the transference in which the patient is alone in the analytic session" is crucial to Winnicott because according to him "the basis of the capacity to be alone (...) is the experience of being alone while someone else is present" (Winnicott, 1958, p.417).

Through its setting, the analytic session transforms the speech of a conversation into a form of monologue determined by an unconscious written text. Anne Golomb Hoffman describes this text as a semiotic of the infantile body: "In the clinical setting, this semiotic body and its history emerge through free association, analytic work with dreams, symptoms, and in the medium of the transference" (Golomb Hoffman, 2006, p.401).

⁸⁹ This contextual aspect of analytic interpretations has been used to justify the view that psychoanalysis is not a science. I believe on the contrary that it is precisely the acknowledgment of this contextual aspect that makes of psychoanalysis a science of the psyche and not a religious practice. However, in the same way that the epistemology of biology differs from that of physics, the paradigms of psychoanalysis are its very own.

According to her, because of this “psychic equivalence” between “the pleasure-body of infantile sexuality” and the written text, psychoanalysis and literary criticism “meet in the space of the symptom considered as text, or the text itself as figure of the body” (*Ibid.*, p.421). Thus, the capacity to be alone in a session can also be understood as the capacity to be alone amidst the text of the symptom, the text of the infantile body, and to become a reader of this text.

In a paper called ‘The Psychoanalytic Narrative: On the Transformational Axis Between Writing and Speech’ (1984) Evan Bellin combines the psychoanalytic theory of narratology and poststructuralist literary criticism to apply the writing metaphor to the clinical psychoanalytic situation.⁹⁰ Bellin studies how a “text emerges from within the asymmetrical exchange of speech utterances in the psychoanalytic situation. It is a text and not a conversation because it operates as if it were written free of authorial intention. Therefore, it is not simply transcribed conversation. It is free as well from the rules of conversational constraint. Rather than confusing and obfuscating, this ‘written’ text opens upon a plenitude of meaning. To further understand how this occurs, we transplant Freud’s writing metaphor from the mind to the scene of action in the psychoanalytic narrative”(Bellin, 1984, p.15). Bellin uses a clinical case to show how the speech of the psychoanalytic dialogue converges towards patterns that seem determined by a pre-verbal text.

This enigmatic text, generated by the psychoanalytic context, does not aim to communicate. When he compared the dream to archaic forms of writing, Freud already insisted: “that the system of expression by dreams occupies a far more unfavourable position than any of these ancient languages and scripts. For after all they are fundamentally intended for communication: that is to say, they are always, by whatever method and with whatever assistance, meant to be understood. But precisely this characteristic is absent in dreams. A dream does not want to say anything to anyone. It is not a vehicle for communication” (Freud, 1916-1917[1915-1917], p.231). In as much as the analytic encounter tries to supplant the tools of verbal language by the primary process of the dream, it creates forms that do not communicate meaning.

⁹⁰ The main thinkers of this theory are Loewald (1980), Schafer (1980) and Spence (1982).

From this angle, psychical writing is radically different from the systematic writing of the philosopher but it shares something fundamental with the writing of the *Dichter*. As pointed out by Jonathan Culler: “The attempt to understand how we make sense of a text leads one to think of literature not as a representation or communication but as a series of forms which comply with and resist the production of meaning” (Culler, 1975, p.259). Like this psychical writing, poetic writing creates forms, which are the expressive medium for experiences that exist prior to, or outside, the verbal language and that resist the production of meaning. The psychical text that appears in an analytic session and the literary text both challenge a metaphysics of presence because they produce forms before producing meaning. As a consequence, they generate a written text irreducible to the record of a spoken text.

The dialogue that Derrida undertook with Freud and psychoanalysis rests partly on this premise, that there is an “impossibility of reducing a text as such to its effects of meaning, content, thesis, or theme” (Derrida, 1981[1972]a, p.7). In *Plato’s Pharmacy*, Derrida has shown how this poetic writing is condemned by the philosopher, the writing that Plato condemns in the *Phaedrus* – a poetic writing that Derrida describes as this “essential drift, which is proper to writing as a structure of repetition, a structure cut off from any absolute responsibility or from consciousness as ultimate authority, orphaned and separated since birth from the support of the father” (Derrida, 1982[1972], p.376). Gradually, the drift of the analytic dialogue “approaches the inscriptive strangeness and autonomous monumentality of the written text as described by Derrida” (Bellin, 1984, pp.27-28). Freud’s elaboration of the psychoanalytic session is the invention of a situation, which reveals the patterns of a primal writing through the speech of an asymmetrical dialogue.

From this viewpoint, psychoanalytic practice foreshadows the general reasoning of Derrida’s deconstruction. Geoffrey Bennington describes with remarkable clarity this reasoning: “deconstruction gets going by attempting to present as primary what metaphysics says is secondary” (Bennington, 1993[1991], p.42). Writing that appears as a secondary object of language operates, at another level, as the primary object, which makes the study of language and, more generally, the study of subjectivity possible. The psychoanalytic session is a frame that stages this movement of deconstruction: a *mise en scène* of a primal writing. A task of the analytic work is to get through the barrage of

verbal meaning so that the unconscious text of psychic reality can be played out in the session.

I find the way Ella Freeman Sharpe (1940) describes the use of the individual metaphor in analysis a convincing example of how this task can be accomplished. I mention Sharpe's work on metaphor also because, it seems to me, that her clinical understanding of the metaphor is more akin to a Derridean reading of Freud than to a structuralist one. As pointed out by Sara Flanders, Ella Freeman Sharpe was the first, in a series of lectures given in the 1930s to the British Society "to make the leap made famous by Lacan (...) locating in the mechanisms of the dream-work" the laws of poetics and equating "condensation and displacement with metaphor and metonymy" (Flanders, 1993, p.8).⁹¹ However, in her essay on Sharpe's literary and linguistic analysis of dreams, Mary Jacobus explains how "Sharpe troubles a strictly Lacanian account of the language of the unconscious" as she "frequently represents dream-thoughts and phantasies concretely in terms of their manufacture, and even as a woven texture—literally, as textile—rather than metaphorically, as a linguistic text" (Jacobus, 2005, p.5).

What is shown by Sharpe's clinical work is that the metaphorical language used in a session rests on an unconscious language that is not organized on the primacy of the signifier but on the primacy of bodily discharges. In the same way that the "implied or crystallized metaphors" can reveal the reality of "past ages of history", Sharpe describes the individual metaphors used in analysis as a verbal creation that reveals a pre-verbal reality, the forgotten reality of the infantile body: "Spontaneous metaphor used by a patient proves upon examination to be an epitome of a forgotten experience. It can reveal a present-day psychical condition which is based upon an original psycho-physical experience" (Sharpe, 1940, p.212).

According to Sharpe, ideas are first expressed through psycho-physical experiences that could be described as a writing of the erotogenic zones and it is only when the bodily orifices become controlled that "words themselves become the very substitutes for the bodily substances". Speech is therefore secondary to a bodily writing of ideas and Sharpe goes as far as considering that "speech in itself is a metaphor" of this more primal mode

⁹¹ These lectures were published as a book named *Dream Analysis* (1978[1937]).

of thinking. She writes: “Speech secondly becomes a way of expressing, discharging ideas. So that we may say speech in itself is a metaphor, that metaphor is as ultimate as speech” (*Ibid.*, p.203).⁹² Individual metaphors invented in the analytical encounter are not “a *façon de parler*”, they reveal a primal writing of the body’s orifices. As eloquently phrased by Jacobus: “Sharpe’s model makes bodily continence the price paid for language and language itself a form of materiality. (...) Words assume the qualities of substitute substances. They function as projectiles, weapons, gifts, or magical performances. Speech (utterance) becomes metaphorical ‘outer-ance’” (Jacobus, 2005, p.6). It is this emphasis that Sharpe places on the bodily concreteness of the psychic traces that haunt speech, that reminds me of some of the key intuitions of post-structuralism.⁹³

I believe that the specificity of a metapsychological writing comes from the attempt to give an account of the back-and-forth movement between speech and writing: the movement from the word-presentation to the thing-presentation that is at stake in the dream-work or in analytical-work. The practice of psychoanalysis does not reveal a Being of the unconscious, nor even an entity of the psyche but, rather, unconscious processes: rational thinking is supplanted by unconscious determinism, the logos of the discourse is supplanted by the pathos of transference and resistance. It is because Freud’s metapsychology was an attempt to theorize the dislocation of conscious speech into unconscious mechanisms that Freud’s metapsychological writing challenges analytic expression and phonetic writing. Freud’s metapsychology is not a theoretical system (*Weltanschauung*) of the unconscious but a form of writing, a mode of representation (*Darstellungsweise*) for unconscious mechanisms.

Unlike philosophical systems that treat the written text as a mere record of a concept, Freud’s metapsychology treats the written text as the transcription of a primal text, which has never been present to consciousness. Freud’s metapsychology is not guided by the elaboration of a concept but by a writing-work which enables the expression of an unconscious determinism. The first published appearance of the word ‘metapsychology’

⁹² Mary Jacobus has noticed that in this quote, Sharpe was paraphrasing John Middleton Murray: “Metaphor is as ultimate as speech itself, and speech as ultimate as thought” (Jacobus, 2005, p.6 fn.10).

⁹³ I believe an interesting avenue of research would be to compare the philosophical intuitions of the young Derrida with the metapsychology of some of the analysts from the School of British Objects Relations, particularly that of Sharpe and Bion.

in Chapter 11 of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* reads almost like an epistemological slogan: “to transform *metaphysic* into *metapsychology*” (Freud, 1901, p.259). The program that Freud assigned to metapsychology is to change the “*supernatural reality*” – what Nietzsche called the “backworlds” (*Hinterveltlern*) – back into a “*psychology of the unconscious*”. The metaphysician projects endopsychic perceptions into the external world and as a consequence his formalism is secondary towards his concept. Metapsychology aims to bring the suprasensitive external reality imagined by metaphysics back towards the primal text of psychical reality. To “transform metaphysic into metapsychology” also signifies the transformation of the speech of the concept into the text of unconscious determinism.

A Metapsychological Writing

To characterize the specificities of Freud’s writing in his metapsychological texts is not so much an attempt to raise the question of Freud’s written style but rather to point out a type of writing that continuously threatens the communicative possibilities of writing: a type of writing that seems to defeat the verbal dimension of a text. The paradox would be, that it is precisely when Freud is least preoccupied with the question of a written style, that he invents a new form of writing. In his metapsychological papers, as in most of his work, Freud is less concerned with the attempt to create new sentence structures, than to be understood. Juliet Mitchell explained how Lacan felt that the classical humanistic tone of Freud’s idiom was a mistake since, as a challenge to an ideology which believes that “man is at the centre of his own history and of himself”, psychoanalysis cannot “rest on a linguistic appeal to that same ideology” (Mitchell, 1985, p.4).

Despite his inhibition in writing, Lacan was a stylist and the difficulty of his texts serves a strategic purpose. Freud, on the other hand, did not take up writing as an exercise in virtuosity or as a rhetorical technique, but as a means to be pedagogical. In the first scholarly book on the subject of Freud as a literary artist, Walter Schönau argued that throughout his work, Freud subordinated his style to the purpose of convincing his readers (Schönau, 1968). Indeed, Freud strove to be clear, and yet there is a profound strangeness in his metapsychological texts. As noticed by François Roustang, in his study

of Freud's style in Chapter seven of the *Traumdeutung*, Schönau seems to ignore the strangeness of Freud's metapsychological writing (Roustang, 1977, p.65).

Jean-Claude Rolland, on the other hand, points out this strangeness that arises from the reading of metapsychological texts, when he describes how Freud's metapsychological writing "espouses and outlines the soul's very movements, an 'iconic' writing that would be like the concrete trace of the psychological transformation the author inflicted on himself to bring to conscious awareness and impose on his ego this reality of the psychological depths that even the most penetrating clinical experience does not spontaneously bestow on the observer" (Rolland, 2005, p.96). Rolland stresses how one becomes destabilised by the reading of Freud's metapsychology, not only because of its lack of concrete clinical instances but, more fundamentally, because *metapsychological writing is not discursive*. It is a form of writing that operates through the ways in which it escapes the framework of discourse: its hesitations, its use of scientific formulas or of mythology, its incompleteness – are the many vanishing points by which "Freud's writing *produces* knowledge rather than merely describing it" (Mahony, 1982, p.14). Thoughts emerge from a reading of what resists direct verbal expression. As an attempt to formalise the psychological systems, Freud's metapsychology never ceases to write the impossibility of an inscription of its objects.

To open *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud chose a quotation from Virgil's *Aeneid*: "Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo". Strachey translates this as: "If I cannot bend the Higher Powers, I will move the Infernal Regions" (in Freud, 1900, p.608). Freud explained that he had borrowed this quotation from Lassalle in order to "emphasize the most important part in the dynamics of the dream. The wish rejected by the higher mental agencies (the repressed dream wish) stirs up the mental underworld (the unconscious) in order to get a hearing."⁹⁴ The infantile wish of the dream that cannot be expressed in the verbal language of consciousness triggers hallucinatory unconscious presentations. I think that Virgil's line can also be read as a motto for Freud's metapsychological writing. Psychic reality resists the clarity of verbal exposition:

⁹⁴ Letter of 30th January 1927 from Freud to Werner Achelis (in Freud, 1961, p.375).

“How bungled our reproductions are, how wretchedly we dissect the great works of psychic nature” Freud complained in a letter to Jung.⁹⁵

If the functioning of an unconscious mode of thinking cannot be expressed in the clarity of the logos, a metapsychological writing will need to invent other forms of intelligibility.⁹⁶ Freud concluded *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, the text in which he pushes his metapsychological speculations to their extremes, with an equivalent slogan in the form of Friedrich Rückert’s lines: “What we cannot reach flying we must reach limping...The Book tells us it is no sin to limp” (Freud, 1920, p.64) It is no sin to limp within the framework of the logos in order to invent a form of writing that expresses a relation with unconscious thing-presentations. Freud pointed out that the danger for abstract thoughts was to become trapped by words, to “neglect the relations of words to unconscious thing-presentations” so that the most theoretical discourse becomes akin to a schizophrenic delirium.⁹⁷ I believe that it is precisely to avoid this trap – a trap into which (according to Freud) so many metaphysicians fall⁹⁸– that Freud invents a form of writing that challenges the logos itself. Where the schizophrenic uses words in a way that ‘derails’ the real, Freud’s metapsychological writing tends to ‘derail’ the logos.

The exhaustive research of the stratagems Freud invented in order to write beyond the logos is an extraordinarily complex and rich task. Indeed, the problem raised by Freud’s metapsychological writing goes beyond the difficulty of formalizing knowledge about non-verbal presentation. What is at stake is the link between a form of writing and psychoanalytic practice: some aspects of this practice create and structure this form of

⁹⁵ Letter of 30th June 1909 from Freud to Jung (in McGuire, 1974, p.238)

⁹⁶ The idea that verbal language is incapable of communicating the affects is very much present in Nietzsche: “Our true experiences are not at all garrulous. They could not communicate themselves even if they tried: they lack the right words. We have already gone beyond whatever we have words for.” (*Twilight of the Idols*, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man” § 26) Patrick Wotling (2008) used this very idea to explain the specificity of Nietzsche’s philosophical writing.

⁹⁷ “When we think in abstractions there is a danger that we may neglect the relations of words to unconscious thing-presentations, and it must be confessed that the expression and content of our philosophizing then begins to acquire an unwelcome resemblance to the model of operation of schizophrenics”(Freud, 1915c, p.204).

⁹⁸ “It might be maintained that a case of hysteria is a caricature of a work of art, that an obsessional neurosis is a caricature of a religion and that a paranoid delusion is a caricature of a philosophical system.” (Freud, 1913[1912-1913], p.73).

writing. In a paper written in 1930, Walter Muschg⁹⁹ points with great sensitivity to some of the links between the sequence of events in an analytic session and Freud's written style. However, my approach here is rather different. I do not aim to subordinate the content to the style but, rather, to show how the formalism of unconscious processes resists rhetorical or stylistic devices. I will try to identify the means by which Freud's metapsychology is expressed through a negative dimension of the process of writing. Hence, the quotes I will use to support my argument will come more from Freud's description of the conditions of existence of his metapsychological texts, rather than from the metapsychological texts themselves.

In *Freud's Legacy*, Derrida tried to apply Freud's speculative model to its own speculative writing. Derrida demonstrated through his reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that the metapsychological "scene of writing does not recount something, the content of an event", for this event "remains unrepresentable, but produces, there producing itself, the scene of writing" (Derrida, 1987[1980], p.336). Because its events are unrepresentable, Freud's metapsychology is the formal invention of a scene of writing in which, at times, a writing of the incomplete - a scaffolding, a mythology, a topography with no localities, or a quantity with no measurements - replaces a discursive writing.

In this chapter, I would like to draw a sketch of the metapsychological scene of writing by first describing the aspects of it that are conditioned by psychoanalytic practice, followed by the three main systems used by Freud in his metapsychological writing.

Esoteric Form of Writing, Writing of the Incomplete

Born from an intimate dialogue that led to the creation of texts which do not allow for a definitive conclusion, Freud's metapsychology resembles psychoanalytic practice.

