

The Transcription of a Psychoanalytic Session: To Write Beyond the Logos

Manuel Batsch

A Textual Empiricism

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). 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 phantasy, 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 that explains this difficulty.

Bion pointed out that even the words can be used by the patient in a hallucinatory non-verbal way: 'words are used both in the expression of verbal communication and in transformation in hallucinosis' (ibid., p. 17). To write about an analytic session, one needs a form of writing that could transcribe this non-verbal mode of thinking.

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.¹

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*.

What makes this otherness-writing possible in *The Interpretation of Dreams* is the transformation of dream images into 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).² 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.

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).³ A strict 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, the fruitfulness of the method described by Boileau 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 psychical reality. Hence, the inventiveness of the *Dichter* can help the psychoanalyst by enriching 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.

To understand better the nature of this textual empiricism, I propose to explore the opposition between the philosophical system and the literary text. I will try to show how through his rejection of the philosophical concept and his bond with the poetical text, Freud elucidates the difficulty of transcribing an analytic session into a text.

The *Dichter* against the Metaphysician

In his book *Psychanalyse et Littérature*, 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).⁴ 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 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 music⁵ (Gomez Mango and Pontalis, 2012, p. 9).

In addition to Freud's papers specifically devoted to the analysis of fictional texts, there is, throughout his work, the understanding that he shares a common interest 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 demonstrations. More than their being 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).⁶

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. 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*.'⁷ Until his very last work, Freud would attack philosophy on the basis that 'the majority of philosophers (...) declare that the idea of something psychical being unconscious is self-contradictory' (Freud, 1940a [1938a], 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 psychoanalytic 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 criticise 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 Schlafrockfetzen
Stopft er die Lücken des Weltenbaus*

(Freud, 1933 [1932], pp. 160–161).⁸

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 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 characterises 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 [1915a], p. 222). Similar to the way that the dream-work creates forms that pre-exist 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 [1915a], 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).⁹ 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 systematised code, that cannot be read through a dictionary, is organised 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.

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).¹⁰

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:¹¹

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 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 verbalisation and it subjects the psyche to the logic of a 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 system:

The Adlerian theory was from the very beginning a ‘system’ – which psycho-analysis 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 rationalises the psyche by locking it up in the categories with which the ego is familiar.

What appears in the clinic is a script of a different nature. 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 of, 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.

This 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.

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 the logos of the philosopher 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 [1972a], 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’, noticed the American clinician Evan 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. 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. 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).¹² 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 organised 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 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).¹³ 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.¹⁴

I believe that the specificity of a psychoanalytic 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.

A Literary Science

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 a practice of writing. This idea rests on the hypothesis that I have tried to explore in this paper: the psychoanalytic mechanism generates psychical phenomena, which in the here and now of the analytic situation replays a non-verbal mode of thinking that was at the origin of psychical reality.

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).

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 representation.

'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 1 February 1900, in Masson, 1985, p. 398). In his 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.

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Notes

- 1 Peter Gay, for instance, described it as ‘an autobiography at once candid and canny, as tantalising in what it omits as in what it discloses’ (Gay, 2006, p. 104).
- 2 ‘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.’
- 3 ‘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.’
- 4 ‘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”.’
- 5 ‘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.'
- 6 '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.'
- 7 Letter of 30 January 1927 from Freud to Werner Achelis (in Freud, 1961, p. 375).
- 8 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).
- 9 Ron Britton defines secondary revision as the 'part played by daydreams in the formation of real dreams' (Britton, 1998, p. 113).
- 10 In my view, the key point is to describe this 'image-rich dream language' as a psychical writing.
- 11 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).
- 12 These lectures were published as a book named *Dream Analysis* (1978 [1937]).
- 13 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).
- 14 I believe an interesting avenue of research would be to compare the philosophical intuitions of the young Derrida with the metapsychology of Sharpe and Bion.