A characteristic of psychoanalytic objects is the difficulty of proving their existence. A metapsychological writing therefore describes phenomena whose very positivist existence remains speculative. What makes the existence of psychoanalytical objects so hard to observe comes partly from an aspect, which Freud had warned of, when he addressed his

⁹⁹ Muschg's paper (1959[1930]) that is entitled *Freud als Schriftsteller [Freud as a Writer]* has not yet been translated into English. I read its French translation by Schotte that was published in *La Psychanalyse*, 5, pp.69-124.

listeners at the beginning of his introduction to psychoanalysis: “The talk of which psycho-analytic treatment consists brooks no listener; it cannot be demonstrated” (Freud, 1917[1916-1917], p.17). Psychoanalytic clinical phenomena come from a dialogue that cannot be observed without losing its internal truth. Like the phenomena it tries to describe, the first traces of a metapsychological writing appeared in the privacy of a dialogue: that of the correspondence between Freud and Wilhelm Fliess.

Unlike the term ‘psycho-analysis’ which Freud had used for the first time in a scientific publication,¹⁰⁰ the word ‘metapsychology’ was created in a letter that Freud wrote to Fliess on the 13th of February 1896: “I am continually occupied with psychology – really metapsychology”. It is certainly not a coincidence that Freud revealed his neologism specifically to Fliess. In the genealogy of Freud’s creation of psychoanalysis, Fliess personifies the esoteric companion. Unlike Charcot and Breuer, who are officially named in Freud’s biographical account, Fliess occupies a more intimate role. He is the individual on the margins of academia who will join Freud in a speculation on the enigma of sexuality. Freud created this new form of writing in the secrecy of this correspondence and in the intimacy of his self-analysis. I believe that this esoteric aspect is a first characteristic of Freud’s metapsychological writing that can be linked to analytical practice.

The second aspect linked to analytical practice that I would like to stress, is the incompleteness of the project elaborated through metapsychological writing. Firstly, because it is the nature of metapsychology to constantly take into account new clinical material and secondly, because when clinical material ceases to be informative, metapsychology is the only way to carry the theoretical reflexion further. In his introduction to Freud’s metapsychological papers, Strachey bemoans the loss of the seven papers, which were destroyed by Freud: “It is difficult to exaggerate our loss from the disappearance of these papers” (Strachey, 1957, p.106). Together with the five existing papers, they would have made up a comprehensive metapsychological work in the form of a book that would have been entitled: *Preliminaries to a Metapsychology (Zur Vorbereitung einer Metapsychologie)*.

¹⁰⁰ *Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses*, first published the 30th of March 1896 in the *Revue Neurologique* (Freud, 1896a)

I would argue, however, that the project to record an exhaustive description of metapsychological concepts is not conceivable. When Freud speaks of metapsychology as “the furthest goal that psychology could attain” (Freud, 1925[1924], p.59) it is, in my opinion, a way to ascribe an asymptotic value to such a goal. In the word metapsychology, “meta” is often understood as designating “beyond” the consciousness. It has also been suggested that “meta” stands for “beyond” psychology or “beyond” clinical observations (Assoun, 2007). I propose to add to this list the interpretation of “meta” as “beyond” completeness. Metapsychology is therefore a constant work in progress, a place for exploration, something similar to the laboratory of the scientist or the studio of the artist. Moreover, as an epistemological rampart, it is an unsettled one that pushes the specificity of Freud’s analytical discourse further and further.

The Scaffolding

Metapsychology emerged as new questions and new models born from the practice of psychoanalysis arose. It appeared in the material of Freud’s self-analysis and, from then on, accompanied the adventure of his analytical practice. At the end of his life, Freud studied the “interminable” analyses: those treatments that can be interrupted for a period but which seem to function as ‘a way of life’ rather than as a cure. This peculiar clinical event raises its own metapsychological question, which is: can analytic therapy tame the demand made by the drives upon the ego? (Freud, 1937a, p.224). What interests me in *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* is, in fact, not the content of this question but its form. In this text, Freud gives a quasi definition of the way in which a clinical problem (the interminable analysis) is transformed into a metapsychological question (the taming of the drives). This transformation is carried out by three modes of investment in the clinical material: to speculate [*Spekulieren*], to theorise [*Theoretisieren*], and to phantasize [*Phantasieren*]. In front of the clinical material “we must call the Witch Metapsychology to our help” wrote Freud, as without “metapsychological speculation and theorizing – I had almost said ‘phantasying’ – we shall not get another step forward”(Ibid., p.225). Metapsychology does not maintain an observational relationship with the manifestations of the unconscious, thus a metapsychological writing is not a descriptive one.

Gilbert Diatkine (1985) pointed out that on many occasions, Freud has defined the metapsychological approach in a way that is similar to the fundamental rule of free-

association: an attitude that makes it possible to follow an idea to see where it will lead, without it being suppressed by the censorship of causality. Thus, in *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, Freud writes:

It may be asked whether and how far I am myself convinced of the truth of the hypotheses that have been set out in these pages. My answer would be that I am not convinced myself and that I do not seek to persuade other people to believe in them. Or more precisely, that I do not know how far I believe in them. There is no reason, as it seems to me why the emotional factor of conviction should enter into this question at all. It is surely possible to throw oneself into a line of thought and to follow it wherever it leads out of simple scientific curiosity, or, if the reader prefers, as an *advocatus diaboli*, who is not on that account himself sold to the devil (Freud, 1920, p.59).

Freud's metapsychological writing does not aim to trigger an affect of conviction in the reader, rather an impression of movement: 'to throw oneself into a line of thought'. However, that Freud's metapsychological writing gives form to the associative dimension of his thought does not mean that Freud wrote in the manner of free-association, because there is a manifest coherence in his metapsychological texts. What is at issue is a way to write that does not endeavour to teach a theory, but to follow its own associative chain. From that angle, Freud's metapsychological writing achieves what Nietzsche considers a well-executed writing: a form of writing that contains "ideas of the sort that breed ideas" (Nietzsche, 1996[1878], p.303).

Far from passing on ready-made concepts, the metapsychological writing brings the concept about. In a letter to Fliess, Freud explains how his composition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* "follows the dictates of the unconscious" and he compares it with "the well known principle of Itzig, the Sunday rider. 'Itzig, where are you going?' 'Do I know? Ask the horse.'" Freud adds: "I did not start a single paragraph knowing where I would end up" (Letter of July 7th 1898, in Masson, 1985, p.319). It is perhaps, as if Freud was aiming towards an ideal writing that would be almost dictated by his unconscious, an associative writing that would not be a description of the unconscious functioning but its manifestation.

Kurt Eissler, who insisted that Freud's scientific achievement was primarily in his writing capacities, reported that in Freud's manuscripts, even "in those on such complicated subjects as are dealt with in his metapsychological papers, a correction is a rarity. They convey the impression rather of a process of pouring out than planned composition, based on careful ratiocination" (Eissler, 1971, p.277). There is, in the associative movement of Freud's writing, the mark of necessity that is at play in the manifestations of the unconscious. A few months after having finished his metapsychological papers of 1915, Freud wrote to Ferenczi: "I maintain that one should not make theories—they must fall into one's house as uninvited guests while one is occupied with the investigation of details".¹⁰¹ The metapsychological writing registers the movement of this internal necessity. As pointed out by Patrick Mahony, the unfolding movement of Freud's composition evokes the Baroque prose that "adapts itself to the movement of a mind discovering truth as it goes, thinking while it writes" and whose purpose is "to portray, not a thought, but a mind thinking, or, in Pascal's words, *la peinture de la pensée*" (Mahony, 1982, p.164).

The kineticism of Freud's writing plays the role of a method of investigation: to stimulate encounters and analogies between unconscious modes of thinking and language. In Freud's metapsychology the psyche is modelled through those analogies born from an associative writing rather than through anatomical charts. Freud stresses the novelty of writing psychological localities in a fictional apparatus rather than ascribing them anatomical locations: "So far as I know, the experiment has not hitherto been made of using this method of dissection in order to investigate the way in which the mental instrument is put together"(Freud, 1900, p.536). To replace anatomy by a speculative writing does not mean that Freud ignores the materiality of the mind. In fact, what guarantees the epistemological validity of such a method is the plasticity of the metapsychological concepts. Freud comes back to this point in most of his metapsychological texts.

In Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he writes: "We are justified, in my view, in giving free rein to our speculations so long as we retain the coolness of our judgement and do not mistake the scaffolding for the building" (*Ibid.*, p.536). As Gilbert Diatkine noticed, many fell into this pitfall of metapsychology and "the ones excited by

¹⁰¹ Letter from Freud to Ferenczi 31st July 1915 (in Falzeder and Brabant, 1996, p.74)

speculation, such as Fliess, Jung, Rank or Reich lapsed into theoretical delusions and transformed the scaffolding into one of Ludwig II of Bavaria's castles" (Diatkine, 1985, p.1233, my translation).^{102 103}

Then, in *On Narcissism: an Introduction*, Freud explains that for psychoanalysis to be a science erected on observation it should have at its basis not "a smooth, logically unassailable foundation" but metapsychological concepts described as "nebulous, scarcely imaginable", concepts that the progression of knowledge hopes "to apprehend more clearly" or even "to replace by others" (Freud, 1914c, p. 77). The same line of thought is developed at the beginning of *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* where Freud defines the metapsychological concepts as "abstract ideas" which must "possess some degree of indefiniteness" as "there can be no question of any clear delimitation of their content" (Freud, 1915a, p.117). It is this conviction that the "advance of knowledge (...) does not tolerate any rigidity" that made possible Freud's metapsychological attitude with which he could invent a form of associative writing that is not alienated from the unconscious but that takes into account the phantasised investment of the clinical material as a method of research.

The Three Points of View

In her paper, *Trauma, Recognition, and the Place of Language*, Juliet Mitchell raised the question of why theories of trauma "revert to neurophysiological models" if they "regard the breaching event as the originary trauma". Indeed, "there can be nothing biologically causative about a rape or a mother's death or about their possible effects" (Mitchell, 1998, p.124). Mitchell's hypothesis is that it is not "because we cannot conceptualize the psyche at the level of a traumatic experience" that "we engage with natural science explanations" but rather "because they echo our existential experience" (*Ibid.*, p.124). Through clinical cases, Juliet Mitchell shows how in a traumatic experience, one is withdrawn from reality at the level of his or her own verbal language. Hence, the use of biological models rather than psychological ones would reflect the very fact that a trauma

¹⁰² "Beaucoup de ceux que la spéculation excitait, comme Fliess, Jung, Rank, ou Reich, ont versé dans le délire, et transformé l'échafaudage en château de Louis II de Bavière."

¹⁰³ I wonder to what extent neuro-psychoanalysis, in its instrumental approach to metapsychological concepts, confuses the scaffolding of metapsychology with the building of a scientific theory.

forces the subject outside of its language and that the level of traumatic experience is a non-verbal one.

I would like to show that, in the same way, the textual consequence of Freud's use of a scientific language is to push the writing beyond words in order to describe a memory that is at first hallucinatory. One of the most recurrent reproaches addressed to the formalism of Freud's metapsychology is its irrelevant use of a language belonging to a natural science that would become out of date (Gill, 1975; Gedo, 1977). I would like to think of Freud's scientific formulation based on physics, not as a scientific anachronism, but as a symbolic writing to describe a non-verbal mode of thinking. The three points of views of Freud's metapsychology – the dynamic, the topographical and the economic – would be symbolic means to represent a psyche that resists being verbalized.

In order to study Freud's use of the notions of physics', Darius Ornston (1982) has shown that it is necessary to take into account the influence of Strachey's translation. Ornston demonstrates how Strachey's translation shifted Freud's comparative description into quantitative explanations: "Strachey read Freud's descriptions as explanatory technical language" (Ornston, 1982, p.423). Freud used quantitative notions like energy, cathexis, intensity, force and so on... as "necessarily vague descriptive convention" and Strachey's translation turned those descriptive symbols into a set of unified concepts. James Strachey's systematic approach in his translation of Freud is one of the great achievements of the Standard Edition but perhaps also one of its limits. By choosing a single English word for each German one and then sticking to it, Strachey ran contrary to the "quality that Freud much preferred in writing", the one "he called *Geschmeidigkeit*, that is, super flexibility (...) Until the end Freud used the same words in various ways, and many different words to describe the same ideas" (*Ibid.*, p. 411).¹⁰⁴ Robert Holt (1962) for instance, spotted over a dozen different ways in which Freud used 'bound' and 'free cathexis' throughout his work.

This plasticity in Freud's writing is especially important when it comes to quantitative and physiological metaphors because what is at stake in psychical locality, force or energy is not explanatory scientific concepts but symbolic comparisons that raise new questions.

¹⁰⁴ In a paper published in *The International Journal Of Psychoanalysis* just after Freud's death, Ernest Jones described Freud's prose as "Austrian prose" rather than German "since Freud showed a marked preference for what he called the *Geschmeidigkeit* of the Austrian manner of writing" (Jones, 1940, p.10).

In his paper on *Repression*, Freud called the quantitative description of repression for each type of neurosis “a series of comparisons” (Freud, 1915b, p. 157). Ornston stresses how Freud inherited this symbolic use of scientific notions from Brücke who had already explained “that although *Kraft* or force has a precisely defined mathematical meaning in physics, it is used as an animistic description in physiology. Force is often ‘a symbol’ of ability, ‘a name’ for causes which we cannot see and do not understand”(Ornston, 1982, p.423). Freud’s metapsychological description of “a psychical process in its dynamic, topographical and economic aspects” (Freud, 1915c, p.181) is similarly an animistic writing because each of these three aspects touches on an impossibility to be named: a limit of the logos. I will try to identify those limits.

Freud built the topographical point of view on the idea of psychical localities, which are not determined in any “anatomical fashion” but rather, as the constituents of a “fiction” (Freud, 1900, p.598) with which to model our mental functioning: the psychical apparatus. The topographical point of view consists in locating a psychical process in this apparatus and Freud insisted that the “crudest idea” of a psychological system was a “spatial one” (Freud, 1917[1916-1917], p.295). Precisely because he didn’t base the spatial representation on any anatomical ground, Freud had to invent the geography of this apparatus. He could not refer to any physiological reality and so had to draw a new map that corresponded to the dissection of this fictional apparatus. Throughout his work, in order to map a psychical process, Freud invented diagrams of mental activities, such as the famous graphics that appear in ‘Part b’ of Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. From a textual angle, this corresponded to a replacement of writing by drawing. I propose that the replacement of verbal writing with the graphic of a fiction constitutes the topographical limit of the logos.

The dynamic and economic points of view rest on the idea of force and energy: psychical processes would be the outcome of forces and they would be cathected by amounts of energy. Both theories are inspired by physical science: the notion of force is at the core of Newtonian mechanics and that of energy is at the core of thermodynamics. The fact that the medium of psychical force remains unclear and that quantitative changes of psychical energy are impossible to measure in a clinical observation have appeared to some adversaries of Freud’s metapsychology as “the weakest element” of a dynamic and economic theory of psychological causations (Kubie, 1947). As noticed by Mark Cousins

in his introduction to a selection of Freud's theoretical papers: "Within psychoanalysis it is more the idea of the economic dimensions and its relation to the drive that has come in for criticism or simply neglect. Faced with the inexorable progress of measurement within psychology there has been an increasing reluctance to refer to a quantitative dimension within psychical life without being able to assign numbers or measured relations to it" (Cousins, 2005, pp.xiv-xv).

I would argue that the economic and dynamic points of view are not so much the testimony of Freud's scientism, but rather, a non-verbal form of writing. They both lead towards a mathematical formalization of psychical processes in which forces could be modelled by vectors, and energies by numbers. However, unlike some post-Freudian psychoanalytic thinkers such as Bion (in his use of *the grid*: a sort of metapsychological algebra) or Lacan (in his use of *mathème*: a sort of metapsychological topology) who have proposed mathematical approaches to the psyche, Freud never really followed this path. I believe, nevertheless, that he initiated it. When he wrote that the economic point of view "endeavours to follow out the vicissitudes of amounts of excitation and to arrive at least at some *relative* estimate of their magnitude"(Freud, 1915c, p.181) one feels a numerical writing looming on the horizon. And yet, "the indefiniteness of all our discussions on what we describe as metapsychology (...) due to the fact that we know nothing of the nature of the excitatory process that takes place in the elements of psychical systems" constrains to operate "all the time with a large unknown factor, which we are obliged to carry over into every new formula."(Freud, 1920, pp.30-31) This unknown factor, that is carried in an economic and dynamic description of psychical phenomena constitutes, I believe, the economic and dynamic limit of the logos.

Freud's transcription of a psychical process into a metapsychological presentation tends towards a non-verbal writing form: along the topographical axis, it tends towards the form of a drawing and along the economical and dynamic axis it tends towards unsolvable equations that are structurally condemned to carry over "a large unknown factor".

The Greek Myth

In parallel to the use of viewpoints borrowed from natural science, the other main resource in Freud's metapsychological quest to formalize unconscious psychological determinism was constituted of figures of Greek mythology. In *The Creation of Mythology* (1986[1981]) Marcel Détiéne shows how from the fifth century bc, through Pindar and Herodotus, the Greek notion of *mythos* became distinguished from that of *logos*. Détiéne explains that this opposition between mythical and rational thought has endured in western thinking. Freud played on this opposition, using myth as a form of discourse distinct from conceptual discourse, in order to describe a functioning of subjectivity that is not determined by rationality but by tragic forces.

As Elisabeth Roudinesco has pointed out: “without his genius idea to bring back Greek tragedy – which is to say into an unconscious destiny – in the middle of the nineteenth century and into the middle-class European family, Freud would have remained a psychologist of the neuroses in the same way as Pierre Janet” (in Roudinesco & Derrida, 2001, p.32, my translation).¹⁰⁵ The birth of Freud's ‘psychology of the depths’ was linked with the refinding of the Oedipus myth at the core of both his first patients’ inner life and his own. The hypothesis raised in Freud's self-analysis that the Oedipus tragedy could seize “on a compulsion which everyone recognises because he feels its existence within himself” (Letter to Fliess of October 15th 1897, in Mason, 1985, p. 272).

Throughout Freud's work, Greek mythology seems to define the paradigmatic steps of his metapsychology, whose evolution could be summarized around the succession of three of these mythological figures: Oedipus, Narcissus and Thanatos. Oedipus would correspond to the discovery of infantile sexuality, Narcissus to the introduction of the concept of narcissism and Thanatos to the apparition of the death drive. Figures from Greek mythology are milestones in Freud's metapsychological writing because they represent a form of knowledge that imposes itself onto existence. Unlike the philosophical knowledge of the *logos*, which comes from the benevolence of a rational mind, the myth incarnates a movement of pathos that impels a search for knowledge because it breaches thought with the violence of a symptom. In his endeavour to

¹⁰⁵ “Si Freud n'avait pas eu l'idée géniale, à la fin du XIXe siècle, de ramener les petites affaires de la famille bourgeoise occidentale à la tragédie grecque – c'est à dire à un destin inconscient –, il serait resté un psychologue de la névrose au même titre que Pierre Janet.”

formalize unconscious presentations, Freud transformed the logos of a theory of psychological causations into the pathos of Greek mythology. Moreover, by writing the subject's psychical reality through the Greek tragedies, Freud reinstated the significance of the violence of destiny which is contained in these myths: the determinism of unconscious presentations disguised in the form of destiny

Conclusion: A 'Stracheyesque Freud'

If the invention of psychoanalysis was an event for the history of literature, it is not so much because it became a new method to interpret fictional texts but, more fundamentally, because the question of writing concerns psychoanalysis from within. Psychoanalysis from its origins has defined its epistemological status through the production of written texts. In her paper about the psychoanalyst as a writer, Geraldine Pederson-Krag stressed this literary aspect of psychoanalytic epistemology: "While workers in the physical sciences use models and diagrams to make plain the entities with which they are dealing, the psychoanalyst wishing to explain what he perceives of psychoanalytic structures and relationships can depend only on words" (Pederson-Krag, 1956, p.66).

In *Character in Fiction*, a paper given in 1924 to the Cambridge Heretics Society, Virginia Woolf proposed a "scientific" reason to explain the appearance of modern fiction and that reason was Freud:

"If you read Freud you know in ten minutes some facts - or at least some possibilities - which our parents could not have guessed for themselves: to read Freud was to come to know something that even scrupulous scrutiny could not divine." (Woolf, 1991, p.504)

The new knowledge that made of Freud a catalyst of modernity in literature was of course the explicit knowledge of the unconscious. However, even more than the unconscious as a concept, I wonder if Freud's influence on literature might also have to do with the transcription of the unconscious in his practice of writing. This idea rests on the hypothesis that I have tried to explore in this chapter: the psychoanalytic mechanism

generates psychological phenomena, which in the here and now of the analytic situation replays a hallucinatory mode of thinking that was at the origin of psychological reality.

The question of the influence that Freud's metapsychology may have had on the literary writing of memory goes beyond the scope of my study. However I would like to mention the hypothesis that to set language to work in a way that can convey the subjective construction of a memory has appeared as a new challenge for both Freud and the writers of modern fiction: the challenge of a formal research that aims to transcribe internal images into a text that is not a recording of an object's external reality but a description of the transformation of an object into an internal enigmatic representation.

As an example, I find very inspiring the way Timothy Mathews in his book on Apollinaire analyses how the poet had argued for an artistic expression that would consist "in the creation of an image of perception itself, in opposition to the object in perception" (Mathews, 1987, p.29). Independently of the material reality of an image, the poet should describe the internal emergence of a subjective image. But as Mathews explains: "the distinction between perception and the object cannot be established, it is the object of a desire. In the same way, the barrier that makes the unconscious unavailable to consciousness cannot be located, even though the unconscious is banished by it, emerging as vestiges of memory and traces of the self" (*Ibid.*, pp.31-32). The "vestiges of memory" are the outcome of a perception transformed by an unconscious mode of thinking and I believe it is the image of this transformation that Freud's metapsychology attempt to formalise.

"For I am actually not at all a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, not a thinker. I am by temperament nothing but a conquistador – an adventurer, if you want it translated – with all the curiosity, daring, and tenacity characteristic of a man of this sort" (Letter to Fliess of 1st of February 1900, in Masson, 1985, p. 398). In his metapsychological conquest of unconscious territories, Freud did not use observation or experiments but a form of writing that models an irreducible otherness at the core of the subject. From this angle, psychoanalysis could be described as a literary science: a science whose knowledge is archived through a textual form.

The fact that I read Freud mainly through James Strachey's English translations of the original works in the *Standard Edition* constitutes an obvious limitation for my research. Perhaps even more than elsewhere in the thesis, it would be in this chapter on Freud's formalism that reading Strachey's translation raises issues. It is therefore at this point of my work that I wish to discuss the nature of this limitation.

In August 1920 James Strachey and his wife Alix settled in Vienna where they both undertook an analysis with Freud that would last until the winter of 1922. In his General Preface of the *Standard Edition* James Strachey remembers how after a few weeks of their analysis, Freud had "suddenly instructed" them to translate some of his works (Strachey, 1966, p.xxi). In 1924 Strachey began to publish some volumes of Freud's *Collected Papers* at the Hogarth Press directed by Leonard and Virginia Woolf. After Freud's death in 1939, Ernest Jones sent a letter to Strachey in which he invited him to translate the '*Gesammelte Schriften*'. Jones' plan was to publish the whole of Freud's psychoanalytic work in English with the financial help of American psychoanalytic associations but under an editorial committee that would remain in Britain (Steiner, 1987, p.43). The outcome of Jones' enterprise was the publication between 1953 and 1974 of the 24 volumes of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* translated under the general editorship of James Strachey.

Since the early 1960's a vast critical literature has been published around Strachey's translation (Brandt 1961, 1972; Brull 1975; Ornston 1982, 1985; Mahony 1982; Bettelheim 1983; Junker 1987; Gilman 1991). Apart from the specific errors that have been pointed out, two categories of criticisms can be distinguished.

The first kind of criticism aims to demonstrate mistakes in translation by which the meaning of some technical terms would have been distorted or at least obscured. For instance the translation of *Nachträglichkeit* as 'deferred action' has been discussed and challenged as unsatisfactory because the "essential difference between the verb *nachtragen* and 'to defer' consists in the fact that they express exactly opposite relations to time: the former is backward-looking (*nach*= 'after', so... after what?), whereas the latter is forward-looking (defer... until when?)" (Thomä & Cheshire, 1991, p.422). It has been argued that 'deferred action' fails to capture Freud's idea that in a delayed traumatic experience, it is the retrospective attempt to construct significance that activates the traumatic effects.

More than the “variable time-lapse, due to some kind of storing procedure, between stimuli and response” what is central to Freud’s notion of *Nachträglichkeit* is the “complex set of psychological operations” involved in “a work of recollection” (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973[1967], p.114).

The second kind of criticism claims that Strachey’s translation would have modified the character and ethos of Freud’s text by transforming a humanistic prose into scientific and academic language. The use of neologisms derived from ancient Greek and Latin, the shifts from subjunctive mood to indicative (Ornston, 1985, p.398), the typographical rearrangements of the texts (Frankland, 2005, p. xxv), the changes from the passive voice into the active voice (Mahony, 1997), the replacements of “affect-laden German terms by neutral English words” and the reification of a process into a structure (Brandt, 1966, p.50) are amongst the main stylistic means through which the *Standard Edition* is thought to have lost ‘Freud’s soul’ (Bettelheim, 1983).

The second criticism therefore includes the first one since it argues that Strachey’s distortions of Freud’s technical terms are not random but that they follow the distinct agenda of casting a scientific and biological light on Freud. The most famous and virulent advocate of this view was Bruno Bettelheim who in his book *Freud and Man’s Soul* described the *Standard Edition* as an inadequate translation that “makes Freud’s direct and always deeply personal appeals to our common humanity appear to readers of English as abstract, depersonalized, highly theoretical, erudite, and mechanized—in short, “scientific”—statements about the strange and very complex workings of our mind” (Bettelheim, 1983, p.5).

In this second category of criticism also falls the reproach according to which Strachey would have ignored the historical specificity of Freud’s discourse (Junker, 1987) (Gilman, 1991).

Those critical readings of James Strachey’s translation have in their turn prompted a discussion and some studies have attempted to nuance them. Mark Solms (1999) showed the continuity between the language of Freud’s earlier neuroanatomical writings and his later psychoanalytic writings. In both Freud used the same direct language. Solms explained that unlike English neuroanatomy in which most concepts are named with

neologisms derived from Greek or Latin, German anatomy “use everyday, descriptive terms” (Solms, 1999, p.32). According to Solms, Strachey’s use of neologisms borrowed from neuroanatomy would reproduce Freud’s use of neuroanatomical terms in his psychoanalytic texts: “when Strachey translated Freud’s psychological terms in the manner in which he did, he was following the conventions of English scientific writing (...) which in many ways differed from those of German science” (Ibid, p.33).

Emmet Wilson (1987) answered to the list of stylistic reproaches that Darius Ornston (1985) makes of Strachey’s translation in what I see as a convincing way. For instance he points out that in the paragraph from *The Interpretation of Dreams* quoted by Ornston to illustrate Strachey’s replacement of subjunctive mood by indicative, the subjunctive is in fact used to express conceptualization rather than the degree of truth of a statement (Wilson, 1987, p.303).¹⁰⁶ Moreover it is interesting to note that in her translation of the same passage, Joyce Crick follows Strachey in using the indicative mood (Freud, 1999[1900], p.377).

Being an analyst and a translator, Strachey may well have combined two “impossible professions”.¹⁰⁷ In their practices both the analyst and the translator face the impossibility of “a position of neutrality with respect to languages” (Craig, 2010, p.718). It would certainly be naïve to expect a neutral transcription of a work as complex as the Freudian text. Any translation of Freud is also an interpretation of Freud, and within the field of psychoanalytic studies it is possible to speak of an ‘American Freud’ (Birksted-Breen, 2010a), a ‘French Freud’ (Turkle, 1978), a ‘British Freud’ (Birksted-Breen, 2010b), and for that matter of a ‘Stracheyesque Freud’ (Solms, 1999). In fact Strachey made no mystery of his intention to interpret the language of Freud as the one “of some English man of science of wide education born in the middle of the nineteenth century” (Strachey, 1966, p.xix). In his study on the history of the *Standard Edition*, Riccardo Steiner demonstrated the role played by Ernest Jones in a translation that increased the ‘scientificity’ of Freud’s writing in order to add medical credibility to psychoanalysis. Steiner quoted Jones presenting Freud as a “Darwin of the mind, who has replaced the

¹⁰⁶ The paragraph that is discussed is: “But it seems to me unnecessary to suppose that dream-processes really maintain, up to the moment of becoming conscious, the chronological order in which I have described them: that the first thing to appear is the transferred dream-wish, that distortion by the censorship follows, then the regressive change in direction, and so on.” (Freud, 1900, p.576)

¹⁰⁷ In *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* Freud wrote of psychoanalysis as “the third of those ‘impossible’ professions”, the other two being “education and government” (Freud, 1937a, p.248).

metaphysical or poetical phrases of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson, Shaw, by a scientific and biological one” (in Steiner, 1987, p. 53). I believe it is fair to state that such an understanding of Freud as a Darwin of the psyche has guided the choices of the *Standard Edition*. To read this translation therefore signifies to read Freud coloured with a positivist light.

The controversies about Strachey’s translation cover the dispute between a humanistic, hermeneutic and a scientific reading of Freud. In this dissertation I try to show that a concept of memory put forward by Freud in his metapsychology resists both those readings. The difficulty is that in my attempt to show that Freud’s metapsychology could not be entirely reduced to a scientific psychology, nor to a theory of interpretations, I have been using a translation that favours a scientific interpretation of Freud’s text.

In order to understand the influence that Strachey’s translation has on my commentary, it should be noticed that a kind of scientific prose and a mechanistic language are consistently to be found in the original German version of Freud’s metapsychological texts (Hoffer, 1989, p.208). It is also in Freud’s German metapsychology that the reader encounters many terms inspired by a Greek or a Latin terminology. In a non-exhaustive list that comes from the one established by Emmet Wilson (1987, p.304), one would read in Freud’s metapsychology such non-Germanic words as:

Metapsychologie, Objekt, Objektlibido, Libido, Erogenität, erogene Zone, Libidobesetzung, Psychogenese, Introversion, Mechanismus, Apparat, Quantität, Qualität, psychische, Konversion, Reaktionsbildung, Affektstörung, Restitutionsversuch, Niveau, Differenz, Differenzierung, Libidotheorie, Funktion, Sexualobjekt, fundamentale, charakteristisch, Tendenz, primäre, sekundär, Ideal, Genese, Faktor, Basis, Impulse.

Therefore the metapsychological texts seem more in accordance with the premises that guided the elaboration of the *Standard Edition* than other parts of Freud’s work. It is probably for that very reason that the adversaries of the *Standard Edition* are often also the ones who would like to rid psychoanalysis of Freud’s metapsychology (Wilson 1987, p.313).

However in my reading of the metapsychological texts, I have attempted to show that Freud used the language of natural science as one means amongst others in order to describe a memory that does not operate like an archive. It is I believe at this very point that the tension between my argument and Strachey's translation lies. I do not read Freud's metapsychology as a scientific psychology but as a disguised portrayal of a hallucinatory memory.

To explain the precaution I take in reading the *Standard Edition*, I would like to come back to Freud's 1915 definition of metapsychology:

I propose that when we have succeeded in describing a psychical process in its dynamic, topographical and economic aspects, we should speak of it as a *metapsychological* presentation. (Freud, 1915c, p.181)

At the beginning of this chapter I proposed that this definition describes not only a conceptual tool but also a system of notation. I would like here to use the German text in order to stress the notion of *Darstellung*. In the *Gesammelte Werke*, Freud writes:

Ich schlage vor, daß es eine metapsychologische Darstellung genannt werden soll, wenn es uns gelingt, einen psychischen Vorgang nach seinen dynamischen, topischen und ökonomischen Beziehungen zu beschreiben. (Freud, 1991[1915], p.281)

Strachey translated *eine metapsychologische Darstellung* into 'a metapsychological presentation'. Usually Strachey uses the word 'presentation' to translate *Vorstellung* and he translates *Darstellung* into 'account' or 'representation'. Now as Joyce Crick explains in the introduction of her new translation of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung* mean representation in a quite different sense: *Vorstellung* indicates the image or the idea of an act of thought, whereas *Darstellung* "consists of disguises, substitutions, and stand-ins" for the thought (Crick, 1999, p. xlv).

In his translation of *The Unconscious* for *The New Penguin Freud*, Graham Frankland translated *eine metapsychologische Darstellung* into 'a metapsychological account'. My hypothesis is that in this above definition of metapsychology Strachey chose to translate

Darstellung into ‘presentation’ rather than ‘representation’ or ‘account’ in order to reinforce the sensation that the mechanistic language used by Freud was not metaphorical. ‘A metapsychological presentation’ would not lead to a metaphorical reading but rather to an understanding of metapsychology as a thermodynamic of the psyche. I read the term *Darstellung* as an indication that metapsychology is a more deviant form of representation: a mode of representation that – as I have tried to show in this chapter – points towards the limits of a verbal description of the psyche.

Apart from the more usual ‘representation’ and ‘account’, *Darstellung* is a word for which many translations have been proposed. I have already mentioned in Chapter 5 ‘presentification’ that was coined by Monique David-Ménard (1989[1983]) to describe how an unconscious idea is performed through a hysterical symptom. Riccardo Steiner mentioned that Ernest Jones had proposed to translate *Darstellung* with ‘dramatisation’ (Steiner, 1987, p.79). Botella and Botella chose to use ‘figurability’ as a translation of *Darstellbarkeit* in order to emphasize that the psychic work of representability is similar to a process of translation: a process “of ‘clarifying’, and of sending out on reconnaissance to explore an unknown terrain” (Botella and Botella, 2005[2001], p.2).

It seems to me that all those translations give an idea of *Darstellung* as a theatrical representation of thought. It is actually also worth noticing that *Darsteller* means ‘actor’. When in a hysterical symptom or in a dream, an unconscious thought is represented – or one could say ‘performed’ – I believe that Freud used the term *Darstellung* to stress the ‘theatricality’ of this representation.

In Chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud takes over Fechner’s hypothesis that “*the scene of action of dreams is different from that of waking ideational life*” (Freud, 1900, p.536) and he explains that it is such a scene of the dream that reveals the hallucinatory mode of functioning of unconscious processes. When Freud describes how an unconscious memory attracts thoughts on this hallucinatory stage, it is the term *Darstellung* that he uses:

Diese Erinnerung zieht gleichsam den mit ihr in Verbindung stehenden, an seinem Ausdruck durch die Zensur verhinderten Gedanken in die

Regression als in jene Form der Darstellung, in der sie selbst psychisch vorhanden ist. (Freud, 1968[1900], p.281)

Strachey's translation:

The thoughts which are connected with a memory of this kind and which are forbidden expression by the censorship are, as it were, attracted by the memory into regression as being the form of representation in which the memory itself is couched. (Freud, 1900, p.545-546)

Thoughts connected with an unconscious memory are attracted under a mode of dramatisation characteristic of the unconscious; similarly, in order to theorise the unconscious, Freud's metapsychology 'dramatizes' the language of science. I think that to read the metapsychology in the *Standard Edition* one should resist a too literal reception of the text and keep in mind that metapsychology is a *Darstellung*: a scene on which scientific language is like a scenography to give an account of unconscious processes.

To conclude my comments on Strachey's translation, I would like to point out that by establishing a text the *Standard Edition* has made close textual readings of Freud possible. What John Forrester writes at the beginning of his book *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis* testifies, I believe, to this invaluable merit of the *Standard Edition*: "My debt to the erudition, exactitude and uniform care displayed on every page of its twenty four volumes is as incalculable as every other reader of Freud's now is, whether he is read in English, French or German ... Where I have modified the translation, I do not necessarily believe that my modified text is a more accurate or better translation than that to be found in the *Standard Edition* (...). In many passages my modifications are alternative translations, which are hoped to give at least as faithful or as treacherous a reading as in the *Standard Edition*?" (Forrester, 1980, p. xiv). It seems to me that the alternative translations of technical terms as well as the main criticisms addressed at Strachey's translation are now part of the *Standard Edition*: they operate like a palimpsest, a sort endless 25th volume.

Chapter 7

From the *Proton Pseudos* to the *Proton Algos*

This last chapter should be read as an epilogue to what has come before, and will refer to *A Child is Being Beaten*. Until now, I have dealt with Freud's metapsychological texts written prior to his 1915 attempt to write a comprehensive account of metapsychology, but I would now like to examine what his metapsychology then made possible in his clinic: that *to understand* in the context of psychoanalysis, is a verbal act of creation.

Unconscious ideas appear in the clinic through such an act of creation, in the form of a construction. I will argue that the appearance of this construction in the clinic led to Freud's discovery of the primacy of self-aggression over heteroaggression, revealing the masochistic nature of primary unconscious ideas, and therefore the presence of the death drive lurking behind them.

I shall now examine the link between the notion of memory that Freud elaborated in the metapsychological texts that I have so far discussed and his clinical discovery of primary pains.

Father and Daughter

From his first hysterical patients to the cases described in *A Child is Being Beaten* (1919), the figure of an aggressive father and that of a passive child seem a recurrent dyad. However, between *the systematic search* for a scene of passive seduction and, twenty-five years later, *the construction* of unconscious masochistic beating phantasies, Freud's understanding of this theme changed drastically. The seducing father and the passive daughter ceased to be understood as historical truths unearthed in the analytic investigation. Rather, they came to be understood as creations of the analytic encounter: masks through which sexual destiny is replayed in an individual history.

This change corresponds to Freud's gradual evolution from a view in which the psychological cause of a neurotic symptom is an unchanging idea, towards a view in which a symptom rests on a system of presentations [*Vorstellung*] irreducible to

consciousness. In the former position, the cure attempts to make the causes of the symptom become conscious. In the latter position, the aim is not so much to find causes, but rather, to create a verbal language for them: to construct them in the analytical situation. The analytical framework is not so much a device of inquiry as a device of creation.

Reading Freud's clinical cases, one intuitively feels this shift: it is apparent in the difference between the thriller-like atmosphere in the cases from *Studies on Hysteria* and that of Dora (1905[1901]), and the atmosphere of modernism found in the Wolf Man, in which the "scenes from infancy are not reproduced during the treatment as recollections, they are the product of construction" (Freud, 1918[1914], pp.50-51). The story of Dora is interrupted only by her escape from the treatment. In the Wolf Man, on the other hand, it seems as if the threat is internal to the text: Freud's writing proceeds more slowly, embracing the path of the patient's associations (Perelberg, 2005, p.209) and it is the reader who, faced with Freud's attempt to write the construction of a memory in an analytic encounter, is at risk of abandoning the story: "I have now reached the point at which I must abandon the support I have hitherto had from the course of the analysis. I am afraid it will also be the point at which the reader's belief will abandon me" (Freud, 1918[1914], p.36).

From Dora to the Wolf Man, it is not the psychoanalytic framework that has changed but the understanding of what is at play within this framework. To contain his clinical discoveries Freud invented a metapsychological form of writing but in return Freud's metapsychology also made the clinic intelligible.¹⁰⁸ The succession of analytic sessions reproduces something that exists in the functioning of the unconscious, hence a better understanding of the unconscious casts a sharper light on the events of the clinic. As Freud's model of the psychical apparatus became more refined, his understanding of clinical facts and his therapeutic ambition evolved.

¹⁰⁸ Jean-Claude Rolland described this two-fold function of Freud's metapsychology in terms of a *metapsychology of beforeness* that "anticipates and authorizes the rigorous observation of clinical facts" and a *metapsychology of afterwardsness*, which re-inscribes "the pathological accident in the logical continuity of human psychical functioning" and thus "guarantees the universality of the phenomena presented providing a coherent ontological basis for them" (Rolland, 2005, p.93).

The aim of the psychoanalytic cure became more than just the disappearance of neurotic symptoms through the discovery of their causes, it was an attempt to create an image of infantile experiences – in both their real and phantasy aspects – that had sculpted the patient’s character. In *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud was describing the analyst as someone who, faced with the patient’s associations, tries to solve a Chinese puzzle:

The whole spatially-extended mass of psychogenic material is in this way drawn through a narrow cleft and thus arrives in consciousness cut up, as it were, into pieces or strips. It is the psychotherapist's business to put these together once more into the organization which he presumes to have existed. Anyone who has a craving for further similes may think at this point of a Chinese puzzle (Freud, 1893-1895, p.291).

In *A Child is Being Beaten*, Freud would stress how it is the attempt to understand the very beginnings of psychic life that distinguishes psychoanalysis from other type of cures:

analytic work deserves to be recognized as genuine psycho-analysis only when it has succeeded in removing the amnesia which conceals from the adult his knowledge of his childhood from its beginning (Freud, 1919a, p.183).

At first glance, a great continuity and coherence exists between these two quotes, although separated by a twenty-four year period: in both cases the psychoanalytic technique aims to recover the idiosyncratic history of the patient. However, Freud’s metapsychological research has changed the meaning attributed to this work of recovery. The removal of childhood amnesia no longer involves the discovery of primal experiences but rather the construction of primal modes of thinking in the present of the analytic situation. In other words, if in *Studies on Hysteria* the role of the analyst was to solve the enigma of the patient’s associations, at the time of *A Child is Being Beaten*, it is to construct an enigma from the patient’s associations. What makes this shift possible are the 1915 papers on metapsychology. In these, Freud put forward a concept of memory in which amnesia is not a weakness of memory’s functioning but constitutes its condition of existence. Freud imagines that memory depends on the void created by primal repression [*Urverdrängung*], the process through which the drives generate ideas

inaccessible to consciousness: it “consists in the psychical (ideational) representative” of the drive “being denied entrance into the conscious” (Freud, 1915b, p. 148).

The prefix *Ur*, also present in primal phantasy [*Urbphantasie*] and primal scene [*Urszene*] points towards the link between primal repression and man’s archaic heritage. The first phase of repression that constitutes the unconscious nucleus is not the repelling of ideas that have been present to consciousness but the production of forms that belong to the heritage of the species and that are incompatible with consciousness:

The theory of psycho-analysis (...) holds firmly to the view that the motive forces of repression must not be sexualized. Man’s archaic heritage forms the nucleus of the unconscious mind; and whatever part of that heritage has to be left behind in the advance of later phase of development, because it is unserviceable or incompatible with what is new and harmful to it, falls a victim to the process of repression (Freud, 1919a, pp.203-204).

Primal repression is not the disappearance of a piece of memory but the creation of an absence within the self that undermines every conscious presentation. “One of the essential characteristics of the primal” wrote Le Guen “may well reside in the fact that it is based on absence” (Le Guen, 1982, p.531). Childhood amnesia is the scene of this absence. Amnesia is not understood as a void but as *a solid absence* made of archaic presentations which organise the contingent events of the subject’s life into a predetermined pattern. In this tragic vision, the subject is a character who, in its idiosyncratic life, embodies the trans-individual history of its drives. Primary repression generates an absence that reorganises the contingency of life around a destiny of the drives. In Freud’s metapsychology, memory is not a tool to access a primal or modified form of presence, but the abyss within which the subject is forced to encounter an irreducible otherness. The act of remembering therefore consists not of a rediscovery, but of an ongoing act of elaboration around this otherness.

Derrida has insisted on this aspect of Freud’s metapsychology: “There is then no unconscious truth to be rediscovered by virtue of having been written elsewhere. There is no text written and present elsewhere which would then be subjected, without being changed in the process, to an operation and a temporalization (the latter belonging to

consciousness if we follow Freud literally) which would be external to it, floating on its surface” (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.265). The unconscious text cannot be discovered but it will nevertheless be embodied in the analytic encounter. From this angle, the psychoanalytic session is considered to be a scene on which the tragic figures of this text will be constructed.

By establishing the status of memory as a tragic subjective instrument in the 1915 metapsychological papers, Freud came to understand that the analytical cure does not re-construct but constructs unconscious presentations. In a more fundamental way, it is Freud’s metapsychological approach that both initiates and reproduces this constructive aspect of his clinic. Serge Viderman has clearly articulated this point: “because of the multiplicity and the ambiguity of the parameters at stake in the analytic cure, any deep interpretation does not *re-construct* the history of the subject but rather *constructs* a history. This history is based on a type of data that does not lead to certainties. Hence analytic constructions necessarily remain of the uncertain nature of a bet, in the same way that the metapsychology of the psychical apparatus is not a *discovery* but a *conjecture*” (Viderman, 1970, p.26, my translation).¹⁰⁹

Freud’s metapsychological scaffolding is not a demonstrative research into the mind but an uneasy speculation – a “phantasy” as Freud would write at the end of his life – which never ceases to question its capacity to formalize the unconscious. There is an internal necessity to this speculation, which emphasises certain aspects of the clinic and seems to ignore others. My point is that Freud’s metapsychology generates the creative aspect of the clinic and in return is influenced by it. This intricacy is not as direct as it would be in a – perhaps naïve – model of empirical science. Thus, I would argue that to read Freud’s metapsychology as a manual of the unconscious would be completely irrelevant and would lead to a form of dogmatic teaching, rightly denounced by Joseph Sandler when he complained about:

¹⁰⁹ “Car il semble bien que la multiplicité et l’ambiguïté des paramètres mis en jeu dans la cure analytique font que toute interprétation profonde ne *re-construct* pas l’histoire du sujet, mais bien plutôt *construit* une histoire, inférée à partir de données qui ne permettent pas de conclure avec certitude et dont les constructions gardent toujours et nécessairement le caractère aléatoire d’un *pari*, tout de même que la métapsychologie de l’agencement de l’appareil mental n’est pas davantage une *découverte*, mais bien une *conjecture*.”

psychoanalytic training institutes where substantial quantities of metapsychology (...) are taught to beginning students, as an end in itself rather than as one aspect of the history of ideas in psychoanalysis. For how long will we need to expound the vicissitudes of cathexes and the acrobatics of energy transformation to our clinical students, as if these matters had direct relevance to their clinical work? (Sandler, 1983, p.37).

However, I think that there is a fundamental link between the experience of reading Freud's metapsychology and clinical work, which makes their reading crucial for any psychoanalytic training. This link appears if one approaches these texts, not as an axiomatic system, but through an experience of reading, which tends to reproduce the situation of listening in a psychoanalytic way. In fact, many psychoanalysts have described how writing about the unconscious, or even reading metapsychological texts, forces the mind to work in a way which has many similarities with the type of thinking involved in the attempt to listen an analysand's unconscious. For instance, as François Gantheret has explained: "I am not listening with metapsychology in mind and yet I would not know how to listen without it. It seems to me that I engage in the same psychical work when I try to think about metapsychology and when I try to think about what is said between the patient and myself; even though these two experiences do not combine" (Gantheret, 1986, p.99, my translation).¹¹⁰

My question here is not to establish what came first between Freud's clinical experience and his metapsychology but to identify the latter as a form of knowledge, which supports the creative dimension of the psychoanalytic cure. Freud's metapsychology strengthens the perception that what is at stake in the clinic is also an act of creation: the creation that constructs verbal signs from unconscious traces. In chapters three, four and five of my thesis, I have explored the hypothesis that Freud's metapsychological texts from 1895 to 1915 were, "those elements of psychoanalysis which can only uneasily be contained within logocentric closure" (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.249). In chapter six, I have tried to indicate how Freud's metapsychological writing was the invention of a formalism that constantly challenges its verbal expression. In this epilogue, I will attempt to describe

¹¹⁰ "Je n'écoute pas avec la métapsychologie en tête et pourtant je ne saurais écouter sans elle. Il me semble que je me livre au même travail psychique en essayant de penser la métapsychologie, et en tentant de penser ce qui se dit, chez le patient comme en moi-même, et pourtant ces deux temps ne se confondent pas."

how Freud's metapsychology facilitated the possibility of a psychoanalytic clinic that operates beyond the logos: a clinic that creates beyond normative categories and beyond certainties.

In order to do so, I will focus on *A Child is Being Beaten*, which I propose to read as an account of the way that the psychoanalytic session came to be perceived as the construction of a space through which tragic unconscious figures could be created. At the centre of this clinical paper, the recurring couple formed of a father and a daughter appears. The pair father-daughter is not only a creation of the transference, because present amongst the six cases used by Freud to write his article was his own daughter Anna. Anna Freud's most recent biographer, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl has noticed that the "fifth patient sounds very much like Anna Freud" but "the sixth patient is not directly described at all, and this may signal that Freud protected his daughter's privacy with silence" (Young-Bruehl, 1988, p. 104). Freud finished writing this paper in March 1919 when Anna had been in analysis with him for a year. According to Young-Bruehl: "Anna Freud started her analysis in the fall of 1918" when Freud "had a regular hour for his daughter six days a week - while, later, he saw her after his full schedule, at ten o'clock in the evening" (*Ibid.*, 1988, p. 115). This first phase ended around the spring of 1922 and was followed by a second one from 1924 to 1925.

That Freud was able to start an analytical process with his daughter, I believe, was partly due to the subtle and gradual evolution that led him to perceive the psychoanalytic space as a less inquisitive one. In *A Child Is Being Beaten*, transference and resistance remain the effective means of the cure. However, they are not used as tools to discover a factual past but rather as spaces of encounter between an infantile mode of thinking and the verbal signs of the talking cure. The analytical framework is not a stage on which the primal scene is replayed but a space through which an infantile mode of thinking can be constructed. In fact, as it has been stressed by Rivka Eifermann, the "absence in Freud's paper of any reference to the possible effects on the child of exposure to the primal scene is remarkable" (Eifermann, 1997, p.166).

Many later analysts have pointed out the absence of reference to primal scene exposure as a flaw in Freud's description of a beating phantasy. Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel has, for instance, commented: "I think it is necessary to introduce the fantasy of a

sadomasochistic primal scene into Freud's development of the subject in *A Child is Being Beaten*" (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1991, p.412). That Freud did not raise the hypothesis of a primal scene in the beating phantasy is at first rather intriguing. Indeed, already in his paper *On the Sexual Theories of Children* (1908d) Freud had put forward the idea that when children "become witnesses of sexual intercourse between their parents" they "adopt what may be called a *sadistic view of coition*. They see it as something that the stronger participant is forcibly inflicting on the weaker" and interpret "the act of love as an act of violence" (Freud, 1908d, pp.220-221).

Freud had also suggested that premature sadistic impulses attached to the problem of where babies came from might have "emerged under the influence of extremely obscure memories of parental intercourse, for which the child had obtained the material – though at the time he made no use of it – while he was still in his first years and was sharing his parents' bedroom" (*Ibid*, p.221). Moreover, it seems that one of the six cases dealt with in *A Child is Being Beaten* – the one that Freud described as suffering from "extremely severe and incapacitating" obsessional neurosis – was the Wolf Man (Mahony, 1997, p.50) and the question of the primal scene is central to this case.

So why has this question disappeared from *A Child Is Being Beaten*? It would be tempting to interpret the absence of any hypothesis regarding primal scene exposure as Freud's resistance to touch on this question in the analysis of his daughter.¹¹¹ However, my intuition is that it works the other way around: it is because Freud's clinical practice became less centred on the discovery of a secret and evolved towards the question of the construction of a secret that he could undertake analytical work with Anna. The issue of Freud's clinic, as it is described in *A Child is Being Beaten*, is in fact quite new: Freud aims to construct the path by which a set of presentations "finds its way into the permanent possession" of the subject's "libidinal trends" (Freud, 1919, p.186). In other words, to describe the means by which an unconscious mode of thinking – that I understand as a hallucinatory mode of thinking – generates a masturbatory scenario.

¹¹¹ Arnold Modell has argued that "even though his daughter was only one among six patients, it is Freud's experience of his daughter's analysis that permeates" *A Child is Being Beaten*. Thus, Modell raises the question of the resistances encountered by Freud in publishing "his daughter's masturbation fantasies" and Modell wonders if Freud's assertion "that the second phase of the fantasy was never conscious and hence had little to do with actual experience represent a wish to distance himself from recognizing any seductive involvement with his daughter"(Modell, 1997, p.74).

This gives rise to a new tone in Freud's description of his clinical work in which what seems crucial is not the memory or the idea of a memory but the process that led to this idea. The third part of the text which summarizes the three phases of the beating phantasy, is full of expressions such as: "process of development"; "end-product"; "initial manifestation"; "historical development (...) in the course of which they are changed in more respects more than once"; "to follow these transformations"; "Profound transformations have taken place between this first phase and the next"; "By what path has the phantasy (...) found its way" (*Ibid*, pp.183-186). The use of these types of expressions gives the impression that Freud approaches the unconscious not only as a scene in which thing-presentations interact but also as a sort of factory. Similarly, the analytic encounter is not the scene on which a secret will be unveiled but a process that constructs a secret. To use an archaeological metaphor, in *A Child Is Being Beaten*, Freud's focus is not so much an artefact but a process of excavation. Transference is not the last word of the analytical encounter but a work in progress towards presentations that are both intentional and irreducible to consciousness.

This movement of construction that appears in Freud's clinic continues beyond the framework of the analytic session. In the case of Anna Freud, it will give birth to a set of papers through which she will herself become an analyst. As she was finishing the first phase of her analysis, Anna took up the transference's work in progress and wrote *The Relation of Beating-Phantasies to a Day-Dream* (1923), an "Oedipally engendered paper" that "served also as her 'write' of passage – it was a membership paper delivered to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, which was presided over by none other than her own father and analyst" (Mahony, 1997, p.49). Anna Freud claimed that the clinical material for her paper came from her first patient, but Young-Bruehl has shown that it "was actually written some six months before Anna Freud saw her first patient" and that the rapidity with which she wrote it "makes it almost certain that the patient whose case is discussed was herself – the one patient she knew intimately" (Young-Bruehl, 1988, pp.103-104).

Thus, Anna Freud's account of the phantasy post-history is more than an appendix to her father's paper. What is at stake is, in fact, the development of the transference. Through the attempts – that fail and that are nevertheless systematically renewed – to keep apart the masochist beating phantasy from the "nice stories", one feels the

inexpressibility of the incestuous transference relationship.¹¹² Juliet Mitchell has proposed a very enlightening reading of this compulsion for story-telling in the secret of her own imagination, this ‘bovarisme’ of Anna Freud. Mitchell understands the superstructure of Anna’s day-dream not as a sublimation but as “a defence against something else illicit breaking into consciousness” and she proposes to think of this psychic structure as “the hysterical potential” (Mitchell, 2003, p.86).¹¹³ Both “Anna O and Anna Freud could not stop their story-telling”, which becomes “a verbal equivalent of a bodily conversion symptom”: “the beating fantasies are completely repressed and become unconscious, while at the same time the illicit desires which underlie them are not so much *sublimated into art* as *converted* into ‘nice stories’, fantasies which apparently, but only apparently contain care and affection” (*Ibid.*, pp.86-87). Mitchell also points out how by turning “the day-dreams of her illness into the written stories of her cure, as did Anna O” for Anna, the road to sublimation is open: “arriving will entail mourning the loss of the unique self” (*Ibid.*, p.87).

Despite presenting her paper as a prolongation of *A Child is Being Beaten*, Rachel Blass’ careful reading has pointed out how Anna Freud’s ideas “both reflect and conceal an important dialogue between daughter and father, for the most part an unconscious one. The dialogue is complex, involving the source of her ideas and her creativity, as well as the source of her analysis” (Blass, 1993, p.69). An important difference between Anna’s paper and her father’s is that she attributed the guilt, which is so crucial in the construction of the beating phantasy, mainly to the autoerotic gratification and not so much to the actual content of the phantasy. Thus, the content of the conscious phantasy becomes more and more elaborate as a substitute to masturbatory pleasure:

In the attempt to enjoy the legitimate pleasure as long as possible, and put off its tabooed climax indefinitely, she added on description a wealth of details indifferent in themselves. She constructed whole institutions, schools and reformatories in which the scenes of beating were imagined to take

¹¹² In his short book on masochism, Paul-Laurent Assoun raised the hypothesis that with her article, Anna Freud discovered a structural masochistic motive for feminine writing: the feminine signature of any fictional work would be the phantasy of a beaten child (Assoun, 2007, p.40).

¹¹³ Juliet Mitchell mentions amongst the “famous exponents of this widespread hysterical tendency to elaborate this sort of day-dreaming”: “Mme Bovary (and hence probably Flaubert: ‘Emma Bovary, c’est moi’), the Brontë children, Anna O, Anna Freud, Klein’s Erna” (Mitchell, 2003, p.96).

place, and established definite rules which determined the construction of the various scenes (Freud, 1923, p.91).

It is rather striking that the construction of “institutions, schools and reformatories” bear such a charge of erotic pleasure in Anna’s phantasy, when one considers that she would devote an important part of her life to the creation of clinics and centres to treat children. Moreover, as Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg has noticed, the whole content of the conscious phantasy tends toward an *institutionalization* of the masochistic pleasure:

Institution building, social life *tout court* stand not simply for the postponement of pleasure, but function as the mechanism by which to *increase* pleasurable tension: the little girl’s fantasy functions as a substitute for pleasure to the degree, precisely, that it is an instantiation, indeed *institutionalization* of that same pleasure (Stewart-Steinberg, 2011, p.65).

This father-daughter dialogue centred around a masochistic phantasy found another repercussion in an article that Freud wrote in the summer of 1925, *Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes*, as Anna was finishing her second phase of analysis with him. Here, Freud comes back to the excavation of the beating phantasy in girls. Implacable analyst of his daughter’s illusions, Freud re-connects the monotonous formulation of Anna’s nice stories to the monotony of the masturbatory act, and the presentation hallucinated behind the anonymous hero of those stories becomes “nothing more nor less than the clitoris itself” (Freud, 1925, p.254). Significantly enough, it was Anna who read this paper on her father’s behalf at the Hamburg International Psycho-Analytical Congress.

Lou Andreas-Salomé has certainly played a crucial role in this dialogue, having helped Anna to extract original theoretical insights from her analysis. At the beginning of her paper, Anna Freud indicates that it was written on the basis of discussions she had with Andreas-Salomé and, two years after their first encounter, Anna wrote to her: “Before you were here, it was still very difficult for me to talk to others about theory – I learned it first with you”.¹¹⁴ In fact, it has even been proposed that Andreas-Salomé had been Anna’s real analyst. However, whenever this rumour reached Anna Freud, she would

¹¹⁴ Letter from Anna Freud to Lou Andreas-Salomé, January 13, 1924 (in Young-Bruehl, 1988, p.110)

always insist that she had been analysed by her father and would claim, “that the idea persisted because people were scandalized by the thought that her father had filled that role”(Young-Bruehl, 1988, p.112).

Rather than softening the scandal of this analysis, I would like to stress that it took place within the frame of a construction of a masochistic phantasy, which was extended in a theoretical dialogue through which Anna Freud became a psychoanalyst. Could it be that this act of construction in the cure is in itself a scandal? This question forms the main hypothesis of this chapter: that the construction of a masochistic phantasy is paradigmatic of a type of clinical act specific to psychoanalysis that remains scandalous because it resists both the meaning of interpretation and what is observable in the phenomenon. Instead, it creates a verbal expression to describe what “has never had a real existence” and is nevertheless “a necessity” of the psychoanalytic account of a phantasy. (Freud, 1919, p.185)

In the first part of this chapter, I will describe how this work of construction was made possible by Freud’s metapsychology. Freud’s clinical work, as it appears in this paper, could not have been conceived without his metapsychological work of 1915: the latter is the correlate of the former. As Jean Laplanche has explained in great detail at the end of his paper ‘Aggressiveness And Sadomasochism’ (in Laplanche 1976[1970]), there is a parallel to be drawn between the genesis of a sadomasochistic phantasy that Freud constructs in the analytical encounter, and the vicissitudes of the drive as theorized in the 1915 metapsychology. My point here will be to argue that this parallel is not only a clinical confirmation of Freud’s metapsychology but more fundamentally that it shows a unity between metapsychological speculation and the clinical act of construction. In Freud’s metapsychology and in some aspects of his clinic the origin of subjectivity is not meaning but the creation of forms. Both Freud’s metapsychology and the sadomasochistic phantasy constructed in the clinic are a *mise en scène* of this absence of meaning, and I would underline Daniel Lagache’s (1960) idea that the real scandal of psychoanalysis is not sexuality or even infantile sexuality but phantasy, as a means to stress the radicalism of intentional contents that escape their meaning.

The second part of this chapter will be an attempt to read the act of the construction of a phantasy in *A Child Is Being Beaten* as a way to decipher infantile forms beyond meaning.

The originality of *A Child Is Being Beaten* is to construct the archaeology of the father-daughter couple as it appears in the transference: to construct the prehistory of these ideas. I would like to understand how in the construction of a sadomasochist phantasy, the father and the daughter are transcribed into universal images that structure the vicissitude of the drive; how their presentations become the mainsprings around which the subject is turned into an object.

Proton Algos

The division among Freud's commentators regarding the importance of *A Child Is Being Beaten* within Freud's work is rather striking: while some consider it a trivial and confused paper, others view it as an essential and paradigmatic Freudian text.

Many Freudian scholars have neglected or dismissed *A Child Is Being Beaten*. Ernest Jones appears to have understood Freud's paper as a pause in the middle of a burst of theoretical creativity: "In 1919, at a time when he was more engrossed with theory, Freud turned aside to publish a purely clinical study that reminds one of his earlier days" (Jones, 1955, p.308). In fact, one often encounters a similar view: that *A Child Is Being Beaten* is a clinical shrub in the shadow of the imposing theoretical tree, which is *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In Peter Gay's exhaustive biography of Freud (1988), the paper is not even mentioned. George Makari describes it as a "less than revolutionary paper" (Makari, 2008, p.315) and Rivka Eifermann muses over her "uncomfortable feeling that the paper is not easy to follow" and feels that it "could do with considerable editing: it is hardly a Goethe Prize piece" (Eifermann, 1997, p.166).

On the other hand, many writers have stressed the paradigmatic value that Freud gave to the construction of the masochistic phantasy in *A Child Is Being Beaten*. Freud himself described it in a letter to Ferenczi as "a 26-page-strong paper on the genesis of masochism".¹¹⁵ In his 1957 seminar, Jacques Lacan's commentary on Freud's paper presented it as "a study that should be famous" (Lacan, 1994[1957], p.114) because its reading is "crucial" to an understanding of how the genesis of a sadomasochistic perversion does not escape the Oedipal dialectic. In Freud's text, Jean Laplanche saw an

¹¹⁵ Letter from Freud to Ferenczi of March 17th 1919 (in Falzeder and Brabant, 1996).

illustration of the idea that a phantasy “is intimately related, in its origin, to the emergence of the masochistic sexual drive” (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.97).

In her introduction to a collection of papers devoted to *A Child Is Being Beaten*, Ethel Spector Person stressed the anthropological dimension of the masochistic phantasy: “masochistic fantasies alone (as opposed to masochistic perversions) are not necessarily the result of contingent events in one’s childhood but may be embedded in the human condition” (Spector Person, 1997, p.x). Similarly, in his commentary of Freud’s text, Paul-Laurent Assoun explained: “if the masochistic phantasy is paradigmatic, it is because it reveals that masochism is at the heart of the fantasy in itself” (Assoun, 2007, p.32).¹¹⁶

Roger Dorey noticed that for a long time psychoanalysts have used Freud’s decomposition of the beating phantasy in its three successive phases as a model: “day dream, infantile memory forgotten then remembered and reconstruction of the unconscious intermediary phantasy, is indeed a privileged representation of the analytic work” (Dorey, 1986, p.118). In her work on siblings, Juliet Mitchell used Freud’s analysis of the beating phantasy to elaborate “a psychoanalytic paradigm that takes account of sisters and brothers and lateral relationships in general” (Mitchell, 2003, p.85).

My reading of Freud’s essay will follow this second group of commentators: Freud deciphered in the combination of suffering and pleasure – that enigmatic fusion between a demand for love and an expression of hatred – a paradigm of the phantasy’s functioning. Interestingly enough, a textual study of *A Child Is Being Beaten* shows that the form of writing in which Freud made this discovery is itself paradigmatic of a certain approach through which Freud formulated his ideas. Thus, Marcelo Viñar explains:

We have also learned, not without difficulty, to see Freud’s concepts in the context of their gradual development over time: rather than coming into being by an instantaneous act of parthenogenesis, they evolved by a slow step-by-step and sometimes contradictory process in which Freud combined in his unique way his capacity for coherent systematization with the

¹¹⁶ “Si le fantasme masochiste est paradigmatique, c’est qu’il révèle le *fond masochiste du fantasme* en tant que tel.”

nomadism of an indefatigable explorer of the mind. To me, *A Child is Being Beaten* is a paradigm of a synthesis of wandering and coherence (Viñar, 1997, p.180).

It is partly because Freud's essay is so illustrative of the way he formulates his thoughts that Darius Ornston (1982) could use it to explore the influence of Strachey's translation of Freud's theory.¹¹⁷ The way Freud developed his ideas in this essay evokes "those fruitful moments in the work of analysis when in attempting to say one thing, the patient or the analyst in fact says or finds something else" (Viñar, 1997, p.180). Unlike the transparent exposition of a ready-made thought, Freud's written style transcribes the movement of his research. Patrick Mahony pointed out how in *A Child Is Being Beaten*, this expository manner of Freud's generates and facilitates "the associative and critical processes, his own in the act of writing and ours in the act of reading him" (Mahony, 1997, p.58).

It has been suggested that this essay is so representative of Freud's associative formulation because it starts with Freud "reporting his patients' fantasies in their own words" (Ornston, 1982, p.410). I think that, more accurately, what is at stake is the double operation by which the phantasy representation [*Phantastische Vorstellung*] is transposed by the patient in his associations and then by Freud in his essay. The peculiarity of Freud's associative formulation comes from this double work of transcription that leads to visual images being transformed into a written text. As pointed out by Laplanche, this "transcription into the language of words has the merit of bringing to light the grammar of the fantasy itself" (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p. 98).

I think that the great formal discovery of Freud's essay is precisely that the present continuous and the passive voice constitute the verbal mode used for the expression of a phantasy. Thus, the title of the essay is not a clinical label or a nosological entity but the passive formula used by the patient to describe their phantasy. The repetitive formula "a child is being beaten" condenses a sort of perpetual present: the negation of a past and a future and the anonymity of the passive voice. This combination of present continuous and passive voice makes its mark at the beginning of Freud's paper. The first sentence:

¹¹⁷ *A Child Is Being Beaten* was the first of Freud's works that James Strachey translated. He undertook the translation in 1920 when both he and his wife Alix had been in analysis with Freud for a few months. In 1955 he modified his original translation.

“It is surprising how often...” stands for the present continuous and Patrick Mahony indicates that in “the first two paragraphs of Freud’s essay (...) there are three clauses in which the passive voice was changed by Strachey into the active voice, thus erasing the introductory effect of passivity, in which the passive phantasy “a child is being beaten” is enveloped” (Mahony, 1997, p.59). Hence, in Freud’s paper, both the turning round of the drive upon the subject and the use of the present continuous passive formulation by which this movement of turning round is transcribed in verbal language, are paradigmatic of the process of fantasmaticization.

Thomas Kuhn redefined the notion of paradigm as: “scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners”(Kuhn, 1962, p.x).¹¹⁸ Kuhn believed that each scientific theory contains paradigms that impose the legitimate questions to be asked and the framework in which these questions could be answered. Using Kuhn’s definition, André Green (1979) has proposed that the dream is a paradigm for Freud’s conception of the mind. The discovery that every dream corresponds to a hallucinatory wish-fulfilment revealed that perceptions of the previous day activate infantile hallucinatory thoughts. The dream-work becomes the framework of a hallucinatory mode of thinking that escapes the subject’s consciousness and it is from this framework that Freud invented the questions and the models of his first metapsychology.

I would argue that the masochist phantasy described in *A Child Is Being Beaten* is an addition to the paradigm of the dream. The unconscious mode of thinking is produced not only by infantile unconscious wishes but also through the turning round of muscular aggressiveness upon the self. The beating phantasy becomes a clinical model through which Freud linked the construction of primal thoughts and the genesis of masochism. What organises the unconscious system is this process of turning round upon the self by which hallucinatory traces are created.

In other words, the hallucinatory mode of thinking is of a masochistic nature: its presentations are the outcome of the conversion of the drive into its passive form. The

¹¹⁸ The 1960’s saw the appearance of the first work of a number of thinkers who would later be more or less artificially regrouped under a school of thought called *the new epistemology*. Their attempt was to challenge the neo-positivist view of science, the *received view* as Hilary Putnam called it in *What Theories are Not* (1979[1962]). It is within this contestation of neo-positivism that Thomas S. Kuhn created his concept of paradigm.

primal hallucinatory presentations of the experience of satisfaction by which psychic life begins are governed by the pleasure principle. However, the analysis of the beating phantasy shows that those primal forms of thoughts (independently of their content) are generated through a turning round of bodily aggressiveness upon the psychical apparatus – in this process we see a somatic nature transformed into a psychic nature. The psychical apparatus appears in the moment when the subject is invaded by the aggressiveness of his own muscular apparatus and therefore primal thoughts can also be described as primal psychic pains. To characterize these primal psychic pains, I propose (paraphrasing Freud's *proton pseudos*, the primal lies of the *Project*) the term, *proton algos*. The *proton algos* would be the *primal psychical pain* of the infantile presentations produced by the drive turning round upon the subject's own self.

When Freud investigates the metapsychology of the neurotic symptom, the metapsychology of dreams or the construction of a perverse phantasy, his object of study is not so much the phenomenon in itself but, more precisely, the representation of this phenomenon. Freud studied the way a psychological phenomenon is verbalised, but also the way it resists being verbalised. The transcription of a neurotic symptom, a dream or a phantasy is formed from a combination of verbal associations and the resistance encountered by those associations.¹¹⁹ The starting point of Freud's metapsychology is the epistemological bet that there is a type of determinism behind the way psychological phenomena are represented by a subject.

The initial question of metapsychology was therefore to understand the nature of this psychical determinism. In other words, *Freud's metapsychology interrogates the nature of a psychical text that would generate a form of speech, which never ceases to encounter its limits*. From the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) to the 1915 *Papers on Metapsychology*, Freud developed an intuition that this psychical text was produced through a hallucinatory mode of thinking. The psyche is built as an apparatus that primarily faces the preemptory demands of internal needs in a hallucinatory manner. In Freud's metapsychological fiction, the primal activity of the psychic apparatus is to replace perceived reality with hallucinatory ideas derived from this reality.

¹¹⁹ Resistance to free association has a tendency to involve repetitive patterns and the analytic dialogue will attempt to create verbal forms to transcribe those patterns.

When he wrote the *Project*, Freud thought that the hallucinatory power of *proton pseudos* would remain uninhibited. The *proton pseudos* designate infantile ideas that escape the control of the secondary process because they contain a latent sexual content: they can be described as ‘sexual pre-sexual’. It is as if the hallucinatory mode of thinking could create ideas that contain a sexual potential that will only be revealed at puberty. Puberty activates this latent sexual content and hallucinatory presentations manifest themselves in the form of symptoms. With the *proton pseudos* a contingent experience becomes a pathological structure: the contingent encounter between a child and manifestations of the adult’s sexuality generates a set of hallucinatory ideas that produce the structure of a neurotic symptom.

On the other hand, the notion of *proton algos* that I extract from my reading of *A Child is Being Beaten* would operate in the opposite way: the structure of the hallucinatory mode of thinking would be transcribed into the representation of an experience. The *proton algos* designate the hallucinatory ideas generated by the internalisation of somatic aggressiveness. The genesis of *proton algos* (a turning round of aggressiveness upon the subject) would come about through the construction of a masochistic phantasy. The notion of primal lies [*proton pseudos*] implies that contingent memories are registered within the ontology of human sexuality; the notion of primal psychological pain [*proton algos*] on the other hand, implies that the ontology of the hallucinatory mode of thinking is established in human memory prior to or regardless of contingent memory. Hallucinatory thoughts appear in the internal attack of drive energy upon the psychological apparatus and the final content of a masochistic phantasy illustrates this primal movement of the psyche.

To understand how the same hallucinatory process can be described as an experience of satisfaction and as primal psychological pain, it is useful to distinguish between pleasure as *Lust* and pleasure as satisfaction. Jean Laplanche has stressed that Freud’s notion of pleasure “would seem to divide into two directions: on the one hand, enjoyment [*jouissance*], in the sense both of frenetic pleasure and of lust, and on the other, satisfaction, understood in terms of the allaying of vital tensions” (Laplanche, 1976[1970], p.105). The production of hallucinatory thoughts aims to reach a perceptual identity in order to satisfy an internal need and yet it also manifests itself as a

phenomenon of pain because it operates through “an effraction of the boundary and a rush of ‘unbound’ energy” (*Ibid.*, p.105).

On the one hand, the hallucinatory mode of thinking is pleasure, as it produces presentations of satisfactory objects. On the other hand, it is pain, because it operates through an increase of tension in the psychic apparatus. The hallucinatory mode of thinking can be described as masochistic in as much as it achieves hallucinatory satisfaction through a turning round of the drive upon the subject. What is shown by the analysis of the beating phantasy in *A Child is Being Beaten* is the link between the beginning of psychological life and the genesis of masochism.

The question of whether it is masochism or sadism that comes first is central to Freud’s theory of the drives because the sadism-masochism pair is a universal psychological manifestation of the sexual drive. In a paragraph added to the *Three Essays on Sexuality* in 1915 Freud writes: “Sadism and masochism occupy a special position among the perversions, since the contrast between activity and passivity which lies behind them is among the universal characteristics of sexual life” (Freud, 1905, p.159).¹²⁰ The demand made by the drives upon the psychological apparatus gives birth to primal forms of sadism and masochism. Sadism and masochism are pre-verbal psychological representatives of the drives.

Repression and sublimation are defensive mechanisms that can appear only when a verbal mode of thinking has been established and, with it, a sharp cleavage between the functioning of conscious and unconscious systems. Freud insisted on this point at the beginning of his paper on *Repression*:

Psycho-analytic observation of the transference neuroses (...) leads us to conclude that repression is not a defensive mechanism which is present from the very beginning, and that it cannot arise until a sharp cleavage has occurred between conscious and unconscious mental activity. (...) The view of repression would be made more complete by assuming that, before the mental organization reaches this stage, the task of fending off instinctual

¹²⁰ In 1915 the writing of the metapsychological papers pushed Freud to reread and add paragraphs and footnotes to his ‘shibboleth’ works such as *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *Three Essays on Sexuality*.

impulses is dealt with by the other vicissitudes which instincts [drives] may undergo – e.g. reversal into the opposite or turning round upon the subject's own self (Freud, 1915b, p.147).

In *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915a), Freud described how sadism and masochism are generated by these two pre-verbal modes of defence of the mental apparatus against the drives. Sadism and masochism as a pair of opposites show the functioning of the drive before it the meaning of verbal language conceals it. Through the study of this sado-masochistic genesis, Freud investigated the primal connection between the mental and the somatic. Sadism and masochism display the intricacy of drives in such a way that to search for their origin is also to search for the origin of psychical sexuality.¹²¹

Within Freud's first drive dualism between ego or self-preservative and sexual drives, sadism exists prior to masochism but psychical sexuality appears only with masochism. Freud distinguishes between primal non-sexual aggressive sadism that aims to control the object and secondary hedonistic sadism that extracts sexual excitation from the infliction of pain on to the object. The point of articulation between these two forms of sadism is the experience of masochism. Sexual excitement from pain inflicted on to an external object arises from the passive experience of a link between pleasure and pain: "The [sexual] enjoyment of pain would thus be an aim which was originally masochistic, but which can only become an instinctual aim [*Triebziele*] in someone who was originally sadistic" [in the non-sexual aggressive sense of the term] (Freud, 1915a, p.129). In order for pain to play a role in the genesis of sexual pleasure the pain must first be experienced passively in the self because "sensations of pain, like other unpleasurable sensations, trench upon sexual excitation and produce a pleasurable condition, for the sake of which the subject will even willingly experience the unpleasure of pain" (*Ibid.*, p.128).

Already in the *Three Essays*, Freud had identified that all "intense affective processes, including even terrifying ones" are a source of children's sexual excitation (Freud, 1905, p.203). What is described is an odd alchemy by which an experienced pain is transformed into sexual excitation. The clinic of *A Child is Being Beaten* cast a new light on this transformation: it showed how this transformation corresponds to the shift from a non-

¹²¹ The idea of the fusion of the drives that would be so crucial for the concept of the death drive appears for the first time in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*.

qualitative muscular sensation to an excitation made of hallucinatory traces. Hallucinatory traces are created in the outburst of pain into the field of sexuality. I use the term *proton algos* [primal psychical pains] to designate these hallucinatory traces in order to stress the link established by Freud between the genesis of masochism and the genesis of hallucinatory thoughts.

To make this link more explicit, I will return to the sequence of the beating phantasy. In previous texts, Freud had put forward the conscious phantasy as a function which could serve the pleasure principle.¹²² In *A Child Is Being Beaten*, Freud goes further: he explains the different steps of the elaboration of the phantasy and reveals its unconscious dimension. The conscious beating-phantasies “represent an end-product and not an initial manifestation” (*Ibid.*, p.184). Freud expounds the masochistic grammar of this phantasy, and in the same way in which he had dissected the dream-work, he rebuilds the phantasy-work from the conscious content of the phantasy as brought to him by his patients.

In the first part of the paper, what Freud describes of his patients’ behaviour is a form of compulsory masturbation, which is reminiscent of the experiment of post-hypnotic suggestion. From around their sixth year, at the beginning of school life, a psychical suggestion that urges masturbatory satisfaction keeps being activated in Freud’s patients. If at first they can maintain the illusion that the act of masturbation takes place voluntarily, it quickly appears that it is done “in spite of the patient’s efforts, and with the characteristics of an obsession” (Freud, 1919, p.179). The stimuli that activate the masturbatory suggestion can be the sight of other children being humiliated by a teacher or, later on, the reading of novels such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *Les Malheurs de Sophie*. In fact, one can suppose that any ideas that evoke a submissive child at the mercy of an adult’s physical strength would activate the impulse to masturbate.

In the same way that in post-hypnotic suggestion it is not the hypnotist’s command but only the command’s outcome that is revealed to consciousness, the patient of the beating phantasy is conscious only of the impulse to masturbate and not of the hallucinatory ideas that trigger it. Only later on, a conscious phantasy is created like a framework

¹²² *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming* (1908[1907]); *Hysterical Phantasies and their Relation to Bisexuality* (1908a); *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning* (1911b)

within which the excitation can exist; it is *après-coup* that the subject elaborates a more or less complex conscious fiction around the impulse: “masturbation was at first under the dominance of unconscious phantasies and (...) conscious ones were substituted for them later” (*Ibid.*, p.190). This conscious fiction constitutes the third phase of the phantasy: the one confessed with hesitation in the intimacy of the analytic dialogue. The patient behaves like a sleepwalker, obeying unconscious orders, and he elaborates fictions as a way to offer some motives for his senseless behaviour: a “vehicle of the excitation impelling towards masturbation (...) which on the one hand continue the phantasy along the same line, and on the other hand neutralize it through compensation” (*Ibid.*, p.195).

The analytic work reveals how this unconscious order is formed from hallucinatory ideas that are created from the awakening of somatic factors at a very early period of childhood. The activation of somatic factors corresponds to the first phase of the beating phantasy. The transformation of somatic factors into hallucinatory ideas corresponds to the second one, which is also the unconscious and masochistic keystone of the phantasy. Both the first and the third phase can be consciously perceived and remembered but only the latter is sexual: “the essential characteristic which distinguishes even the simplest phantasies” of the third phase “from those of the first, and which establishes the connection with the intermediate phase, is this: the phantasy now has strong and unambiguous sexual excitement attached to it and so provides a means for masturbatory satisfaction” (*Ibid.*, p.186).

It is therefore at the second masochistic phase of the beating phantasy that sexuality is introduced. To keep the analogy with the experiment of post-hypnotic suggestion, it is in the transition between phases one and two that the hypnotic suggestion is built. I would like to focus on this transition to show how Freud describes the emergence of psychical sexuality as the turning round of a somatic aggressiveness, which gets lost in a puzzle of psychical traces with no primal origins.

The first phase of the beating phantasy can be represented by the phrase: “My father is beating the child *whom I hate*” (Freud, 1919, p.185) and yet, Freud rejects the idea that this first phase is sadistic. Firstly, because “the child producing the phantasy is never doing the beating herself” (*Ibid.*, p.185), secondly and more importantly, because there is no real sexual excitement or enjoyment attached to it. Hatred directed towards the rival child is

not sexualized but an expression of aggressiveness against an object that causes frustration. It corresponds to the primal cruelty described by Freud in the *Three Essays*, which “develops in childhood even more independently of the sexual activities that are attached to erotogenic zones” (Freud, 1905, p.192).

Freud ascribed this primal cruelty of the child to the drive for mastery [*Bemächtigungstrieb*]. The notion of a drive for mastery was not thoroughly developed by Freud. The part played by this drive in the genesis of sexuality can appear quite equivocal and according to the American psychoanalyst, Ives Hendrick, Freud’s usage of the term “seems to serve as a convenient evasion when its classification as an ego or sexual instinct [drive] was uncertain” (Hendrick, 1942, p.40). I will try to show that the notion of the drive for mastery put forward by Hendrick can lead to an original reading of Freud’s theory of anaclisis.

In the 1915 edition of the *Three Essays*, Freud attributes three essential characteristics to infantile sexuality. The first is its anaclitic origin: at its origin, infantile sexual manifestation “attaches itself to one of the vital somatic functions” (Freud, 1905, p.182). The second is its auto-erotic functioning: it has no sexual object. The third is the way it obtains pleasure: through erotogenic zones. Now, primal manifestations of the drive for mastery such as exhibitionism and cruelty “appear in a sense independently of erotogenic zones” and “from the very first” they “involve other people as sexual objects” (*Ibid.*, p.192). The paradox of the first phase of the beating phantasy, which is under the dominance of the drive for mastery, is to have sexual objects but with no sexual excitement attached to them. In other words, the actors of the ‘phantasy play’ (the father, the beaten child) are already there but there is not yet a text for this ‘phantasy play’.

As Freud put it: “we may say in terms recalling the prophecy made by the Three Witches to Banquo: ‘Not clearly sexual, not in itself sadistic, but yet the stuff from which both will later come’” (Freud, 1919, p.187). For that reason, Freud hesitates “to say whether the characteristics of a ‘phantasy’ can yet be ascribed to this first step” (*Ibid.*, p.185). Rather than an autonomous phantasy, this first step would be the subjective representation of the child’s attempts to acquire control of its somatic musculature. The first phase of the beating phantasy would then be a clinical confirmation of the preliminary stage of sadism that Freud has hypothesised in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*: a

preliminary stage born “out of the child’s efforts to gain control over his own limbs”(Freud, 1915a, p.130).

In ‘Instinct and the Ego During Infancy’ (1942) and ‘Work and the Pleasure Principle’ (1943), two papers that he wrote in the early 1940’s, Yves Hendrick emphasized this understanding of the drive for mastery as a drive, which was behind the infant’s effort to gain control over its muscular apparatus.¹²³ He defines it as a drive that “provides the energy and the need to exercise the physiological organs available for work” (Hendrick, 1943, p.314). Hendrick tried to show that the drive for mastery is the main force in the development of ego functions and that it operates independently of the sexual drives. Its aim “is the pleasure in executing a function successfully, regardless of its sensual value” and the “function is then at the disposal of the ego for use in a multitude of situations”(Hendrick, 1942, p.42). This function can secondarily achieve goals “whether the goals be libidinal, egoistic or—as is generally the case—both” (*Ibid.*, p.45).

Even though Hendrick’s definition of the drive for mastery is influenced by both Adler’s ‘will to power’¹²⁴ and developmental psychology, I believe it can still be read as a post-Freudian concept. Indeed, I would argue that Hendrick’s notion of the drive for mastery conserves and refines the central role played by infantile sexuality in the genesis of mental life. I will propose a reading of Hendrick, emphasising the idea that the first step in the genesis of an infantile wish rests on the development of a neuromuscular function. I would like to show how this idea casts a new light on Freud’s theory of anaclisis [*Anlehnung*] and how this is helpful to understand the beating phantasy.

To clarify and develop this point, I must first explain how Jean Laplanche has influenced the contemporary understanding of Freud’s notion of anaclisis. The theory of anaclisis gives an account of the genesis of infantile sexual wishes and with this concept, Freud proposed that vital somatic needs initiate psychical wishes, that a sexual wish is attached to a non-sexual vital function. Amongst Freud’s commentators, Jean Laplanche is the

¹²³ Yves Hendrick is one of the rare analysts to explore Freud’s notion of a drive for mastery. In his papers, he translates Freud’s ‘drive for mastery’ [*Bewältigungstrieb*] as ‘instinct to master’ but he makes explicit that he uses instinct in the sense of drive [*Trieb*]: “Instinct’ is open to the usual objection that it is used throughout in the special psychoanalytic sense of drive, of a biological need experienced mentally as emotion, and impelling the organism to tension-relieving behaviour” (Hendrick, 1942, p.40). For the sake of coherence and clarity, I will use the term: ‘drive for mastery’ in this chapter.

¹²⁴ Hendrick acknowledges Adler’s influence “without following him in rejecting other important contributions of psychoanalysis”(Hendrick, 1943, p.314, fn.2).

author who has most thoroughly excavated this concept from the *Three Essays on Sexuality*. Through his questioning of the Freudian lexicon (that led him to write *The Language of Psychoanalysis* with J.-B. Pontalis and through the writing of *The Order of Life* – the first of the six lectures that form *Life And Death in Psychoanalysis*) Laplanche has tried to show the importance of the concept of anaclysis within Freud’s model of infantile sexuality. Laplanche favours the translation of the German word *Anlehnung* into the French term *étayage* that Jeffrey Mehlman translated into English as the word *propping*:

Propping [*Etayage*], the French reader will perhaps be surprised to hear, is a fundamental term in Freud’s conceptual apparatus. In current translations of Freud, in French as well as in the excellent Standard Edition in English, the only trace of the Freudian concept is the sporadic and poorly justified use of an adjective derived from the Greek: “anaclytic.” A prolonged consideration of Freudian terminology and an effort at retranslating Freud’s work have led us to choose (...) the term *étayage* (*propping*) and its derivatives. If we have adopted that term, it is because it was necessary to bring into focus, as had not been done before, the rigorous conceptual value which the German word *Anlehnung* – meaning “to find support” or propping in something else – takes on in Freud. We have attempted thereby to bring into relief with its various resonances a notion long obscured by translations more concerned with elegance than rigor, specifically by an excessively learned and insufficiently explicit pseudoscientific term: *anaclysis* (Laplanche, 1976[1970], pp.15-16).

I will nevertheless, conserve Strachey’s translation of *Anlehnung* as ‘anaclysis’ because apart from having hidden the concept using rather technical terminology, I do not see any major conceptual problem with Strachey’s translation. When he wrote *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, Laplanche used the concept of anaclysis to show how, in Freud’s metapsychology, the emergence of sexuality is neither “a quasi-metaphysical abstract genesis”, nor (formed/developed in) relation to an object perceived in its primal empirical reality as sexual. In other words, Freud’s anaclysis appears as a solution to the “false impasse” between the “vast fable of autoerotism as a state of the primary and total absence of an object” from which “the object would be generated as it were *ex nihilo*, by a

stroke of some magic wand” (*Ibid.*, p.18) and a model in which sexuality has an object from the beginning.

Laplanche would stress that the notion of anaclisis “by no means designates a leaning of the subject on the object (of child on mother)” (*Ibid.*, p.16) but is rather, the process by which the accomplishment of a bodily function that is essential to life leaves residual messages, that in a second stage will be translated by the child into hallucinatory wishes expressed autoerotically. Hence, the somatic function has an object from the beginning but “*on the other hand sexuality does not have, from the beginning, a real object*” (*Ibid.*, p.19). In the absence of the object that brings satisfaction, the sexual object is created in a hallucinatory way. Freud’s famous quote: “The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it” (Freud, 1905, p.222) would confirm this reading: the search for a sexual object is always the search for a primary lost object.

One can already clearly sense in this first chapter of *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* what will later become Laplanche’s great metapsychological achievement: the so-called *general theory of seduction*, which is in fact a theory of anaclisis. The theory rests on the premise that an infant is born with innate biological needs, but does not have the capacity to satisfy many of them. The body of the newborn baby needs outside help to carry out its vital biological functions. The great length of time during which the infant remains dependent on this help is one of the most striking characteristics of our species and Jean Laplanche calls this dependence *the fundamental anthropological situation*.

Through the relation of primal care between the adult and the infant, infantile sexuality is introduced into the infant. The messages sent by the adult to the infant are compromised by the sexual unconscious of the adult and as a consequence part of the adult’s message remains enigmatic for the infant. Laplanche understands the process of repression as a repeated attempt to translate this enigmatic message. What comes first in Laplanche’s metapsychology is the fundamental anthropological situation: the needs of the infant that necessitate the intervention of an adult. These somatic needs are, in a way, twisted by the sexual infantile unconscious of the adult and this transmutation of the infant’s needs forms Laplanche’s understanding of the notion of anaclisis. The momentous consequence of the general theory of seduction is that infantile sexuality has an exogenous origin. Under its more elaborate form, this consequence almost became

Laplanche's metapsychological motto: "psychical reality is not a creation of the ego it is invasive"¹²⁵ (Laplanche, 1999, my translation).

Hendrick's notion of a drive for mastery can be understood as a direct challenge to this. Of course, Hendrick's drive for mastery is not an answer to Laplanche's understanding of anaclisis since he conceptualized it thirty years before Laplanche's first texts. Moreover, the concept of anaclisis never appears directly in Hendrick's work. However, I believe that his definition of a drive for mastery leads to an original reading of Freud's theory of anaclisis, which throws light on the beating phantasy. Hendrick's metapsychological innovation is to affirm that what comes first in the genesis of an infantile wish is not the need for an external object but the display of neuromuscular functions:

For it suggests that *function initiates the wish*; that the development of the ability to execute a certain function may determine, for example, the pregenital aims by which libidinal gratification is sought during a certain phase. The familiar psychoanalytic explanation of development of needs in terms of transformation of the libido alone implies that we strive for what we want; but consideration of the development of the ego indicates that in many cases what we may desire or choose is determined by what we are able to get (Hendrick, 1942, p.48).

Following Hendrick, infantile sexuality would lean primarily on the infant's muscles and only secondarily on its needs. For instance, the newborn's first scream is not the expression of a need – not a demand for milk or care – but the expression of the muscular impulse to use its voice. Only secondarily is there an encounter between the voice and the object. Likewise, the anal phase rests firstly on the infant's impulse to use its sphincter and it is through this impulse that the infant encounters the object of care. The infant's impulse to gain control over its muscular apparatus alters the perception of its environment: external reality is filtered by a pregenital function.

Hence, the object of care is not perceived in its empirical reality but through the display of pregenital functions: there would be a breast perceived orally, a breast perceived

¹²⁵ "La réalité psychique n'est pas créée par moi, elle est invasive."

anally, and so on. Under the dominance of the drive for mastery, pregenital functions are at first not linked with sexual pleasure but rather, they aim to master a segment of the environment: the drive for mastery pushes the infant to impose its muscular reality on its environment. At this stage pregenital functions are not yet linked with an unconscious mode of thinking but they are the expression of muscular functions.

In Freud's metapsychological speculation, it is in the absence of the object that the infant creates hallucinatory forms of thought through its pregenital functions. In this turning round of the drive for mastery upon the self, pregenital functions cease to be only a means to master the environment, becoming also a means to represent the environment. In other words, the pregenital functions are no longer exclusively dependent on the muscular apparatus, but also rely on the psychical apparatus. From this angle, *anaclysis* corresponds to the process by which the pregenital functions shift from being under the command of the muscular apparatus to being under the command of the psychical apparatus: the process by which pregenital sexuality appears as a primal hallucinatory mode of thinking.

In the transition between phases one and two of the beating phantasy, what is at stake is this transformation of the pregenital as an expression of the muscular apparatus, into the pregenital as a mode of representation. As Jean Laplanche has pointed out, between phases one and two "the process of a turning back into autoerotism" takes place *in and through* this process "*the fantasy, the unconscious, and sexuality in the form of masochistic excitation* together emerge in a single movement" (Laplanche, 1976[1970], pp.99-100). Hence, the study of the transition between the first and the second phases goes way beyond the specific case of the beating phantasy because what is made intelligible is the process by which hallucinatory ideas emerge from the turning round of the drive upon the subject's own self.

Freud observes the vicissitudes of the drive through the lenses of the beating-phantasy. It is in this sense, I believe, that Freud's claim on the universality of the beating-phantasy should be understood. Primal presentations of objects appear in the turning round of the drive upon the self and this movement of turning round is at the core of masochism. From this angle, *A Child is Being Beaten* is Freud's essential text on masochism. It starts from a type of semiology specific to the psychoanalytic cure in order to show the

ontological dimension of masochism: the discovery that a condition of existence of hallucinatory presentations at the basis of the fantasy is a reflexive masochist phase. In his commentary of the beating phantasy, Laplanche insisted on this point:

the process of turning round is not to be thought of only at the level of the content of the fantasy, but *in the very movement of fantasmaticization*. To shift to the reflexive is not only or even necessarily to give a reflexive content to the “sentence” of the fantasy; it is also and above all to reflect the action, internalize it, make it enter into oneself as a fantasy. To fantasize aggression is to turn it round upon oneself, to aggress oneself: such is the moment of autoerotism, in which the indissoluble bond between fantasy as such, sexuality and the unconscious is confirmed (*Ibid.*, p.102).

Freud’s discovery of a mental life beyond consciousness is closely linked with his observation of sexual manifestations beyond the reproductive function and beyond the genitals. In the *Introductory Lectures*, Freud developed this parallel:

we have been obliged to extend the concept of ‘psychical’ and to recognize something ‘psychical’ that is not ‘conscious’. And in just the same way, whereas other people declare that ‘sexual’ and ‘connected with reproduction’ (or, if you prefer to put it more shortly, ‘genital’) are identical, we cannot avoid postulating something ‘sexual’ that is not ‘genital’—has nothing to do with reproduction (Freud, 1917[1916-1917], p.321).

To a certain extent, non-genital forms of sexuality would be the manifestation of unconscious ideas. In this sense, Freud’s efforts to find criteria that could characterize human sexuality were also a way to establish some sort of empirical trace of the unconscious.

There is a recurring question throughout Freud’s work: what can be understood to come under the umbrella of sexuality covered by the concept of the sexual? What is it that allows us to characterize human sexuality? What would be a “recognized criterion of the sexual nature of a process, apart, once again, from a connection with the reproductive function which we must reject as being too narrow-minded. The biological criteria, such

as the periodicities of twenty-three and twenty-eight days postulated by Wilhelm Fliess, are still highly debatable; the chemical characteristics of the sexual process, which we may suspect, are still awaiting discovery” (*Ibid.*, p.320).

At times, one feels in Freud the temptation to return to the positivist utopias of his youth: the temptation to discover a periodicity of time with Fliess, or to identify a chemical characteristic of the sexual process with Brücke. However, far from the lure of empiricism, in his metapsychology Freud proposed to characterize infantile sexuality as a mode of thinking that would operate beyond the logos: a mode of thinking that would transform a muscular aggressiveness into a set of ideas that are irreducible to consciousness. To define infantile sexuality as a set of presentations irreducible to the logos is, I believe, the great originality and the great subversiveness of the Freudian reading of sexuality. *A Child is Being Beaten* shows how the clinical encounter *constructs* a type of idea that “never had a real existence” in the regime of consciousness but that constitutes the hallucinatory suggestion by which the subject is lived.

Construction of a Trace

To give the name *proton algos* to the masochistic presentations created in the second phase of the beating phantasy is a way to establish a link between the construction of a phantasy in *A Child is Being Beaten* and the hysterical *proton pseudos* of Freud’s 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. I think that the chain of Freud’s metapsychological texts between 1895 and 1915 – what can be called Freud’s first metapsychology – unites these two notions around the same interrogative point: with the *proton pseudos* Freud attempted to discover the secret of hysteria, with the second phase of the beating phantasy, he was trying to reconstitute the grammar of a phantasy but they both share the same question about the origins of psychic life.

In fact, rather than an investigation into the origins of psychic life, it would be more accurate to speak of a ‘calling into question’ of various notions about these origins. Freud tries to identify a mode of thinking that existed at the beginning of psychic life and throughout his first metapsychology he describes this mode of thinking as hallucinatory. The *proton pseudos* of the *Project*, the *unconscious wish* of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the *thing-presentation* of the 1915 papers on metapsychology, the *proton algos* of the beating phantasy:

these primal forms of thought all appear because of the replacement of a perceived external object with a hallucinatory internal object. However, the uncanny noise that becomes stronger and stronger as Freud affirms his metapsychological endeavour is that these hallucinatory forms challenge the very concept of origin. The code of the primal hallucinatory mode of thinking gets lost in man's archaic heritage and the origins of the individual's subjectivity becomes trapped within the origins of the species. The hallucinatory mode of thinking triggers a type of intentionality that is irreducible to any form of self-presence and that can only appear to the regime of consciousness in the form of the enigmatic.

The primal hallucinatory forms described by Freud, using terms such as the protons pseudos, unconscious wishes, unconscious traces or thing-presentations are those elements of his model that resist being "contained within logocentric closure".¹²⁶ In chapters three, four and five, I tried to show how Freud's model of a hallucinatory mode of thinking challenged the conception of a subject defined around self-presence. In chapter six, my purpose was to point out how the attempt to express hallucinatory forms of thought would disturb Freud's writing and for that reason I defended the idea that metapsychology is also the name of a type of formalism specific to psychoanalysis. Finally, in this chapter I am arguing that manifestations of the hallucinatory mode of thinking in the clinic constantly overflow the boundaries of Freud's clinical encounter. Thus, Freud's concept of the hallucinatory mode of thinking resists the logos by challenging the closure of classic western metaphysics, by disturbing the framework of verbal expression and by provoking the limits of the analytical setting. It is this last point on which I would like to focus in my conclusion.

The discovery that the aetiology of neurosis was not to be found in a real memory but in the hallucinatory traces derived from a real bodily experience changed the nature of analytical work. In its attempt to make the early development of the subject intelligible, the work of analysis does not aim to produce a picture of the past but to construct the unconscious hallucinatory presentations derived from this past.

¹²⁶ To "locate in Freud's text several points of reference, and to isolate, on the threshold of a systematic examination, those elements of psychoanalysis which can only uneasily be contained within logocentric closure" (Derrida, 1978[1967], p.249) is the question that Derrida addresses to Freud's work at the beginning of *Freud and the Scene of Writing* and it is through the spectacles of this Derridean question that I have, in this study, been reading Freud's first metapsychology.

These hallucinatory presentations are not rigid forms that pre-exist the subject in a sort of original universal womb: hallucinatory presentations are neither Plato's "ideas" nor Jung's "archetypes". Freud's concept of the unconscious is not one that is formed from ideas already inscribed in the analysand and that the analyst discovers one after the other in their original forms through the 'here and now' of transference. As noticed by Serge Viderman, such a transcendental conception of the unconscious would lead to a notion of "unconscious truth given once and for all in a *logos* that would perpetuate its continuity and as a consequence the speech of the analytical situation would reveal its [unconscious] truth rather than creating its [unconscious] truth" and "the history of the subject would only be the result of a predictable fragmentation from a primal nodal point that would contain all the possible later forms of its event" (Viderman, 1970, p.162, my translation).¹²⁷

In other words, his conception of a primal hallucinatory mode of thinking did not lead Freud to replace the investigation for a scene of seduction in his early clinical work with an ontological inquiry for ideal unconscious forms. What is at stake is to generate from the verbal artefacts of the analytic dialogue, a type of presentation (*Vorstellung*) that challenges notions of origin because it is primal and yet never had a real existence in the self-presence of the subject. This act of construction of ideas that are at the origin of subjective life without having had a real existence, corresponds exactly to the construction of the second phase of the beating phantasy:

This second phase is the most important and the most momentous of all. But we say of it in a certain sense that it has never had a real existence. It is never remembered, it has never succeeded in becoming conscious. It is a construction of analysis, but it is no less a necessity on that account (Freud, 1919, p.185).

The intuition that psychological life starts with a sort of ontological lie, in the form of presentations that have never existed contemporaneously with subjective thoughts and

¹²⁷ "La vérité de l'inconscient serait donnée une fois pour toutes dans le *logos* qui en répète la pérennité, comme la parole dans la situation analytique dirait ce qu'elle *est*, davantage qu'elle ne la ferait advenir par ce qu'elle *en dit*" et "L'histoire du sujet ne serait plus que le résultat d'une décompression dispersive, d'un éclatement prévisible à partir du point nodal originel qui enferme en une lettre toutes les formes ultérieures possibles de l'événement."

whose intentionality has escaped any form of self-presence, had been present in Freud's metapsychology since the *proton pseudos*. In various ways, the paradoxical view that mental life had a beginning but no fixed origin had never ceased to haunt Freud's metapsychology.

This metapsychological paradox gradually appears in the clinic as a creation of the analytic encounter to which Freud would give an epistemological status only in his 1937 paper *Constructions in Analysis*. Laplanche and Pontalis, amongst others, have pointed out that it “would be no difficult matter (...) to find ample evidence in Freud's work attesting to the fact that the theme of a construction (...) was present in it from the outset, and in more than one form” (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973[1967], p.89). How, then, should we understand such a late reification of the clinical event of construction?

Reflecting on this question, Jacques Press has stressed how “the work of 1935 to 1939, as Freud struggled with successive drafts of *Moses and Monotheism*, represented a final turning-point in his *œuvre*, leading the founder of psychoanalysis to reappraise core elements of his theory” (Press, 2011, p.31). Indeed, it seems to me that in his last important texts Freud re-examined old questions and stressed their most problematic aspects.¹²⁸ These last texts almost seem to represent Freud's conceptual testament to what remained unresolved in his theory. This might also be understood, as a way of reaffirming that, like the figure of Moses, who set the Jewish people free but never reached the Promised Land, the metapsychological project remains, in essence, interminable.

In writing the drafts of *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud came back to the question of primal ideas without origins. In this work, Freud developed the hypothesis that myth or religion refers to a past that has never been experienced by the subject:

When Moses brought the people the idea of a single god, it was not a novelty but signified the revival of an experience in the *primaeva*l ages of the human family which had long vanished from men's conscious memory. But

¹²⁸ Freud's last important texts are: *Moses and Monotheism* (1939[1934-1938]); *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940[1938]a); *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* (1937a); *Constructions in Analysis* (1937b); *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence* (1940[1938]b).

it had been so important and had produced or paved the way for such deeply penetrating changes in men's life that we cannot avoid believing that it had left behind it in the human mind some permanent traces, which can be compared to a tradition (Freud, 1939[1934-38], p. 129).

Such 'traces' are presentations that the subject has never experienced, transcriptions of an unknown origin, which nevertheless encounter a degree of truth in the subject. This reality does not correspond to a *material truth* but to a *historical truth*: a type of truth whose origin is lost in the past of the species and which could be described as the amnesic memory of the species. As noticed by Press, "the passage in *Constructions* –and indeed in *Moses*– that touches on historical truth is embedded within a discussion of psychosis and hallucination" (Press, 2011[2008], p.40).

I believe it is the reconsideration of hallucinatory presentations through the notion of historical truth rather than that of psychological reality¹²⁹ which led Freud to give theoretical status to the act of construction. Indeed, Freud defined the act of construction as the discovery in the clinical encounter of the way this amnesic recollection of the species manifest itself in the core of the analysand's existence. It is because the clinical act of construction transcribes the historical truth of the drives into the language of the cure that Freud can make this daring analogy between delusions and construction: "I have not been able to resist the seduction of an analogy. The delusion of patients appear to me to be the equivalents of the constructions which we build up in the course of an analytic treatment" (Freud, 1937b, p.268).

Already at the end of Schreber's case history, Freud had put forward a similar analogy between Schreber's delusions and psychoanalytic theory: "Since I neither fear the criticism of others nor shrink from criticizing myself, I have no motive for avoiding the mention of a similarity which may possibly damage our libido theory in the estimation of many of my readers. Schreber's 'rays of God', which are made up of a condensation of the sun's rays, of nerve-fibres, and of spermatozoa, are in reality nothing else than a concrete representation and projection outwards of libidinal cathexes; and they thus lend his delusions a striking conformity with our theory" (Freud, 1911a, p.78). This quote, as

¹²⁹ In his texts from 1935 to 1939, Freud never uses the expression 'psychic reality'.

André Green has stated, is an “extraordinary confession by which Schreber’s *delusion* states Freud’s *theory*, when it should be the theory that states delusion in the process of thinking” (Green, 1977, p.34, my translation).¹³⁰

It is the same trace of a hallucinatory truth without origin, which is at the service of psychotic delusions or neurotic symptoms, and at the service of the act of construction in the analytic encounter. Thus, Freud and Breuer’s famous proposition that belonged to the prehistory of psychoanalysis: “*Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences*” (Freud, 1893-1895, p.7) makes its reappearance forty-four years later at the end of the text on *Construction*:

Just as our construction is only effective because it recovers a fragment of lost experience, so the delusion owes its convincing power to the element of historical truth which it inserts in the place of the rejected reality. In this way a proposition which I originally asserted only of hysteria would also apply to delusions—namely, that those who are subject to them are suffering from their own reminiscences (Freud, 1937b, p.268).

From its inception in *Studies on Hysteria* to its revival in *Construction in Analysis* the meaning of the proposition had changed drastically. Initially, it is not only hysteria that is deemed to be a manifestation of reminiscences but, more generally, delusions. Now, Freud understands delusions to be the pathological expression of a non-pathological infantile hallucinatory mode of thinking. From this perspective, it could be said that the very activity of thinking is a manifestation of reminiscences. The Freudian cogito would represent this odd formula: ‘I think therefore I suffer from reminiscences’. However, unlike Descartes’ cogito that served to establish the Subject, the foundation of an ‘I’, the Freudian cogito, on the contrary, breaks the subject away from its thoughts.

Indeed, the second momentous change to the meaning of the proposition between 1893 and 1937 is that the ‘reminiscences’ are no longer to be found in the traumatic past of the subject but in the absolute past of the species: the one who thinks, suffers from hallucinatory reminiscences from a past without origin. The hallucinatory mode of

¹³⁰ “Extraordinaire aveu: le *délire* de Schreber représente la *théorie* de Freud, alors que c’est la théorie qui devrait représenter le délire dans la pensée.”

thinking inscribes traces of the species' biological history into that of the individual's subjectivity.

More than a pseudo-scientific mask, I understand Freud's affirmation that "Man's archaic heritage forms the nucleus of the unconscious mind" (Freud, 1919a, pp.203-204) as a means to undermine the conception of a fixed origin of the psyche. Having just finished their work of exegesis on the language of psychoanalysis, Laplanche and Pontalis returned to Freud's questioning of the origins in a paper entitled, *Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality* (translated from the French *Fantasme Originnaire, Fantasmés des Origines, Origines du Fantasme*). They write: "Freud finds it necessary to postulate an organisation made of signifiers anteceding the effect of the event and the signified as a whole. In this mystical prehistory of the species we see the need to create a pre-structure inaccessible to the subject, evading his grasp, his initiatives, his inner 'cooking pot', in spite of all the rich ingredients our modern sorceresses seem to find there" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2003[1964], p.122).

This article was written in 1964, in the direct aftermath of Laplanche and Pontalis' separation from Lacan and, as they explained twenty years later in an introduction to its reprinting, this short essay displays their ambivalence towards him: "by operating a 'return to Freud' in our own way we were showing our refusal to take a one-way ticket towards Lacan and yet we were concerned to establish a continuity between him and Freud" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1985, p.8).¹³¹ Indeed, one feels a certain tension in this paper: on the one hand, they highlight the specificity of Freud's notion of the memory-trace that cannot be integrated into consciousness because it has never been experienced in a mode of self-presence: "a pre-structure inaccessible to the subject" but on the other, one senses Lacan's influence in the temptation to replace this notion of memory-trace with the structuralist concept of the sign.

To describe the "prehistory of the species" as a structure or to speak of the memory-traces coming from man's archaic heritage as a sign is, I believe, a misrepresentation of Freud's thinking because unlike the sign there is no phenomenology of the memory-trace. The specificity of Freud's memory-traces is that they cannot be fully integrated into

¹³¹ "En opérant, mais tout à notre manière un 'retour à Freud', nous indiquions notre refus de prendre un billet d'aller sans retour vers Lacan. Mais parallèlement, nous restions quelque peu retenus par le souci d'établir une continuité entre Freud et lui."

the psyche: they don't have a direct and observable presence, but manifest themselves through their repeated failure to acquire a structure. The one thinker who took over Freud's questioning of the origins in its full radicalism, putting it at the core of his work, was the young Jacques Derrida.

In his reading of Freud in Chapter two of *Of Grammatology* and in *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, he aimed to show against a structuralist perspective that Freud's concept of unconscious ideas led to an "impossibility of re-animating absolutely the manifest evidence of an originary presence" (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.67) and that unconscious ideas were therefore irreducible to the notion of the sign. The unconscious hallucinatory trace creeps within the sign, in 'the hinge' between signifier and signified. This "hinge" explains Derrida "marks the impossibility that a sign, the unity of a signifier and a signified, be produced within the plenitude of a present and an absolute presence. That is why there is no full speech, however much one might wish to restore it by means or without benefit of psychoanalysis. Before thinking to reduce it or to restore the meaning of the full speech which claims to be truth, one must ask the question of meaning and of its origin in difference. Such is the place of a problematic of the *trace*" (*Ibid.*, pp.70-71).

Derrida's use of Freud in his criticism against a structuralist metaphysical theory of language was a starting point for his dialogue with Jacques Lacan. Bearing this criticism in mind, it is interesting to examine what Lacan makes of the act of construction as it appears in *A Child is Being Beaten*, a text that Lacan discussed in his seminar of January 1957, at the peak of his incorporation of Saussure's linguistic models into his reading of Freud.

Lacan describes both the unconscious and conscious phases of the beating phantasy as forms of speech. According to him, the subject expresses the unconscious speech of a primal situation through its present capacity to symbolise in the here and now of the transference (Lacan, 1994[1957], p.116).¹³² Lacan does not mean that the nature of the unconscious speech of the beating phantasy is equivalent to that of the conscious phase because his main point is to show that the latter is ternary and involves subjects only

¹³² "Le sujet formule et organise une situation primitive dramatique à partir du point où nous en sommes dans l'analyse, d'une façon qui s'inscrit dans sa parole actuelle et dans son pouvoir de symbolisation présent."

when the former is anonymous and desubjectified. However, to conceive of the second phase as a primal unconscious speech that can be reconstructed in the analytical work, implies that psychological life starts in self-presence. Hence, Lacan insists that the act of construction is, in fact, the reconstruction of a lost speech: “an unconscious speech that had to be re-found through all the devices of transference analysis” (*Ibid.*, p.118)¹³³ or, as he had stated earlier in the text of his seminar: “we are almost always obliged to reconstruct this step [the second phase of the beating phantasy] because it is so fleeting [fugitive]. This fleeting aspect is so much its characteristic that rapidly the fantasy rushes towards its third phase” (*Ibid.*, p.118).¹³⁴

Freud’s crucial intuition was to describe the second phase of the beating phantasy, not as ‘fleeting’, but as a phase that “never had a real existence” and was therefore not a reconstruction but “a construction of analysis” (Freud, 1919, p.185). In its metapsychological radicalism, the Freudian unconscious describes subjective experiences that are no longer dependent on the grammar of presence. As early as 1890, Freud concluded his paper called *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment* with the affirmation that the beginnings of mental life “are based precisely on hypnotic experience” (Freud, 1905[1890], p.302). Thus, in a similar way to the post-hypnotic subject who is determined by suggestions that he has never experienced in his self-presence, psychological life begins with the replacing of perceived experience with hallucinatory presentations that escape self-presence.

In order to both conceptualize and stress this absence of origins in subjective life, Derrida proffered the concept of trace which he borrowed, to a great extent, from Freud: “This deconstruction of presence accomplishes itself through the deconstruction of consciousness, and therefore through the irreducible notion of the trace (*Spur*), as it appears in both Nietzschean and Freudian discourse” (Derrida, 1976[1967], p.71). The Derridean trace is a fruitful way to pursue Freud’s metapsychological intuition of primal hallucinatory ideas. As suggested by Jacques Press, what Bion termed hallucinosis would be a further vicissitude of the same intuition. Rather than the reconstruction of a primal

¹³³ “Une parole inconsciente, qu’il a fallu retrouver à travers tous les artifices de l’analyse du transfert.”

¹³⁴ “Cette étape (...) nous sommes presque toujours forcés de la reconstruire, tellement elle est fugitive. Cette fugitivité est si bien sa caractéristique, que très vite la situation se précipite dans la troisième étape.”

sign, the act of construction that Freud described in his clinical work is the creation of trace, the creation of an absolute past that never ceases to determine the present.

Conclusion: ‘the time had not yet come’

Ferdinand de Saussure had compared the language-system [*la langue*] with chess games: “A game of chess is like an artificial realization of what language offers us in a natural form” (Saussure, 1974[1964/1916], p. 88). But, Saussure added, unlike chess games the rules by which language is transformed are inaccessible to consciousness: “While the chess player has the *intention* of operating a shift and affecting the system, the language-system premeditates nothing. The pieces of language are displaced, or rather modified, spontaneously and fortuitously (...). In order for chess to resemble the play of language in all points we would have to imagine an unconscious or unintelligent player” (*Ibid.*, p.89).

Samuel Weber took up the chess game analogy in his chapter on the encounter between Lacan and the linguistic theories of Saussure, and distinguished two kind of rules in it: “There are those that regulate the formal conditions of the game” and “there are also those which are less fixed, that regulate the different ways games have been played. These are rules of strategy” (Weber, 1991, p. 36). According to Weber, it is the “rules of this strategy and their unconscious calculation” that “will constitute one of the major concerns of Lacan’s return to Freud” (*Ibid.*, p.37).

The structuralist Lacan of the late fifties or the Foucault from *The Order of Things* perceived the unconscious as a self-contained system of signs that is actualized in an unconscious desire. From this vantage point, psychoanalysis would be the finding of an unconscious desire through the deciphering of a code: a science of the unconscious not because it reaches down to “what is below consciousness in man, but because” it is directed “towards that, which, outside man, makes it possible to know, with a positive knowledge, that which is given to or eludes his consciousness” (Foucault, 1971[1966], p.378).

As subtle as the unconscious chess player could be, Lacan’s seminar on *A Child is Being Beaten* demonstrates how through a structuralist model of the unconscious, the act of

construction in analysis is reduced to the *reconstruction of a sign* while a Derridean reading of the unconscious, as I have argued, leads us to understand it as the *creation of a trace*. From this last perspective, the construction of the second phase of the beating phantasy is not understood as “an unconscious speech that had to be re-found” (Lacan, 1994[1957], p.118) but as the transcription of an unconscious psychical writing into the analytic dialogue. As explained by Patrice Maniglier, if Derrida states that writing is a better model for unconscious intentionality than speech, it is precisely, in as much as writing is a secondary system, that it supposes the deconstruction and the reconstruction of a previous system (Maniglier, 2011, p.389).

Under the pressure of the drives, the hallucinatory mode of thinking transforms perceived experiences into forms that belong to man’s archaic heritage. Unconscious ideas are hallucinated through layers of phantasies that pre-exist the subject. From this angle, the act of construction is not a discovery but the transcription of a hallucinatory mode of thinking into a verbal mode of thinking: ideas that have never been integrated into consciousness are transcribed through the means of the analytic dialogue.

The model of the unconscious as a hallucinatory mode of thinking is necessary in order to understand the act of construction, not as the disclosure of a primary scene but as the transcription of past processes under the pressure of the present analytic situation.¹³⁵ More generally, the hallucinatory mode of thinking leads to an understanding of memory as the attempt to read an internal text that has never been present to consciousness. Freud’s first metapsychology put forward a tragic notion of the unconscious in which existing at the core of the subject’s psychic apparatus there is a text of traces irreducible to consciousness: the subjective scene of the most intimate nature is also the scene of the greatest otherness.

As noticed by Clement Rosset in his book on tragic philosophy: “What makes of Oedipus a psychoanalytic and tragic hero is not so much that he would be incestuous and parricide but rather that he would search in external reality for a subject that concerns his interiority” (Rosset, 1971, p.61, my translation).¹³⁶ In such a tragic view,

¹³⁵ In other words, under the pressure of the transference.

¹³⁶ “Ce qui fait d’Œdipe un héros tant psychanalytique que tragique n’est pas qu’il soit incestueux et parricide, mais qu’il interroge une extériorité à un sujet qui ne concerne que l’intériorité.”

repression is not the result of transcendental law but of the irreducibility between a primary hallucinatory mode of thinking and a secondary verbal mode of thinking. Thus, presentations would not be repressed because of their sexual content – sexuality itself would be defined through the production of hallucinatory presentations that are irreducible to consciousness.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault wrote: “Structuralism is not a new method; it is the awakened and troubled consciousness of modern thought” (Foucault, 1971[1966], p.207). It is this “troubled consciousness of modern thought” that Derrida attempted to challenge through a science of non-phonetic writing. Derrida found the scaffolding for such a science in Freud’s theory of the unconscious: a science that put into question the originary constitution of objectivity by defining the psychological apparatus as a continual rewriting of a text with no origins. However, for Derrida (as for Freud) the time for such a speculation beyond the closure of the logos has not yet come. In the beginning of *Of Grammatology*, Derrida predicts: “such a science of writing runs the risk of never being established as such and with that name” for “that future world and for that within it which will have put into question the values of sign, word, and writing, for that which guides our future anterior, there is as yet no exergue” (Derrida, 1976[1967], pp.5-6).

In *An Autobiographical Study*, Freud also points towards the impossibility of his metapsychological project in his epoch: “Later on [in 1915] I made an attempt to produce a ‘Metapsychology’ (...) The attempt remained no more than a torso; after writing two or three papers – ‘Instinct and their Vicissitudes’, ‘Repression’, ‘The Unconscious’, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, etc. – I broke off, wisely perhaps, since the time for theoretical predications of this kind had not yet come” (Freud, 1925[1924]b, pp.58-59). In this last chapter, I have tried to show that these impossible metapsychological texts are necessary for an understanding of the significance of the act of construction in analysis.

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